



Addendum 1

THE YEAR OF JESUS' DEATH

New evidence has now become available which gives powerful proof for properly dating the years of Jesus' ministry and even the year of his crucifixion is able to be determined. This new information provides a major key which makes other chronological indications of the New Testament more understandable.

The Gospel of John records some prime chronological references for reckoning the years of Jesus' ministry which the other three Gospels do not report. For example, John mentions three Passovers which occurred during the ministry of Jesus (2:13; 6:4; 13:1). Other Jewish festivals were acknowledged as well. There was the "unknown feast" between the first two Passovers (5:1), and after the second Passover he mentions the feasts of Tabernacles (7:1) and Dedication (10:22). These feasts provide some chronological benchmarks for establishing the proper sequence of years associated with Jesus' ministry.

The new evidence which is presented in this research, centers on a statement given by Jesus which John positions between his first two Passovers (2:13 and 6:4) and before his "unknown" feast (5:1).

This reference is an important piece of historical information which, up to now, has been completely overlooked and misunderstood. But when the new research is recognized, we will have one of the most significant chronological keys for ironing out the historical difficulties associated with Jesus' ministry.

It is first essential to understand the historical environment in which the new evidence occurs. At the end of John's third chapter we are told that Jesus left Jerusalem after John's first Passover and started on his journey toward Galilee (John 4:3). His route necessitated traveling through Samaria. Upon his arrival at Jacob's Well, being weary of his journey, he talked to a Samaritan woman while his disciples went into the village to fetch food. No other people were around when the discussion mentioned by John took place (John 4:6-26). However, upon the conclusion of the dialogue, the disciples returned with food, whereupon Jesus gave them some spiritual teaching about what true food actually represented. It is this particular teaching (when the woman had left and no other Samaritans were around) that solves a major chronological problem in Jesus' ministry. Jesus said:

"Say ye not, 'There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest?' behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white [ripe] already for harvest" (John 4:35).

The real meaning of Jesus' words has not been understood, yet his intention is so easy to comprehend if the legal requirements governing Palestinian agriculture in the first century are taken into account. In a moment I will show what Jesus had in mind when he made this statement, but let us first review the normal interpretations given by scholars to explain what Jesus meant.

There are two explanations normally proffered by theologians.

- 1) Since Jesus was speaking within a context of sowing and reaping, it is recognized (correctly) that Jesus was calling attention to the barley and wheat harvest which

farmers reaped between Passover and Pentecost (from late March to early June). Scholars have seen significance in the phrase “four months unto the harvest.” If Jesus meant that there were yet four months until the time of the Palestinian grain harvest, then it is supposed he must have uttered his statement about late December or early January. This would allow the phrase four months to harvest to make reasonable sense. If this is the case, scholars have surmised, it would mean that Jesus gave this illustration to the disciples some 8 or 9 months after John’s first Passover, and about 4 months before the beginning of the regular grain harvest which started about late March. So, most conservative theologians have felt that this is a chronological statement which can be placed within the months of December or January near the end of Jesus’ first year of ministry.

- 2) The other theory, however, suggests that Jesus was simply stating a well-known proverb about some four month interval of time from sowing to harvest, and that no chronological significance is to be interpreted from his reference.

There are flaws in both suppositions. For one, Jesus’ statement could hardly have been made some 8 or 9 months after John’s first Passover because in verse 45 (given shortly after he had returned to Galilee) his Galilean acquaintances recalled the signs he had recently accomplished at John’s first Passover. These were Galileans who had gone to “the FEAST for they also went unto the FEAST.” Anyone should recognize that this refers to the first Passover mentioned by John which happened about six or seven weeks before. If this is not the case, then the words of John’s Gospel are incomprehensible. To say that the Galileans were referring to an unmentioned feast of Pentecost, or an unnamed feast of Tabernacles (or even the feasts of Dedication or Purim) is stretch-

ing the matter beyond reasonable belief. Truly, the Galileans must have been talking about the previous feast of Passover during which they had seen Jesus perform certain miracles and that Passover had been no more than 40 or 50 days before. This means that Jesus' statement (made at Jacob's Well, about a week before he met the Galileans in Nazareth) was not made in the months of December or January, and not 8 or 9 months after John's first Passover. It is clear that it was late May or early June. (The reason he did so at that time will be shown shortly.)

The second explanation offered by many scholars is also suspect because no proverb has been found in Jewish literature which refers to a four month season from sowing to harvest. The period for wheat was more like six months according to the Jewish Mishnah (*Ta'anith*, I.7).

The Real Meaning of Jesus' Statement

Jesus said that his disciples would reckon four more months to the harvest, yet his statement was proclaimed in late May or early June, right in the midst of the wheat harvest. There is really no doubt that this would have been the case. Origen who lived in Palestine in the third century recognized that Jesus' teachings in John 4:35 were stated in the middle of the actual harvest season (*in John*, tom.xiii.39,41). Even Jesus himself acknowledged that this time was during the regular grain harvest.

“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields for they are white [ripe] already for harvest” (John 4:35).

This reference by Jesus shows that the grain was already available for harvest (after all, it was late May or early June), but for some reason he put it in the mouths of the disciples that they would not expect anyone to harvest for another four months. Why on earth did Jesus say there were yet four more months before harvest, when the harvest season was at its height?

The answer is simple if one remembers the agricultural legisla-

tion that Moses imposed on Jews and Samaritans living in the Holyland. There were agricultural rules that both groups observed in the first century. The truth is, Jesus made his statement in the midst of what the Jews and Samaritans called a Sabbatical Year. Such a year was one in which no sowing or reaping were permitted, from the New Year of one Autumn to the New Year of the next. When this is realized and understood, all chronological difficulties associated with John 4:35 (though they appear to be outright contradictions on the surface) thoroughly disappear.

Notice how plain the whole matter can become. Jesus gave his teaching near the end of the second Hebrew month or the start of the third (late May or early June). When a person counts forward four more months, the month of Tishri is reached. This is the month in which all Sabbatical Years ended and people could legally begin to harvest once again. Jesus was saying what the apostles and the general population were aware of. Since that year was a Sabbatical Year, no one could commence any harvesting (even though one were in the midst of the harvest season for grain) until the Sabbatical Year was over. This is the reason Jesus said it was still “four months” to the period of harvest.

There is more evidence to support this interpretation. Jesus elaborated on his teaching about the harvest by saying:

“And herein is this saying true, ‘One soweth and another reapeth.’
I send you to reap that which ye bestowed no labor” (verses 37,38).

Even Jesus adopted the theme of a Sabbatical Year by telling his disciples that the harvest he asked them to engage in was one in which they **HAD DONE NO LABOR**. How true this illustration would have been even for the physical harvest of a Sabbatical Year. During Sabbatical Years no one could labor on the land. No sowing, plowing, pruning or harvesting were permitted. So even Jesus’ statement that the disciples had bestowed no labor on the harvest that he was talking about, is indicative of the fact that that year was

sabbatical. Jesus used terms applicable to Sabbatical Years.

Another point needs to be made. Since Jesus gave his illustrations in John 4:35-38 at the time the fields were already white for harvest, he strongly implies that no one was in the fields doing any reaping. If all the fields were then ripe for harvest (and that is what Jesus said), this is a powerful suggestion that none of the fields (no matter how many there were) was then being harvested by the people. And, of course, this would have been the case in a Sabbatical Year.

In case some might doubt that fields in Sabbatical Years would produce much grain, since they had not been sowed in the previous Autumn and Winter, all one has to do is to recall that Leviticus 25:5 indicates there would always be a crop during the fallow Sabbatical Year from the grains that fell on the ground in the sixth year of harvest.

The Day of Pentecost?

There is yet another probable proof that the event which occurred at Jacob's Well happened in a Sabbatical Year. This is Luke's parallel account of what transpired in Galilee soon after Jesus had returned to his hometown of Nazareth from the Passover at Jerusalem. Luke tells us that on "The Day of the Sabbaths" (or, "The Day of the Weeks" is another possible way of saying Pentecost to agree with the terminology of Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10; II Chronicles 8:13), Jesus was handed the scroll of Isaiah and he read chapter 61, verses 1 and 2. Luke recorded the occasion. [I am translating directly from the Greek.]

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Day of the Sabbaths [or, The Day of the Weeks] and stood up to read. And he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the scroll, and found the place where it was written: 'The Lord's Spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and sight to

the blind, to set free the bruised, to proclaim the Lord's acceptable year.' And he rolled up the scroll, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. And he began to say unto them, 'Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears'" (Luke 4:17-21).

It should be noted that the synagogue attendant handed Jesus the scroll of Isaiah. This hints that the synagogue liturgy required Isaiah to be read that day. If so, this could indicate that Jesus read the regular triennial cycle selection from the prophets that accompanied the sequential readings from the five books of Moses. It is interesting that the section that Jesus quoted was that which paralleled the readings from the Law of Moses for Pentecost on the second year of the triennial cycle. (See the chart accompanying the article on the Triennial Cycle in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Funk and Wagnalls, 1906.) This may well be another indication that this event in the synagogue in Nazareth occurred on Pentecost.

Though I am in no way insisting that the phrase "The Day of the Weeks" on which Jesus read Isaiah 61:1,2 was Pentecost (yet it may have been), it is still clear that the event happened in the late Springtime just after Jesus had returned from Jerusalem from John's first Passover. It was certainly the same year that Jesus said his teaching about the Sabbatical Year in John 4:35. With this in mind, we may have a further reference that that year was sabbatical. Note that Jesus called that year "the acceptable year of the Lord." This is a phrase indicating the time of release.

These terms Jesus was using in his discourse at the synagogue at Nazareth were those associated with Sabbatical Years (and with the Jubilee which was a type of Sabbatical Year). [Jubilee Years were not being celebrated by the Jews in the first century, yet the ordinary seven year sabbatical cycle was very much in evidence among the Jews and Samaritans.]

Look at the factors within Jesus' quote from Isaiah which suggest this. He said that he was anointed (1) to preach good tidings to

the poor. This is a reflection on the sabbatical regulations that the poor and the stranger could eat from the fields without hinder. (2) He was to proclaim a release and to free the bruised. This recalls the sabbatical release regulations and being free of debt as mentioned in Deuteronomy 15:1-6. And (3), Jesus was ordained to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. This is a reference to a sabbatical period (which years officially commenced on the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 25:9 and Isaiah 58:1-14). Such years are always associated with “unloosing the bands of wickedness, undoing heavy burdens, letting the oppressed go free, and the breaking of every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6). This is the type of “acceptable year” that Jesus was proclaiming at the synagogue in Nazareth, and the theme smacks of a Sabbatical Year.

If it can thus be shown that the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry and that of Jesus' started in a Sabbatical Year, then it makes excellent sense why so many people were able to follow both of them during the times of their preaching. Many of the people would have been off from their farm labor and able to travel at leisure over the land of Palestine.

The Sequence of Sabbatical Years

Though over the past few centuries historians studying the records about Sabbatical Years have been able to arrive at their sequence within a year or two, only within the last 50 years (and especially the last 30), has it become possible, through archaeological discoveries, etc., to determine with an almost certainty what the exact Sabbatical Years' sequence was and is. This can be known from 163 B.C. to the present. Two brilliant historical studies by Prof. Wacholder of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, have solved the riddle of when the Sabbatical Years occurred in ancient times, and when they ought to be observed today. His first study is in the Hebrew Union College Annual, 1973, titled “The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period” (pp.183-196), and the same Annual for 1975 has

his “The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles” (pp. 201-218). In this paper I will summarize the results of Prof. Wacholder’s excellent studies. I also will give some research material of my own from three further references in Josephus which substantiates the conclusions of Wacholder. It will demonstrate the number of precise years over the centuries as sabbaticals, and how we can know the exact sequence of the seventh years for the period we are discussing.

- 1) We are told by I Maccabees 6:49 that Judas Maccabee’s defeat at Beth-Zur was on a Sabbatical Year. And this can be dated to the Sabbatical Year from the Autumn of 163 to Autumn 162 B.C.
- 2) Josephus, the Jewish historian, shows the murder of Simon the Hasmonean as happening in the Sabbatical Year of Autumn 135 to Autumn 134 B.C.
- 3) Josephus shows Herod’s conquest of Jerusalem as occurring in the Sabbatical Year of 37 to 36 B.C.
- 4) King Agrippa the First recited the section of Deuteronomy which a king was required to do as associated with the Sabbatical Year (Deuteronomy 31:10-13). He performed it at a time which historically shows that Agrippa’s Sabbatical Year was A.D.41 to 42.
- 5) A papyrus document written in Aramaic has recently been found in Palestine which is dated to the second year of Nero, and it says that that year was a Sabbatical Year. Thus, A.D.55 to 56 was sabbatical.
- 6) A reference in the second century Jewish work called the *Seder Olam* can be interpreted as showing the Temple at Jerusalem being destroyed in a Sabbatical

Year. That would have been A.D.69 to 70.

- 7) Dated documents have been found concerning the Bar Kokhba revolt of the Jews against the Romans which show that the year A.D.132 to 133 was also a Sabbatical Year.
- 8) The ruins of an ancient synagogue have recently been uncovered which have a date, in a mosaic, for the Jewish year 4000, and that it was the second year of a sabbatical cycle. This answers to A.D.237 to 238.
- 9) There is a reference in the Jewish Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 97b) that the Messiah will release the world from its bondage of corruption in the year after 4291 of the Jewish calendar. Since it was believed this would occur in a Sabbatical Year, this reference becomes important (though the prophecy did not occur) because the year after 4291 was A.D.531 to 532, and it was sabbatical.

The interesting thing about these Sabbatical Years is the fact that they are all in proper sequence. This gives the historian a great deal of confidence that they are correct. This would mean that all the Sabbatical Years in between can be known. (Schurer, following Zuckermann, felt that the Sabbatical Years' cycle was a year earlier than the one presented here, but Wacholder has shown this to be untenable. For example, in Schurer's sequence, the year A.D.40 to 41 was sabbatical, but Josephus says that crops were able to be harvested that year *War* II.200; *Antiquities* XVIII.271-284 and even Schurer admits to the difficulty (*JPJC*, I,I,pp.42,43). Indeed, to use Zuckermann's and Schurer's cycle of years, A.D. 61 to 62 would have been sabbatical, but Josephus makes it clear that in the Spring of A.D.62 people were working at the threshing floors (*Antiquities*, XX.206). But, in the very next year (A.D.62 to 63), Agrippa II started to rebuild Caesarea Philippi which is what would ordinarily

have happened when many farmers were seeking work in the building trade during a Sabbatical Year (*ibid.*, 211-214). Prof. Wacholder has given us the proper sequence of Sabbatical Years, and my references to Josephus just given above corroborate his findings. (See also *The Interpreter's Dict. of the Bible*, Suppl. Vol., pp.762,763.)

Historical Events in Judaea Can Now Make Better Sense

Once the proper annual occurrences of sabbaticals are understood, all other intervening years in sequence can be tallied. We then discover how important events occurred on them. Those years were times when the majority of the population (being mostly in agriculture) were off from their ordinary jobs, and something had to be done in order to keep them busy at earning a proper living. There was a simple answer to this that many people have not thought of. During the six years of farm labor the government took some grain and foodstuffs (like Joseph did in Egypt) and when the Sabbatical Year came around, they paid the people this produce to work at construction or other types of work. Since there was a vast reservoir of workers then available, new buildings, cities, walls, roads, irrigation projects were undertaken. And for the most part the people did the work willingly because they believed God to be behind their efforts of keeping the Sabbatical Years. Note examples of this.

Herod commenced his work on the outer parts of the great Temple of God on the Sabbatical Year of 23/22 B.C. (*cf. War* I.101 and *Loeb*, vol.VIII,p.184 note c). This was also the exact year he commenced work on building the new city of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast (*cf. Antiquities* XV.341 and *Loeb* note d). And later, Herod's son Philip started to build Caesarea Philippi (*cf. Schurer*, rev. II.169-171) in the Sabbatical Year 2/1 B.C. The city of Tiberias probably had its founding in A.D.20, which was also the beginning of a Sabbatical Year (*cf. Schurer, ibid.*, p.179). Also the expansive third wall around the northern parts of Jerusalem (which, if finished, Josephus said would have made Jerusalem impreg-

nable) was no doubt started by King Agrippa the First in the Sabbatical Year of A.D. 41/42 (*cf. War II.218*). And, as I stated earlier, his son Agrippa II also began huge construction projects in similar circumstances in the Sabbatical Year of A D 62/63. Josephus said that “King Agrippa enlarged Caesarea Philippi and renamed it in honor of Nero. He furthermore built at great expense a theatre for the people of Beirut and presented them with animal spectacles, spending many tens of thousands of drachmas upon this project” (*Antiquities XX.211*).

It is because so many Jews had to take different types of jobs in Sabbatical Years that it was common for most of them in the first century to have two trades. Recall that the apostle Paul was a trained tentmaker (Acts 18:3). Most learned these secondary trades during the Sabbatical Years when so many new construction projects were then underway. This is one of the main reasons that the Jewish people put up with many of the building endeavors of Herod during Sabbatical Years.

The Sabbatical Year of Jesus' Ministry

The sequence of Sabbatical Years is now established with almost certainty by Professor Wacholder. His information, with the new interpretation of John 4:35 that I am giving in this book, provide a logical chronology for the years of Jesus' ministry. We can now know that Jesus gave his information about the “four months to harvest” in a Sabbatical Year and that year has to be the one from the Autumn of A.D.27 to the Autumn of A.D.28.

There is another chronological indication in Luke's Gospel that helps substantiate this. Luke said that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1). Scholars have recognized several ways of reckoning this fifteenth year, but with our new information identifying Jesus' first year of teaching as the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28, we are now helped in understanding the regnal years of Tiberius as reckoned by

Luke. (For a full discussion on the various ways that Tiberius' fifteenth year have been reckoned, see the works of Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, pp.259-273, and Prof. Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, pp.29-37.) We can now consider two of the explanations which blend in perfectly well with this new chronological information.

If one acknowledges the fifteenth year of Tiberius as being in conformity with the non-accession method based on the official Roman Year (called the Julian), that fifteenth year would be from January 1, A.D.28 to December 31, A.D.28. This would dovetail nicely with our new proposal, yet it would mean that John the Baptist began baptizing in January A.D.28 in the Jordan Valley. This would be acceptable since it was not excessively cold in the Jordan depression even during mid-winter. However, it does press events between January and the next Passover (which occurred in late March or early April) into a "hurry up" situation. (Recall that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness after his baptism.) Though this reckoning for the fifteenth year is not improbable, it is not to be preferred over the following determination which fits in much better with all factors. Let's notice it.

Since Luke was a Gentile and writing to a nobleman named Theophilus (traditionally both were from Antioch, Syria), it is possible that Luke was using the non-accession method of reckoning regnal years in Syria from the time of Augustus to Nerva. The fifteenth year of Tiberius was then from Tishri 1, A.D.27 to Tishri 1, A.D.28. This would mean that Luke was calculating the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry (and consequently that of Jesus') according to the calendar with which he and Theophilus would have been familiar (Hoehner, pp.34,35). It also has the advantage of paralleling the Jewish Year which also commenced with Tishri 1 (near our September). And more than that, this reckoning would also correspond precisely with the Sabbatical Year' from the Autumn of A.D.27 to the Autumn of A.D.28.

What a significant symbolic time for John and Jesus to start their ministries. The Jewish people were keenly aware of the prophetic significance of Sabbatical Years as they related to prominent people of the Old Testament periods, and also to the advent of the Messiah into the world. In literature written not long before Jesus began to preach, we have these symbolic features about sabbatical years emphasized. The Book of Enoch presents an apocalyptic account based on the seven sabbatical ages, and in 91:12-17 it adds three more, a total of ten sabbatical periods. The Book of Jubilees records that at the creation God partitioned off time periods into sabbatical and jubilee cycles (Jubilees 1:27-29). The births of significant people such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, and other patriarchs were timed to dovetail precisely with sabbatical eras (4Q181, fragments 1-2). The Dead Sea sectarians recognized future reigns of the Kings of Wickedness and Righteousness relative to a sabbatical calendar, and believing that the last year of the cycle would be the start of the Messianic age (1 *QMelch*.3:2).

These early opinions on the symbolic teaching concerning Sabbatical Years were no doubt prompted by the sabbatical periods recorded by the Prophet Daniel. His Seventy Weeks' prophecy was an extension of a Sabbatical Years' theme, and this prophecy was the prime reference point for the advent of the Messianic age that the Jews were expecting in the first century. "Passover of the Sabbatical Year became the period when the redeemer's coming was expected most" (Wacholder, *Int.Dict One Vol.* supplement, p.763).

It is thus no surprise that vast crowds of people came out in the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28 to be baptized of John the Baptist and Jesus. This was not only a time when a great percentage of the people would have been free of agricultural duties and able to travel at leisure following the great teachers around Palestine, but it was also the Sabbatical Year when many of them were expecting Messianic signs to occur.

It makes perfectly good sense that John the Baptist would have started his ministry in the Autumn, at the beginning of the Sabbatical Year, and that Jesus would have commenced his own teaching a little later.

This would indicate that John the Baptist inaugurated his teaching ministry at the beginning of a Sabbatical Year. Soon after that, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days and then returned to Galilee. It appears that he was waiting for Passover in A.D.28 to begin officially his ministry. As Prof. Wacholder states, "Passover of the Sabbatical Year became the period when the redeemer's coming was expected most."

It was also in the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28 that Jesus was 30 years of age. (The historical and astronomical proof that Jesus was born in 3 B.C. is given in my book "The Star that Astonished the World.") At the Passover of A.D.28, when he officially began his ministry, he was within his year 30. There was rather a strange way to us westerners of reckoning the years of a person's life. During the whole of a person's 30th year the word meaning "about" or "as if" was used to denote the year. Luke records: "Jesus began [his ministry] *about* thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). Irenaeus, however, shows what Luke meant. "For when he [Jesus] was baptized, *he had not yet completed his thirtieth year* [he was indeed 30 already, but he had not completed year 30], but was *beginning to be about* thirty years of age" (*Against Heresies*, II, xxii, 5). Irenaeus had just said he was already 30 in paragraph 4. So, "beginning to be about 30" was used of a person all the way from the beginning to the ending of a person's year 30. During the whole of a person's year 30, the word meaning "about" or "as if" was applied. When his year 30 ended, he had then concluded his year 30. This means that Jesus was 30 when he began his ministry, but he had not yet completed his 30th year.

The Chronological Indications of John

Since it looks evident that John the Baptist and Jesus began to teach in the Sabbatical Year from Tishri 1, A.D.27 to Tishri 1, A.D.28, it is a simple procedure to follow the apostle John through his other chronological references to the year of the crucifixion. The first Passover mentioned by John can now be reckoned to A.D.28. At the following Pentecost season he was in Galilee, probably at Nazareth. The next festival of John was his “unknown” feast (5:1). This “unknown” festival occurred some time before John’s next Passover mentioned in 6:4.

What was this “unknown” feast? Westcott makes an excellent case for the Day of Trumpets which was the beginning of the Jewish New Year (*The Gospel According to John*, pp.92-94). This suggestion is an attractive one. The theme of Jesus’ teaching at that feast was on the judgment and the resurrection (John 5:25-31), the exact symbolic teaching associated with the Day of Trumpets.

Both Professors Finegan and Hoehner accept the “unknown” feast as Tabernacles. This may be true, but for our present chronological purposes, Trumpets and Tabernacles are only separated from one another by 15 days, and this short interval presents no difficulty. (It is only fair, however, to mention that both Finegan and Hoehner place this “unknown” feast not in the first year of Jesus’ ministry, as I do in this book, but in the second. To do this, an “unknown” (and unmentioned) Passover is usually inserted between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4. My new proposal, however, shows no need to create another unmentioned Passover.

Whatever the case, the “unknown” feast of John 5:1 was probably New Year’s Day (Trumpets) or Tabernacles in A.D.28. This would mean that the following Passover (6:4) was in A.D.29 when Jesus fed the 5000 in Galilee. The next feast in John was that of Tabernacles in A.D.29 (7:2), and then the Dedication (10:22), which was in the winter of A.D.29/30. The next Passover mentioned by John was that at which Jesus was crucified. This would

have been in the year A.D.30. The year A.D.30 is the most reasonable date that can be given for the crucifixion of Jesus, and this is the year that most scholars have come to believe is the proper one. And when all the historical evidence is surveyed, along with the Jewish records that I have given in this book, the year A.D.30 has the best credentials.

The Crucifixion on Friday?

The year A.D.30 for the crucifixion is also attested by the fact that only in that year (or in A.D.33) could Jesus' death have occurred on a Friday (and for A.D.30, it is astronomically possible for it to be on a Thursday). Friday is the most likely day if the third day (mentioned by the disciples on the road to Emmaus) was reckoned inclusively or a Thursday if it were figured exclusively (Luke 24:13-31). The supposition that Jesus died on a Wednesday, however, as some few have suggested, is not possible in the light of New Testament historical and astronomical indications. This is easily demonstrated. In no way can a late Sunday afternoon when Jesus met the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:29) be reckoned a third day from a Wednesday. Only a Friday (inclusively) or a Thursday (exclusively) will work. A Thursday is attractive for one other reason. The reference to three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40) would be literal if Jesus were crucified on a Thursday, and it is astronomically possible for the crucifixion to have happened on a Thursday in A.D.30, but not in A.D.33. (Those in favor of a Thursday crucifixion are Westcott, Aldrich and recently Rusk. See Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, p.68.)

Let us, however, notice the biblical events if the day were a Friday. We find Jesus being crucified on the day of the preparation of the sabbath (Matthew 27:62) and put in the tomb before sunset. The next day (a sabbath) the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and asked for a guard and a sealing of the stone at the entrance to the tomb (v.64) because they remembered Jesus saying he would rise from the dead after three days (v.63). This might give

a person the decided impression that a full 72 hours (a full three days and three nights) were needed to set a guard at the entrance and for the stone to be sealed. But this was not the case. They followed their “after three days” remark by asking for a watch until the third day (v.64). They were aware that one night had passed already. They were asking that a guard be placed at the tomb until the next night was over (v.64) only until the third day. So, Pilate gave them permission to set a guard and to seal the stone. When the sabbath was over, the priests and Pharisees carried out the orders of Pilate. In no way would they have worked at sealing the stone while the sabbath day was still in evidence. They waited until it was over. And this is exactly what Matthew said. Note the wording: “So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch, in the end of the sabbaths [sabbaths, plural]” (Matthew 27:66 with 28:1a). In fact, the phrase “end of the sabbaths” should be attached to the end of chapter 27, not at the beginning of chapter 28. The original Greek text had no chapter breaks, but modern editors have divided the text to where “the end of the sabbaths” becomes the “dawn” of the next day. Actually, the first part of Matthew 28:1 belongs to “sealing the stone,” and the second part to Jesus’ resurrection at dawn on Sunday morning.

The chronological account in the Gospels concerning the crucifixion is really quite simple. Jesus died about three o’clock in the afternoon of Friday. He was placed in the tomb before the weekly sabbath (that day was also the First Day of Unleavened Bread, so that one sabbath became “two sabbaths” in tandem if the day were a Thursday, or superimposed if on a Friday (John 19:31). Then the Pharisees went to Pilate asking him to secure the tomb and to have it sealed for another night. And at the “end of the sabbaths,” (that is, after sundown) they set the guard and labored at sealing the stone. But the next morning, about dawn, the resurrection of Jesus took place. This would have been “the third day” from his crucifixion reckoning in the normal inclusive manner.

One may wonder why we are belaboring the matter of showing a Friday (or, perhaps, a Thursday) crucifixion. The reason is important. A Wednesday crucifixion could only have occurred in A.D.31, while a Friday crucifixion was possible only in A.D.30 or 33 (Finegan, *ibid.*, p.298). Our new information shows that Jesus' ministry began in a Sabbatical Year, and that year was A.D.27 to A.D.28. Then the year of the crucifixion (by following the apostle John precisely and without inventing some unmentioned or "unknown" Passover) comes out to A.D.30. This also fits in well with the Jewish historical records as shown in the body of this book that the period of 40 years (from A.D.30 to 70) were all linked together to give some outstanding miraculous events associated with the priesthood and the Temple at Jerusalem. Only A.D.30 for the crucifixion of Jesus make these Jewish historical records relevant.

A Ministry of Two Years Plus

In short, A.D.30 was the year of the crucifixion. By following John's Gospel, the time from Jesus' baptism to his crucifixion was about two years and three or four months. This length of time was maintained by Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea in Syria (c.310-390) and Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus (c.315-403). Among modern scholars who hold this view are Sutcliffe, Blinzler, Caird, Ruckstuhl, Schnackenburg, F.F.Bruce, and Duncan. See Hoehner for references, pp.48,49. Why Professor Hoehner says it is necessary to transpose chapters 5 and 6 of John to sustain a two years' ministry for Jesus (plus a few months) is a mystery. With our new information, there is really no need to make such a shift in chapters 5 and 6, and likewise, it is not necessary to invent another Passover which John does not mention between 2:13 and 6:4.

More Evidence

There is even further proof for an A.D.30 date for the passion of Jesus. This concerns the time the Book of Galatians was written.

This book was certainly composed by the apostle Paul before the Jerusalem Council held in A.D.49. This has to be the case because it is inconceivable that six full chapters had to be written about the non-need for Gentiles to observe circumcision and the Mosaic law if Paul could simply have referred the Galatians to the official decrees concerning the matter which were ordained by the apostles, and all others, at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

Note this. Paul mentioned in Galatians that he went to Jerusalem two times to discuss doctrinal issues with the “pillar” apostles. One was three years after his conversion and then fourteen years after that (Galatians 1:18; 2:1). It is not to be imagined that Paul meant he only went to Jerusalem twice in that seventeen year period. Not at all. Paul may have visited the capital several times during the interval, and one such time is mentioned in Acts 11:30. In the Book of Galatians, Paul meant that he had gone to Jerusalem twice to discuss doctrine and the relevance of his special commission. In Paul’s other visits over that period of seventeen years (and there must have been several) the issue of doctrine and Paul’s special commission must not have come up because there is nothing about it in his writings. That’s why he never mentioned his other journeys to Jerusalem in the Book of Galatians.

Since Paul wrote Galatians not long before the Jerusalem Council (and the controversy in Galatia may well have provoked the need for the Council in the first place), he said that he, Barnabas and Titus had gone by revelation to the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss their special commissions of preaching to the Gentiles. This visit probably occurred in the previous year to the Council. If this is so, it would have been in A.D.48 (or perhaps very early in A.D.49). This is an excellent chronological clue. Seventeen years before that pre-Council meeting, Paul saw the great vision on the road to Damascus. This leads us back, obviously, to A.D.31 for the conversion of Paul. And since there must have been at least one year’s active persecution by Saul (before he became Paul) against

believers in Jesus throughout Judaea, these historical references focus squarely on Jesus' crucifixion as happening in A.D.30.

There is even further proof that the seventeen years mentioned by Paul in Galatians lead back to A.D.31. He stated that the Galatians were suddenly going over to keeping the Mosaic law because people from Jerusalem taught them the need to do so. Indeed, the Galatians were "observing days, months, times, and *years*" (Galatians 4: 10). Note the italicized word "*years*." Within the context of Paul's rebuke to the Galatian Gentiles, this can only refer to their observing (the verb is in the present tense) the Sabbatical Years of the Mosaic law. This, again, is an important chronological clue. The sequence of Sabbatical Years in the period when the Book of Galatians could have been written was A.D.41/42, A.D.48/49; and A.D.55/56. Since A.D.55/56 is well after the Jerusalem Council of A.D.49, this could not be the Sabbatical Year the Galatians were observing. It is manifestly too early for A.D.41/42 to be considered. The only possibility is the Sabbatical Year of A.D.48/49.

If this were the Sabbatical Year they were actively observing (and note that Paul used the present tense "observing"), one can understand the apostle Paul's urgent concern for their behavior. The truth is, it was not even necessary for Jews to observe Sabbatical Years outside the designated lands associated with Palestine, but here were the Galatians (and Gentiles at that) now observing the official Sabbatical Year of A.D.48/49 in Asia Minor. And only that year fits.

Important New Testament Deductions

Once the proper sequence of Sabbatical Years is understood, we can now appraise some significant New Testament historical statements in a much better way. For one, we now know that the Autumn of A.D.48 to Autumn A.D.49 was a Sabbatical Year. This is a time when all agricultural activity in Palestine would have

ceased. Such ritualistic requirements were often very traumatic for the Jewish people who lived in the Holyland and this was especially true in the six months' period that succeeded any Sabbatical Year. The fact is, they had effectively been cut off from earning any money from land products during the sabbatical period. This point is a major one in interpreting several statements in various sections of the New Testament.

Since Palestinian Jews were usually in dire economic straits during Sabbatical Years, and the six months that followed, it was customary for Jews in the Diaspora (those living outside Palestine) to send money and foodstuffs to their brethren in the Holyland. However, when Palestine was not undergoing drought or keeping Sabbatical Years, there is ample evidence to show that the region was very productive in which to live. Even Titus, the later Roman emperor, said that Judaea was proportionately more prosperous than Rome itself (*War* III.516-521; VI.317, 333-336; *Antiquities* V.76-79). But when the Jews ceased agricultural pursuits in Sabbatical Years, many of them became poor as the Scriptures attest.

It may seem like a moot point, but when Paul and Barnabas were given the right hand of fellowship that they should go to the Gentiles and the "pillar" apostles were assigned to the circumcision, the only extra requirement imposed on Paul was that he "remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10). The poor in question, as the context certainly shows, were the poor among the Jews in Palestine because Paul and Barnabas would surely have considered it incumbent on them to show benevolence upon the Gentiles to whom they were commissioned to preach. But why were the Jews poor? The answer should be evident once the sequence of Sabbatical Years is recognized. The truth is, A.D.48 to A.D.49 was a Sabbatical Year, and the apostle Paul had the conference with the "pillar" apostles sometime in A.D.48 right at the start of a Sabbatical Year. There would have indeed been many poor in Palestine during the next

year or so. It was always the year after a Sabbatical that was most severe in food shortages.

Yet there is more. The apostle Paul went to Corinth while on his second journey, arriving there near the Autumn of A.D.50 or early A.D.51. He spent 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:11). There is archaeological information which shows that Gallio, the Roman proconsul, was in office between January 25, A.D.52 and before August 1, A.D.52 (Finegan, *ibid.*, pp.316-318). Paul went before Gallio at that time (Acts 18:12-17). Afterward, in the middle part of A.D.52, Paul went to Jerusalem, and finally back to his homebase in Antioch of Syria (Acts 18:21,22). Then in the Spring of A.D.53, Paul started out on his third journey (Acts 18:23), reaching Ephesus in late Spring of A.D.53. He stayed there for two years (Acts 19:10) and near that end of that period, and just before the Passover season in A.D.55, he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 16). He ordered them, as he had those in Galatia, to save up money and goods to give to the poor saints at Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:15). Afterwards, he went to Macedonia (from whence he wrote II Corinthians in late A.D.55). He again wrote the Corinthians (two long chapters) about the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, praising them that even "from before" the Sabbatical Year began with Tishri in A.D.55, the Corinthians had started to save their money and produce (II Corinthians 8:10; 9:2). Then, in late A.D.55, Paul went on to Corinth, where he wintered with them for three months (Acts 20:3). This is when he wrote his epistle to the Romans, telling them he was soon journeying to Jerusalem to deliver the collections he had secured from Galatia, Macedonia, and Greece (Romans 15:25-33). The Book of Romans was written in the early Spring of A.D.56. He then left Corinth and went to Ephesus, now telling them it had been three years since he started preaching to them (Acts 20:31). He got to Jerusalem about Pentecost in A.D.56 (Acts 20:16) approaching the end of the Sabbatical Year.

Why are these chronological data important to know? Because they show that Paul was taking produce and money to Jerusalem to help them through the Sabbatical Year from Autumn A.D.55 to Autumn A.D.56. Not only does this information help us date the times when the epistles I and II Corinthians (as well as Romans) were written, but the evidence helps to confirm the sequence of Sabbatical Years which Professor Wacholder has provided.

When the complete ramifications of this chronological subject are recognized, it will be seen how important the proper interpretation of John 4:35-38 really is. Jesus is in that verse talking about a Sabbatical Year. That indication represents a powerful chronological benchmark which can help us identify the years when the festivals took place that John mentioned in his Gospel. When it is realized that the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28 is the first year of Jesus' ministry, most of the other chronological indications in the Gospels and epistles can make much better sense. And more importantly, it gives us, with an almost certainty, the true year of the crucifixion as being in A.D.30. What is important in this matter is the fact that this year (and only this year) dovetails remarkably with the Jewish historical records that beginning in the year A.D.30 (and lasting for 40 years until the destruction of the Temple), some marvelous events took place regarding the priesthood and Temple that were a wonderful witness to the Jewish people that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.