

Establishing The Time Of The Crucifixion

by Maurice Barnett

Establishing the early dates for important events is necessary to placing later events in their proper places. When did Jesus begin and end his work? Was Jesus crucified in A.D. 30 or 33? Establishing that will give us the exact time of the beginning of the New Testament order. I believe the facts establish the beginning of the



work of Jesus sometime in 26 A.D., well after the arrival of Pilate that year and some months after the beginning of the work of John the Baptist. The traditional view has been that Jesus began his work in the year 30, and was crucified in 33. Let's see how that works out.

Jesus was 30 when he began his 3 1/2 year ministry (Luke 3:23), making him 33 when he died. In the sixth century A.D., Dionysius Exiguus, a scholarly monk, introduced what is called the Dionysian Period. It formulated a starting point for modern chronology: the birth of Jesus in the year 1. Granting his figures, that would make Jesus 30 years old in the year 30, and crucified in 33. However, by the reckoning of his chronology, he placed the birth of Jesus four years after the death of Herod. That throws all later chronology off by that much time, at least. Dionysius did not take into account the three years between Octavian's victory over Antony and the time that the Senate entitled him with the title of "Augustus." Further, his beginning of a century with the year 1 instead of 0 threw the time off by another year. (Consider that we went from 1999 to 2000, not 2001). That threw the birth of Christ off by at least four years on our calendar. See the facts concerning the temple below.

The work of John the Baptist began in the "fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea," Luke 3:1. If we count that fifteenth year from the time of the death of Augustus, then 28 or 29 would be correct. But, that doesn't connect with other facts. If we count the fifteenth year from the time Tiberius became co-regent with Augustus, effectively taking control of the government from the aging Augustus, we arrive at the year 26. This corresponds with Luke 3:23 that Jesus was 30 years old at the time he began his work.

The first Passover of his ministry (John 2:13) was the occasion for Jesus' statement about his resurrection that brought the response that "Forty and six years was this temple in building. . ." John 2:19-20. Since the temple was begun in 19 B.C., forty six years would bring the time to 27 A.D. Jesus observed three other Passovers after this, John 5:1, 6:4, 12:1. That would bring events to the Passover of the year 30.

For his last Passover, Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover, John. 12:1. The events of the text show that the journey had to occur on Friday — they couldn't have come there on the Sabbath, and the first day of the week would have been too late for the events of the following week. Passover always came on the 14th. of Abib, or Nisan, Exodus 12:6, Lev. 23:5. That date could fall on any day of the week, depending on the year. Six days before that Passover would place it on Thursday. That would make the crucifixion on Friday, and his resurrection the third day afterward, the first day of the week.

The March 29, 1974 issue of Christianity Today, carried a dating table, a computer analysis, for the years 26-36 A.D. In those years, the 14th. of Nisan only came on a Thursday in the year 30, April 6 of our calendar. So, the crucifixion was on Friday April 7 and the resurrection on Sunday April 9, 30 A.D. Pentecost was fifty days later, Sunday May 28, 30 A.D.

To fine tune the time element of capture and crucifixion, note Luke 24. Verse 1 specifies it is the first day of the week. Verse 13 says Jesus met two disciples on the road to Emmaus, "that very day." In the conversation of verses 18-21, they tell Him that the chief priests and rulers "delivered him up to be crucified" and "it is now the third day since these things came to pass." Jesus then says in verse 46 that it was written that He was to "rise from the dead the third day." It establishes that Jesus rose on the third day since his crucifixion, the first day of the week, which meant He had to have been, Biblically, crucified on Friday.