

References

1. The evidential force of miracles. Events such as the resurrection and the fulfillment of the seventy weeks prophecy would not be within the power or intelligence of any normal person to arrange or control. Neither would they be the kind of phenomena that could occur by chance. At least that possibility would be too unlikely for any rational person to take seriously. It is not unlikely that one with greater than normal human power and/or intelligence (hereafter, superhuman power/intelligence) could effect such an event. And because we have no antecedent reason to believe that there could not be such a being, the most reasonable conclusion would be that a superhuman power did effect this event.

To the degree we accept a person's normal claims to be true without full proof of those claims, so we should accept one's exceptional claims without full proof or verification. However, we would need at least a proportionately greater degree of evidence than we have for the normal claim.

If an acquaintance (say someone whose credibility is neither established nor questionable) says he has just seen a friend who was not known to be in the area, and if little depended upon my believing him, we wouldn't find it necessary to check this claim in order to believe him. We do not need full proof. If, however, someone were to make a claim of much greater significance, he or she would need to supply evidence for the claim, though not absolute point to point verification. We shouldn't need full proof of Yeshua's claim to know one powerful enough to create the universe if he demonstrates the superhuman power or knowledge of predicting and fulfilling a resurrection from the dead. (Yeshua's

claim would be vindicated by the One who effected the resurrection.) By a limited demonstration of superhuman power and/or intelligence we thus have evidence of far greater intelligence and power. And because we would then have reason to believe that Yeshua does have knowledge of such a superpowerful/intelligent being, we can accept his word when he tells us other information about this "God." It also follows that we should accept Yeshua's claim to be the promised Messiah, the one sent and specially anointed of God.

For further discussion, see this writer's article: Dennis Jensen, "The Logic of Miracles," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 33 (March 1981): 145–53. This journal is now entitled *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*.

2. Messianic prophecy. If one would look at most of the passages that have been argued as applying to the Messiah and especially to those the rabbis had at one time or another considered Messianic, we would find the following picture.

We would find a Messiah who will

(1) suffer humiliation, rejection, and physical pain, (Isaiah 52:13–15, Zechariah 12:10, Psalms 22:1–18, Isaiah 53) and

(2) die (Daniel 9:26, Zechariah 12:10, 13:7, Isaiah 53:5, 8–10, 12)

(3) and yet live (Psalms 16:10, Isaiah 53:10–12) and

(4) reign in the coming age (Isaiah 9:7, Daniel 7:14).

(5) His death will bear the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:5, 6, 8, 10–12).

(6) A son of David (Jeremiah 23:5, 6)

(7) whom David, the highest of all human kings (Psalms 89:27) considered a higher king than himself (Psalms 110:1, 2).

(8) Born in Bethlehem

(9) yet one whose origin was from antiquity, perhaps even from eternity (Micah 5:2).

(10) One whose suffering closely resembles that of crucifixion (Psalms 22:1–18; Zechariah 12:10).

(11) One who would appear before the destruction of the second Temple (Daniel 9:26, Malachi 3:1, 2).

(12) and before certain basic rights of regnal authority would be taken from Judah (Genesis 49:10) as occurred in the first years of the Common Era (that is, the first years AD). Robert C. Newman, "The Testimony of Messianic Prophecy," in *Evidence for Faith*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Dallas, Tx.: Probe Books, 1991), 208–09. See also Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, Ca.: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1979), 168–70.

(13) One who would be a prophet with the authority of Moses (Deuteronomy. 18:18–19).

(14) One who would save and make followers of people from all nations (Genesis 49:10, Isaiah 42:4, 49:6, 52:15).

(15) One who would come to the earth in the clouds (Daniel 7:13–14),

(16) reign over the entire earth and

(17) bring peace to the earth (Zechariah 9:9–10).

Though one or two of these have yet to be fulfilled, one person and only one person fits the qualifications of fulfilling all the others: a Jewish rabbi named Yeshua.

3. Yeshua saw himself as the sacrificial lamb which would die as a substitute for the people. Isaiah 53 speaks of one who would die as a substitute for the people like a lamb that is led to be sacrificed. Yeshua claimed that the Hebrew scripture indicated that the Messiah must die, clearly referring to Isaiah 53 and similar passages (Luke 24:25–27, 44–46). He earlier said that he would give his life as a substitute or ransom in our place (Matthew 20:28). (Cf. endnote 10.)

4. See Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Zondervan, 1977), 130–31 for further discussion.

5. The prophesied time period began with Artaxerxes' command in Nehemiah 2. Hoehner, *Aspects*, 119–28; especially 119–21.

6. Michael L Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, 5 vols. (Baker Books, 2003), vol. 3, 91.

7. R. T. Beckwith, "The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology" *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1979–81) 167–202. Cited in John E. Goldingay, *Word Biblical Commentary: Daniel*, 61 vols. (Dallas: Word, 1989) vol. 30, xxvii. Goldingay even says, "Partly on the basis of Dan 9 the Essenes were actually expecting the messiah between 3 B.C. and A.D. 2."

8. Was Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin right in condemning Yeshua for blaspheme? There is in fact no law given by Moses which says one cannot claim deity. Only if one cannot prove one's claims (Deuteronomy 18) would one be condemned as a false prophet, and in this case by extension, a blasphemer. God appeared to Abraham as one man among three walking on a road (Genesis 18). Had they walked into the Sanhedrin in the early first century and one claimed to be God, would the court have condemned him of blaspheme? Clearly they did not have the right to condemn Jesus even if he claimed to be God. Nevertheless, it appears that at his trial, Jesus, though he did likely claim to be more than merely a normal human, did not necessarily claim equality with God.

Daniel 7 speaks of the Son of man as possessing almost if not actually divine attributes. So the promised Messiah could be a supernatural being, perhaps someone like an angel, and possibly even a divine being in some unique relationship with God or possibly even God himself. The Judaism of Jesus' time certainly did not accept the latter but the idea is not contradictory to the Hebrew scripture. The Son of man of Daniel 7 could also be a normal human figure, however. He comes on the clouds, approaches God, and is given the kingdom of an age (dispensation?) to come. More than likely, the idea of "coming on the clouds" speaks of one who is more than a normal human. But this is not absolutely certain. Clearly all people will be brought to stand before the throne of God (on the day of judgment), so that alone does not require one to be more than a normal human. But again, to approach God on the clouds does more likely indicate at least a supernatural being, perhaps someone like an angelic being, though possibly greater. At one point in the Gospel of John when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, he pointed out that the title does not require identification or equality with God (10:34–36) as his opponents claimed. Thus, again, at his trial Jesus did not necessarily claim equality with God though he likely claimed to be more than a mere man.

9. Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 20.9.1 18.3.3 . Tacitus *Annals of Imperial Rome* 15:44, 2–5. Suetonius *Lives of Caesars* 5.25.3–5. Robert E. Van Voorst discusses these passages in *Jesus Outside*

the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mi, Eerdmans Pub.: 2000), 29–53, 81–104.

10. See endnote 3. Other sample passages: Luke 9:22, John 18:11, 12:24, Acts 2:23–24, Romans 3:24–25.

11. Brown, *Objections*, vol. 3, 95–98.

12. Brown, *Objections*, vol 3, endnote 211, p. 221.

13. Brown, *Objections*, vol 3, pp. 86–111 (no. 4.18–4.21); Gleason Archer, cited in Brown, endnote 172, p. 217.

14. For arguments for Daniel's authorship see, for example, Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1974), 377–403; *International Standard*

Biblical Encyclopedia, 1979 ed., s.v. "Daniel, Book of" by R. K. Harrison. If a second century date is assumed for this book or merely portions of the book which include chapter 9, this does not mean that the writer was a false prophet, falsely ascribing the writing to Daniel (e.g. Daniel 9:1–2). An unknown second century prophet may have written most of Daniel 9 under divine inspiration whether he or she wrote any other parts of the book. An unknown editor could have found the prophecy and compiled the book ascribing all of it to Daniel.

15. Artaxerxes' twentieth year began with Tishri (Sept/Oct) 444 BCE . Hoehner, *Aspects*, pp. 127–29. R.A. Parker and W.H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 75* (Providence, RI.: Brown University Press, 1956), 32. (A note for the nonspecialist might be helpful for understanding Parker and Dubberstein. Year 20, the 20th year of Artaxerxes I, begins with Nisan in this list because it is the Persian Nisan to Nisan calendar. So the date under Tishri [Tas. on the list for the corresponding Babylonian month of Tashritu] of the 20th year line would be the first day of the first month of the 20th year by the Jewish reckoning. The following Nisan [Nis.] is marked as beginning April 3 [4/3] of 444. Hoehner indicates that this should more likely be the previous month's first day, March 4 [3/4] since Parker and Dubberstein intercalated an extra month one year too soon. Intercalary months had to be added every few years to have the calendar keep up with the solar year.)

For the evidence that Xerxes died in the last half of December of 465 see S. H. Horn and L. H. Wood, "The Fifth-Century Jewish

Calendar at Elephantine," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 13 (Jan 1954): 9.

The month of Tishri following Xerxes' death began Artaxerxes' first year, and his 20th year can be determined from that point as Hoehner demonstrates (previous reference 5).

16. March 5, 444 BCE was the first day of Nisan of Artaxerxes' twentieth year. Mathematical calculations indicate that the true new moon (when the moon would be completely invisible) occurred on 2 March. (See Herman Goldstine, *New and Full Moons, 1001 B.C. to A.D. 1651* [Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973], 4 and month number 6891. Note: year 444 BC or BCE is 443 in astronomical years listed here. Also compare Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 32.) Sighting of the first visible sliver of the new moon determined the beginning of the month. Hoehner comments that "Nisan 1 in 444 B.C. was March 4, or more likely March 5 since the crescent of the new moon would have been first visible so late at night (ca. 10 p.m.) on March 4 and could easily have been missed." *Aspects*, 138.

17. The origin point of the prophesied time period is the first day of Nisan. The Mishna cites the Jewish practice of having the religious new year of 1 Nisan used as, "a new year for the computation of the reign of kings and for festivals." (Mishna: Rosh

ha-Shana 1.1.) This indicates that the prophetic period of the seventy weeks should be computed from 1 Nisan, for surely this is the computation of the reign of a king, indeed, a most important king. We know definitely that the prophecy's origin point was sometime in Nisan and custom indicates that the computation should be dated from the first of that month. We do not know how far back before the Mishnaic period this custom goes. It might be very early. (The above argument is essentially the one given by Sir Robert Anderson in *The Coming Prince* [London: Pickering and Ingles, 1895], 122.)

There is one other line of evidence this writer has not been able to adequately investigate but which might have potential and should be investigated. This is the fact that the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures in the second century BCE) for a particular passage indicates that the first month is intended when the Hebrew text only says the day and year (Ezekiel 32:17). This might indicate a very early tradition that when a time marker (day, month, etc.) is not mentioned, the first day, month, etc. is intended.

Whether these arguments appear convincing or not we should at least recognize that the first of the month would still be the most plausible date. As in the traditions just cited, so common sense would suggest that when a month is the primary designation for an event, the date selected for that month would most appropriately be the first. Whereas the first is the simplest, most fitting date, any other date would appear gratuitous.

18. "Weeks" in Dan 9 indicates units of seven years, not days. A comparative biblical example is the term normally translated as "ten days." In three cases the context necessitates that it be translated "ten strings" (Hoehner, *Aspects*, 117). In Daniel 9, "weeks" does not clearly designate any particular unit of time. However, Daniel would have indicated if weeks of days were intended since he elsewhere adds the words "days" when referring to seven days (10:2–3) even though the context alone indicates that seven days is the meaning.

Notice secondly that the context of Daniel 9 is referring to years and multiples of years (9:1, 2). Because in this context Daniel is specifically considering weeks of years in the past, the seventy weeks of verse 24 would likely be units of years. Daniel had been considering Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10 in the context of Leviticus 26:34–35 (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:21) which indicates that seventy sabbatical years have been violated over 490 years or one each seven years. A sabbatical year was each seventh year in which the land was not to be worked. Thus the captivity would last seventy years in compensation. As seventy weeks of years were being considered for the past, so the seventy weeks spoken of by Gabriel in this prophecy (9:24) seem only appropriately applied to units of years.

Finally, the term for "sevens" is used in the Mishna to indicate units of seven years. (Baba Metzia 9. 10; Sanhedrin 5. 1.) Cf. Hoehner, *Aspects*, 116–19.

19. The years considered were 360 days long. In ancient times it was not uncommon to use 360 day calendars and to regularly make additions to keep up with the solar year. Egypt and Assyria's calendars would be good examples. The obvious advantage is the simplicity of such systems. Months would have a set number of days (usually 30) and years would have a regular number of months.

Since the length of the years in Daniel 9 is not indicated, we should not assume that these must be solar years or that they must be adjusted to fit solar years. *Prima facie*, there is no greater likelihood that one length of year would be used than another as long as it is relatively close to a solar year. Ancient calendars were usually intercalated, having extra days added each year or an extra month added every few years, to fit the solar calendar. The people wanted the months of their calendars not to drift from the seasons for which each month was known. But this is not always the case. The Islamic or Hijra Qamari calendar, for example, is a lunar calendar which is never made to fit the solar year.

The 360 day year was used in Babylon and Persia. This prophecy was ostensibly given in and it began within the context of the dominion and culture of these empires. Daniel would have been well acquainted with such calendars. The prophecy could be assuming such a calendar which, like the Islamic calendar, was never intended to fit a solar cycle.

Another reason this prophecy might have assumed such a calendar is because the most ancient calendar to be found in

scripture had 360 days. This is evident in Noahic times and/or from a subsequent period prior to the time of the Hebrew lunisolar calendar. This can be determined from Genesis 7:11; 8:4; 7:24; and 8:3. We should not consider it unusual that this prophecy should reflect a calendar of such unique credentials and antiquity. The writer or source of the much later New Testament book of Revelation or the Apocalypse definitely held these "sevens" to be units of 360 day years. See Hoehner, *Aspects*, 136.

For more information on the 360 day calendars used in so many ancient cultures see Immanuel Velikouski, *Worlds in Collision* (Garden City , NY.: Doubleday, 1950), 330–40; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed., s.v. "Calendar," by J. L. A. Filiozat, H. Lewy and M. S. Drower; 15th ed., s.v. "Calendar," by J. A. B. van Buitenen, E. J. Bickerman, J. D. Schmidt, W. Helk, and T. Proskouriakoff; 15th ed., s.v. "Chronology," J. E. S. Thompson.

20. Robert Newman demonstrates that using normal solar years (the Hebrew lunisolar years but considered in cycles of seven years as the text indicates) we arrive at a date anywhere between 28 and 35 CE for the appearance of Messiah (in *Evidence for Faith*, 210–12).

If by utilizing the ancient 360 day calendar we arrive at such an exact prophetic fulfillment with Yeshua fulfilling Zechariah 9:9, the triumphal entry, on precisely the day Daniel says Messiah will appear, we must consider that this cannot be coincidental. Thus although a less precise computation will work, the nature of the

data indicates that the computation of this study is correct as well. It is difficult for this writer to see why both computations cannot be correct. Hoehner's objection that Newman's date does not fit the time of Jesus (*Aspects*, 134) is answered by a more precise calculation of the first sabbatical year cycle (*Evidence*, 211).

21. Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (N.Y.: Avon, 1979), 166. Brown, *Objections*, vol 3, 57–62 (4.7–4.8); vol. 2, (Baker, 2000), 220–32 (3.23).

22. For a thorough defense of this and similar claims, see Brown, *Objections*, vol. 2, 69–198 (3.8–3.19.)

23. Matthew 27:62, 28:1, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54, 56, John 19:31,42; Josephus *Antiquities Judaicae* 16.6.2.

24. The evidence for a Friday crucifixion. Hoehner, *Aspects*, 70–72.

25. Sanhedrin 43a.

26. The crucifixion occurred on Passover eve (14 Nisan) not Passover day (15 Nisan) by official calendar reckoning. There is some reason to believe that Yeshua's Last Supper, eaten on the evening before the day of his death, was a Passover meal (Mark 14:12, Matthew 26:17, Luke 22:7–8). Thus Yeshua would have eaten the Passover meal in the evening which began 15 Nisan, Passover day, and he would have died the following afternoon, still 15 Nisan (see fig. 4, TV). On the other hand, John's Gospel seems to indicate that he died on Passover eve (14 Nisan) when the lambs were being slain for the Passover meal that evening (fig. 4, HV A). John's use of the term "Passover" in 18:28 must at least mean the Passover seder of Passover day beginning that coming evening after Yeshua's death. See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Zondervan, 1971), 778–79, F. F. Bruce, gen. ed., *The New International Commentary of the New Testament*.

The most likely explanation would be that he partook of a Passover meal which did not accord with the official Passover date (HV A, B, or C). We know that some did observe Passover a day earlier than allowed by the official calendar. The Qumran community definitely followed a different calendar for festivals. There might be reason to think that the Passover was reckoned differently by the Galileans or the Pharisees than it was under the official system of the Sadducees (see under HV B & C, though these latter two might have been officially recognized as

permissible). The large number of Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem for this feast could very possibly have had much to do with influencing the Sadducees into allowing some of the lambs to be slain a day earlier than on the officially determined Passover eve.

This need not have involved a violation of Mosaic law. The difference may have involved merely a change in the dating of the first day of the month. The law indicates that the lambs must be slain on the 14th of Nisan and that they must be eaten that night (thus beginning the 15th, Passover day). (See Hoehner, *Aspects*, 76.) Billerbeck's view, for example, is that disagreement between the Pharisees and Sadducees (fig. 4, HV C) would have resulted in different determination of the first day of the month and that two dates for the Passover would result for each group respectively (*Aspects*, 83–4). Here HV C allows both systems to be taken together. This would show the dating of the same events as seen by the two groups. Or the new moon might have been observed a day later in Jerusalem because of fog or an overcast sky than in Galilee. Jesus would have followed the system used by the Pharisees (or possibly Galileans) under HV C and the Last Supper is noted there. The official dating determined by the Sadducees in HV C has their Passover meal indicated after the crucifixion.

Again, if there were two systems for reckoning the beginning and end of the day, say sunset to sunset for the Judaeans (under the Sadducees) and sunrise to sunrise for the Galileans (fig. 4, HV B) with Jesus following the Galilean method, this could also allow for two Passover meals and two days for slaying the lambs with no violation of the Mosaic law. Here again, the two views in HV B should be taken together. This would show the dating of the same events as seen by the two groups. There is some but not definite

evidence that these two methods of determining the boundaries of the day were used in the first century (*Aspects*, 85–90). If any of these various dating methods mentioned above were followed, the records—like so many other records of this time—were lost with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

One of the most damaging lines of evidence against a Passover day crucifixion (by official reckoning) is the fact that it is very difficult to conceive that the Jewish officials would publicly advocate a crucifixion on such a high holy day as Passover. This does not mean that this was not Passover day in some minority views. Indeed, the Jewish officials dare not even arrest Jesus on Passover because of public reaction (Matthew 26:5). Neither the Gospels nor any other historical accounts indicate any controversy, discontent, or protest from any religious leaders or the population as we would expect had Yeshua been killed on Passover day.

If Yeshua had been arrested on Passover eve, this would in part explain why the religious leaders appeared to carry out an illegal trial at night. They didn't have the time to wait until day if they were to have Yeshua killed before Passover day. And if they were to wait until after the Passover to have him killed, they would have to wait a whole week, enough time for Yeshua's followers to regroup and appeal to Pilate (or so Yeshua's opponents might have thought). To avoid the accusation of holding an illegal trial at night, they simply unofficially deliberated and questioned the witnesses and Yeshua at night but officially pronounced their decision at dawn (Mark 14:53–65, 15:1, Luke 22:54, 63–71, 23:1, John 18:13–15, 19–24, 28). Luke's account could be taken as suggesting that the trial took place early in the morning. But because Yeshua and other witnesses were questioned, this would

have required too much time and likely occurred at night as the other Gospels indicate.

We do know that some Jews in Jesus' time did definitely observe Passover a day early because the reason for the divergence was forgotten by the 90s and we know that the rabbis debated why this occurred. Passover lambs were sacrificed a day early for some. This is likely the calendar Jesus and other Galileans observed. Tosephta Pesachim 4.8; Mishnah Zebachim 1.3. David Instone-Brewer discusses this in *The Jesus Scandals* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2012), 55 and fn. 1.

See Hoehner, *Aspects*, 85–90 for more detailed arguments and 81–84 for other possible explanations.

27. Josephus *Antiquities* 18.4.2.§89.

28. Matthew 26:3, 57; Josephus *Antiquities* 18.4.3. §90–95; Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipatus* (Cambridge, 1972) Appendix 8, 313–116. See also Hoehner, *Aspects*, 97–99.

29. Moishe Rosen, *Y'shua: The Jewish Way to Say Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982) 40.

30. The years 27, 30, 33 and 34 were the only possible years in which the death of Yeshua could have occurred. Between 26 and 36 CE the most certain dates 14 Nisan fell on a Friday were in 30 and 33. However, there is also a good possibility that 14 Nisan instead fell on Thursday in 30. (See Hoehner, *Aspects*, 100 and cf. footnote 35.) On the possibility that Yeshua died on the 15th (if he followed the officially determined Passover date to eat the Last Supper as a Passover meal) the only year in which the 14th fairly definitely fell on Thursday was 27. The first of Nisan was determined by an official sighting of the first visible sliver of the new moon. Poor atmospheric transparency could thus delay the sighting of the new moon which would delay the first day of Nisan. On this possibility 14 Nisan of 27 could have fallen on a Friday.

Using a lunisolar calendar, the Jewish year had to regularly have a month added to it so it would be adjusted to the solar year and the months would correspond to the proper seasons. We can usually account for such leap months in the astronomical calculations used to determine when such ancient Passover dates occurred. But there is one other possibility which is not so easily accounted for. Sometimes unusually bad weather could delay the time of harvest. Because the first fruits had to be ripe on 16 Nisan and the lambs had to be mature enough for Passover, in such years an intercalary month could be added before Passover to provide the extra needed time. On the possibility that such a leap month was added during one of these years, it can be calculated

that 14 Nisan would have fallen on Friday on none of these years and it would have fallen on Thursday only in 34.

See C. J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, "The Date of the Crucifixion," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* (March 1985) 3, 4 for the evidence of these computations.

31. Joel 2:31

32. Matthew 24:29, Isaiah 13:10, Ezekial 32:7, 8. Revelation 6:12, 13; 8:12.

33. The moon turned to "blood" on the evening of Yeshua's death. Fifty days after Passover of Yeshua's death, on Shavuot or the day of Pentecost, Yeshua's followers were observed to be speaking in languages they presumably did not know (Acts 2:1–14). Peter explained to those watching that this was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God promised by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:14–21; see Joel 2:28–32). One of the signs of this time would be that the sun would be turned to darkness and the moon to blood (Acts 2:20). It is possible that a Khamsin dust storm turned the sun to darkness from noon until at least 3 p.m. on the

day of the crucifixion as the Gospel accounts indicate (Matthew 27:45). (See G. R. Driver, *Journal of Theological Studies* 16 [1965]: 327 and *Sibylline Oracles* 3. 800. in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* [London: Oxford University Press, 1931] for more on this point.) Very possibly Peter is also indicating here that the moon turned to blood on that same day. (See Humphreys and Waddington, "Date" 6–9.)

Supportive evidence of this is found in some early Christian traditions. One New Testament apocryphal fragment, the *Report of Peter*, may reflect an early tradition when it says that the moon "appeared like blood" on the day of the crucifixion. (R. M. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953], 153.) Again, Cyril the Patriarch of Alexandria in 412 CE cites the tradition that the moon "seemed to be turned to blood" at Yeshua's death. (P. E. Pusey. *Cyrilli archiop. Alex. in XII Prophetas*, i, p. 341, in Joel 2:30–31.)

Lunar eclipses were so commonly described in medieval annals as "the moon turned to blood" that the two were virtually synonymous. The refraction and scattering of light through the earth's atmosphere onto the moon sometimes causes it to appear deep blood-red.

We have evidence of only one lunar eclipse occurring on a Passover between 26 and 36 CE. On 3 April 33 at 6:20 in the afternoon, the moon rose partially yellow-orange but mostly deep red. A red "bite" soon appeared in the yellow-orange moon as it became more fully visible. This lasted half an hour. Dust still

suspended in the atmosphere from the recent storm may have darkened the eclipse even more. (Humphries and Waddington [in "Date"; see note 30 above] consider the lunar eclipse evidence in much greater detail.)

34. Humphreys and Waddington, "Date."

35. Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 301–2; Josephus *Antiquities* 18.3.1. 55–59., *Bellum Judaicum* 2.9.2–4. 169–77.; Luke 13:1.

36. John 19

37. The evidence that Yeshua died after Sejanus' execution in 31 CE and the question of responsibility for Yeshua's death.

Sejanus was executed in October of 31 after Tiberius finally saw him for what he was: one who would stop at nothing in his climb to become emperor, even though he had virtually the full power of emperor already. The Jewish leaders could make no complaint to Caesar without Sejanus intercepting it. After Sejanus' death, Tiberius ordered local governors not to mistreat the Jewish people

(Philo *Legatio* 159–61). He saw that Sejanus had made them a scapegoat and had falsely accused them. Pilate did take steps to placate the Jewish nation. He made one mistake, however. He set up inscribed gilded votive shields in the former palace of Herod the Great. The inscription possibly referred to the divinity of Caesar. The shields offended the Jewish people and several Jewish leaders protested to Caesar. Why Pilate set up the shields is not entirely clear. Possibly he underestimated the influence the Jewish leaders now had and/or he thought to use this display to promote emperor worship and thus to ingratiate himself to Caesar. In any case, his old anti-Semitic habits didn't die easily. Tiberius ordered the shields removed and expressed strong disapproval (*Legatio* 229–305). With this incident, Pilate, having finally become fully aware of the power of the Jewish leaders, was all the more cautious not to offend them.

At the time of Yeshua's trial Pilate was threatened with accusations of disloyalty in that he would not be a "friend of Caesar" if he allowed this usurping "king" to live (John 19:12). Such accusations would not have phased Pilate if they occurred before Sejanus' death. A "friend of Caesar," *amici Caesaris*, was a technical term indicating the elite of Roman officials loyal to Caesar. Should Caesar be told how Pilate shows himself to still be a friend of usurping kings other than Caesar? At least the Jewish leaders could claim to "have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). So despite Pilate's desire to release Yeshua (Luke 23:1–25; likely more from his antagonism toward the Jewish leaders than from any positive feelings toward Yeshua) he finally yielded to pressure from the Jewish leaders. (For more extensive discussion of the evidence that Yeshua died after Sejanus' execution see Hoehner, *Aspects*, 105–11.)

Notice that this does not remove Pilate's responsibility. It was ultimately by his choice that Yeshua was killed just as it had been Gentiles who directly took him captive and put him on the cross. Though the mass of Jewish people did not seek his death, the New Testament appears to claim that the Jewish and Gentile leaders, as representative of all Jews and Gentiles by their actions, placed responsibility for his death in the hands of us all (Acts 4:25–27). But even so, the New Testament claims that Yeshua gave his life on his own accord and that no one took it from him without his allowing it (John 10:17–18).

This is not a paradox. The New Testament claims that we (that is, all people) are responsible for his death because of our sin. Only by his substitution, by his dying in our place, could we be reconciled to God (cf. Isaiah 53). It was by Yeshua's free choice that he gave his life. Yet God's love for us was so great that he couldn't leave us in this living death of separation from himself. Because Yeshua's will and desire were ultimately one with that of God his Father, he really had no other choice. Perhaps, then, in some sense Yeshua was not really free in this choice; but he was free in the sense that no one took his life from him without his consent.

38. The votive shields incident occurred after Sejanus' execution and before Yeshua's death. (For a description of the votive shields incident, see reference 35 above.) That this occurred after Sejanus' execution is evidenced by the fact that appeal was made directly to Tiberius and the incident contained reference to Pilate's possible impeachment, both of which would not have been possible before Sejanus' death. That it happened

before Yeshua's death is evidenced by the fact that the enmity between Pilate and Herod Antipatus before Yeshua's death (Luke 23:12) was likely caused by the shields incident and placated when Pilate sent Yeshua to be tried by Herod.

39. Yeshua's ministry was three years long. From the first Passover of Yeshua's ministry we can determine that there occur three more Passovers traversing a three year period. The first occurred in Judaea (John 2:13). The second is indicated as the Passover season in Galilee (Mark 2:23). The third, the feeding of the five thousand in Galilee in Mark 6:39 is the same event found in John 6:9. The fourth Passover was at the time of the crucifixion (Mark 14:1, John 11:25). (See Hoehner, *Aspects*, 55–60 for more extensive evidence for this.) This would put his death in 32 or 33 since the first Passover recorded here occurred in 29 or 30 (see below).

40. The first Passover of Yeshua's ministry was 29 or 30 CE. Luke records (3:1, 2) that John the immerser or the baptizer began his public ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Writing to a Roman official (Hoehner, *Aspects*, 36) he most likely used a Regnal or Julian ascension year calendar. Both were in use in Rome and both were particularly used by Roman historians at this time. Luke's habitual use of precise and specialized terminology—according to the historical events at hand and in order to accurately record those events—makes it likely that he would use the dating system most familiar to his reader(s), most used by his contemporary historians, and/or most universally used. Using

either system, Tiberius' fifteenth year began at the earliest in 19 August 28 CE and ended at the latest on 31 December 29 (*Aspects*, 29–37). Since Yeshua's ministry began not very long after John's (see Luke 3) the first Passover of Yeshua's ministry could not have been before that of 29 and it is very unlikely that it could have occurred after the Passover of 30.

We have another line of evidence supporting this date. There is good reason to believe that John 2:20 should be translated as stating that the Temple edifice had stood 46 years at this the time of the first Passover of Yeshua's ministry. From the time Herod the Great finished this central portion of the Temple in 19/18 BCE until 28/29 CE (that is, sometime between September/October 28 and September/October 29) would be 46 years. Depending on whether this 46th anniversary occurred before or after the Passover (mid-April) of 29, the statement in John 2:20 would have been made during the Passover of 29 or 30 CE (see *Aspects*, 38–43 for further arguments).

41. Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (IVP, 1987), 179–80.

42. Compare Genesis 22:2 and 2 Chronicles 3:1; *New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Moriah," by T. C. Mitchell.