



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Two Questions about Jesus

Two Questions about Jesus, on: 2008/1/11 10:27

I've seen a wide variety of answers to these:

How many years was the ministry of Jesus?

One year, three years or as many as a dozen are possible answers that i have found.

How old was He when He was crucified? 30 years to 46 old are also possible answers i have come across.

Anybody have some insights?

bub

Re: Two Questions about Jesus - posted by ccchhrrriiss (), on: 2008/1/11 10:51

Hi bubbaguy...

Luke 3:23 says that Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his public "ministry." The Scriptures do not specify his age at death, but we can calculate the timeline through the Gospels to have probably approximated less than four years. Thus, you reach the traditional and most accepted age of about 33 years at death.

There is some debate about this issue. Most of it centers around the date of Cyrenius' reign as governor. He is often incorrectly identified as having obtained office in 6 C.E. However, he served TWO terms (one as a replacement, and the other as a legal appointment).

Hope this helps.

:-)

*EDIT:

Bub, I found this from a pastor's Q&A website. It reinforces what I have heard about the "context clues" in regard to the length of Jesus' public ministry.

Quote:

Q: How many years did Jesus teach before his death?

A: It is not completely certain how long Jesus' ministry lasted. However, I understand the Biblical evidence to indicate that Jesus' ministry lasted around 3 1/2 years. His baptism by John the Baptist came several months prior to the first Passover (2:13, 23) of His ministry. In 4:35 the Lord mentions that the harvest was four months away. Therefore, at this time, Christ is coming up to the second Passover. The harvest happened at about the same time as Passover. John 5:1 mentions an unnamed feast, which probably was the Feast of Tabernacles, which would have been after the Passover which came close after 4:35. Somewhere in here was the second Passover. John 6:4 mentions another Passover, the third, followed by Tabernacles and the Dedication. The final, fourth, Passover is mentioned in John 11:55. Using this information, it appears that Jesus' ministry lasted around 3 1/2 years.

Re: Two Questions about Jesus - posted by LoveHim, on: 2008/1/11 10:54

Quote:
-----How many years was the ministry of Jesus?

i understand it to be 3 1/2 years.
Quote:
-----How old was He when He was crucified?

from what i've studied. Jesus began His ministry at the age of 30. so that would make Him 33 1/2 years old. others will probably say around 36 1/2 - 37 years old.

the harder question that you will never have definitely answered is what year was He born and what year did He die? the answers to those questions will be based upon what one believes concerning their end-time view (futurism, preterism, historicism, 70th week of daniel, etc).

anyways, i hope something said may help you.

phil

Re:, on: 2008/1/11 11:16

Here is some interesting info on this question, and how this fits in with future prophecy:

By Got Questions.org

Question: "How long was Jesus' ministry?"

Answer: According to Luke (3:1), John the Baptist began his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius' reign (29 AD). Jesus began His ministry shortly thereafter at the age of thirty (3:23). Incidentally, this indicates that Jesus was probably born around 1 BC (please note: there was no year zero - 1 AD immediately followed 1 BC). This contradicts the popular date of 4 BC for Herod the Great's death since Jesus was born while Herod was still alive. Recent scholarship, however, has discredited the popular view in favor of 1 BC; or more specifically, sometime between the January 9th lunar eclipse of 1 BC and the Feast of Passover a few months later. This tentatively corroborates Luke's account.

Regardless of the questions surrounding the date of Herod's death, the dates of Tiberius' reign have been confidently established. They give us a firm basis upon which we can approximate what year Jesus began His public ministry: around 29 AD. As for the end of His ministry, we know that it culminated with His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

According to the Gospel accounts, Christ was crucified the day before Passover, was "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:38-40), and was resurrected before sunrise on a Sunday. In order for Christ to have been crucified the day before Passover and resurrected on a Sunday three days and three nights later, Passover would have had to fall on a Friday, whereby Christ was crucified on a Thursday.

For example, Passover of 30 AD fell on a Thursday (April 6th). To be crucified the day before Passover (Wednesday) and resurrected on Sunday, Jesus would have been in the grave Wednesday afternoon, Wednesday night, Thursday day, Thursday night, Friday day, Friday night, Saturday day, Saturday night, Sunday morning before sunrise. That is four nights - one too many. So 30 AD doesn't work. Plus, according to John's Gospel, Jesus attended at least three annual Feasts of Passover throughout the course of His ministry: one in John 2:23, another in 6:4 and the Passover of His crucifixion in 11:55-57. So one year (29 to 30 AD) just isn't enough time.

Based on the dates provided by Sir Robert Anderson in his *The Coming Prince* (Kregel: Grand Rapids, p. 104), we used the Rosetta Calendar online calendar conversion service to establish which days of the week Passover fell upon between the years 29 AD (our starting point) and 37 AD. Here are Anderson's dates and their respective days of the week (please

ase note that these are Julian rather than Gregorian dates):

Passover of 29 AD fell on a Sunday (April 17th)
Passover of 30 AD fell on a Thursday (April 6th)
Passover of 31 AD fell on a Tuesday (March 27th)
Passover of 32 AD fell on a Monday (April 14th)
Passover of 33 AD fell on a Friday (April 3rd)
Passover of 34 AD fell on a Tuesday (March 23rd)
Passover of 35 AD fell on a Monday (April 11th)
Passover of 36 AD fell on a Friday (March 30th)
Passover of 37 AD fell on a Thursday (April 18th)

Using this range of dates and assuming that Christ was in the grave for three days and three nights and resurrected on Sunday, we can narrow down the year of Christ's crucifixion to one of two possibilities: 33 or 36 AD. A prophecy from the book of Daniel seems to favor the earlier date of 33 AD.

In Daniel 9, Gabriel tells Daniel that "Seventy sevens have been decreed for your people... From the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary and its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined." (9:24-26)

Seven sevens + 62 sevens = 69 sevens. 69 seven-year periods would pass from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah would be "cut off" and the city and temple would be destroyed again. A 70th seven-year period would follow.

While the prophecy does not specify what the sevens are, the immediate context implies that they are years. Daniel's prayer in verses 3-19 focuses on the fulfillment of a 70 year period – the 70 years of Babylonian captivity as prophesied by Jeremiah (25:11). The 70 sevens prophecy was delivered to him in response to this prayer. 70 years fulfilled; 7 times 70 still to come.

Scholars generally agree that this prophecy is according to the ancient 360-day calendar employed by both the Hebrews and the Babylonians (Daniel being written in Babylon during the Babylonian captivity after the fall and decimation of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar). $69 \times 7 \text{ years} = 483 \text{ years}$. $483 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days} = 173,880 \text{ days}$.

Persian Emperor Artaxerxes Longimanus (who ruled Persia from 464-424 BC) issued the edict to rebuild Jerusalem on the 1st of Nissan in the 20th year of his reign (that is, March 5th, 444 BC; see Nehemiah 2:1-8). 173,880 days from March 5th 444 BC ends at March 30th 33 AD. Here's the math:

March 5th 444 BC to March 5th 33 AD = 476 years (1 B.C. to 1 A.D. is one year, there is no year zero). $476 \times 365.24219 \text{ days}$ (which is the length of one year according to our modern calendar) = 173,855 days. March 5th to March 30th is another 25 days. $173,855 \text{ days} + 25 \text{ days} = 173,880 \text{ days}$.

March 30th, 33 AD was exactly 5 days before Passover on April 3rd, 33 AD. According to John's Gospel, the Triumphant Entry took place 5 days before Passover: "Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. ... Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus. The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel!" (John 12:1, 9-13)

The day after six days before the Passover equals five days before the Passover. March 30th was the Triumphant Entry, the day upon which Christ presented Himself to the nation of Israel as their Messiah, the first time in His entire ministry that He allowed Himself to be publicly proclaimed as the Messiah (Matthew 21:8-16; Luke 19:37-40; cf. Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; 9:9-10; Luke 9:18-21; John 6:14-15). He was crucified four days later, the day before Passover. Within one generation Titus razed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Two Questions about Jesus

Based on these points, we believe that Jesus' ministry lasted about three and a half years, from sometime around 29 AD until the spring of 33 AD.

Re:, on: 2008/1/11 11:35

thanks for your replies. the verse that i think indicates a much longer term of ministry is John 2:19-20

19Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"

Jesus was talking about His body. Doesn't this imply that He was 46 years old at the time?

bub

Re: - posted by MSeaman (), on: 2008/1/11 11:39

In that verse, Jesus was referring to HIS BODY. the Jews were referring to the BUILDING.

Re:, on: 2008/1/11 14:11

Sorry, forgive me, having stupid attack today.

i used the word "imply" because Jesus doesn't respond to and correct their misunderstanding of what He means by "temple." but then they aren't who He is really speaking to.

one reason i asked the question in the first place is that John and the rest of the Gospels seem to differ on the time frame of Jesus' ministry. also it seems like so much happened during this ministry that three years isn't long enough, given that the mode of travel was primarily by foot.

bub

Re: - posted by MSeaman (), on: 2008/1/11 15:00

Quote:

-----Sorry, forgive me, having stupid attack today.

Bub,

I must apologize as my tone didn't come through correctly. I only capitalized those two words because it was faster than trying to bold, italicize or underline as I don't know HTML...

Forgive me, I don't think you are stupid at all.

Re:, on: 2008/1/11 17:31

Interesting question, Bub, and some interesting answers.

You are right not to assume the traditional belief of 3 1/2 years. Sometimes traditional ideas don't fit with what Scripture really says... Such as "three wise men" (the Bible doesn't say how many), and that Israel marched around Jericho 7 times (it was actually 13).

However, the consensus is that it was almost certainly about 3 1/2 years. My personal reason for believing this is that historical facts in the Bible are often symbolic also.

Check out Daniel's use of 3 1/2. Either 3 1/2 years, or "in the midst of the week" in the day-year symbolism, or "time, times and half a time". Of course, 3 1/2 days is exactly half a week.

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Two Questions about Jesus

Even the writing on the wall echoes this. "mene mene tekal upharsin" literally meant either, "number, number, weigh, divide" or "a shekel, a shekel, a minah and a half (= money). In each case its 3 1/2 of whatever. King Belshazzar understood the words but not what God meant by them, until Daniel interpreted.

So 3 1/2 years of Jesus' ministry would make sense as the time during which He tested His earthly people, (weighed in the balances as Daniel says to king Belshazzar).

Sadly most rejected Him. As John 1 says, "He came unto his own and his own received him not".

Blessings

jeannette

Re: PS re Jericho, on: 2008/1/11 17:44

Quote:
-----Sometimes traditional ideas don't fit with what Scripture really says... Such as "three wise men" (the Bible doesn't say how many), and that Israel marched around Jericho 7 times (it was actually 13).

In Revelation the "Jericho symbolism" is taken up. You remember that they marched around once each day for 6 days, but on the seventh day they marched 7 times. So it was **seven within 7** times.

In Revelation there are seven seals - the seventh "contains" seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet "contains" seven vials. So we have **seven within seven within seven**.

Jericho was utterly destroyed in God's judgement. In Revelation it's the whole earth that is being judged.

So is 3 1/2 also symbolic of *partial* judgement??? Will God still have mercy for a season, even though He has to judge man's wickedness? 3 1/2 is by definition incomplete...

In AD70 Israel was exiled for what seemed the final time, seemingly as a result of rejecting her Messiah. Yet He did not make a full end, and they are even back in their land after about 1900 years of wandering...

These are just some thoughts that came when I was typing this....

My thoughts are also incomplete, so don't take me up on them too strictly just yet, anyone. ;-)

Ponder....

Ponder...

Thanks for opening things up like this

In Him

Jeannette