

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PASSOVER

by

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January 2015
(updated 06 Jun 2021)

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4 Jan 2015

(updated 22 Apr 2021)

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The Passover is a festival of redemption. During the time of Moses, the Almighty brought His people out of Egypt with power, mighty signs and miracles. Few people seem to realise that the LORD is going to repeat this event, but this time, His people will be gathered from the four corners of the earth.

Many Christians simply dismiss the Passover as a Jewish festival which is for Jews only, hence failing to understand the importance of Passover today and what it means for our salvation. Even among those who are awakening to this realisation, many are finding the instructions in the Bible confusing. Consequently, there are a lot of differing opinions on when precisely the feast falls – whether at the beginning or end of the 14th day – or from which day we should start counting the 50 days for determining which day the Feast of Weeks (i.e. Shavuoth, also known as Pentecost) falls. In this paper, we shall examine what has been written on the matter and try to make sense of it all.

Let's start with the actual meaning of the word פֶּסַח Pesach which is translated throughout our Bible as 'Passover'.

The Meaning of the Word Pesach

What may come as a surprise to most people is that the Hebrew word **Pesach**, which is translated as **Passover**, does **not** mean a 'passing over'. It actually means a 'withholding', a 'sparing' or a 'halting'.¹ The Hebrew word for a lame person is **Piseach** – someone who is 'withheld' from walking. The older usage of the English word 'halt' likewise can also mean 'lame'.² The word 'halt' is understood to be derived from the German *halten*, meaning to hold or to stop. The Hebrew word Pesach means all of these things.

¹ Entry under פֶּסַח on [p.272](#) in Langenscheidt's *Hebrew-English Pocket-Dictionary to the Old Testament*, Dr. Karl Feyerband, Hodder and Stoughton, Kent, UK 1959. See also entry for פֶּסַח on [p.683](#) (i.e. DCLXXXIII) in Gesenius's *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, London 1857.

² Entry under Halt² in *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, London & Glasgow 1980 meaning **3. Archaic**, to be lame. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, it can also mean "to walk with a limp".

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“And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said: ‘How long halt [פִּסְחִים *poschim*] ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ And the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18:21)

Here, in the above passage, the word *pesach* appears in the plural form *poschim* where it is translated as ‘halt’.

“And they [the Baal worshippers] took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon [i.e. יָפְסְחוּ *yefaschu*] the altar which was made.” (1 Kings 18:26)

Note that the word יָפְסְחוּ *yefaschu* is from the same Hebrew word *Pesach*. This passage, which is translated as “And they leaped upon the altar” in the Authorised Version, is translated as “And they **danced in halting wise** about the altar” by the Mechon Mamre institute³ who have worked from Yemenite manuscripts.⁴

In the Greek Septuagint, the words used in the above passage are διέτρεχον *dié trekon*, meaning ‘run up and down’⁵ from τρέχω *trekhu* meaning ‘run’.

In the Septuagint, the word ***pasach*** is translated in Exod. 12:13 as ‘protect’:

“And the blood shall be for a sign to you on the houses in which ye are, and I will see the blood, and will **protect you** [i.e. פָּסַחְתִּי *pasachtī* in Hebrew but σκεπάσω in Greek], and there shall not be on you the plague of destruction, when I smite in the land of Egypt.”

The Greek word σκεπάσω *skepasu* which is used in the above passage is from σκεπάω *skepau* meaning ‘to cover, shelter or protect’. It does not mean ‘pass over’. Note also that it is highly likely that this Greek word σκεπάω is a metathesis⁶ of the Hebrew word *Pesach*, Greek being derived in part from the Phoenician language.⁷ From this, it becomes clear that the Hebrew word פֶּסַח *pesach* cannot be translated into a single word in English and still convey the original meaning.

Whilst on the subject of metatheses, I should perhaps point out that the Greek word ἀζύμων *azimon*, which is translated in various places in the New Testament as ‘unleavened bread’ (written ἄζυμα *azima* in Mark 14:1 and ἄζυμοι *azimoi* in 1 Corinth. 5:7), is a metathesis of the Hebrew word מַצָּה *matza*, which also means ‘unleavened bread’. The Hebrew letter צ *tsadi* can be transliterated as a *t* as in Tyre (צֵר), or as an *s* as in Sidon (צִידֹן), a name which is often transliterated in the AV as Zidon.⁸ In the word *azimon*, this letter צ *tsadi* has assumed the form of the Greek letter ζ *zeta* so that

³ <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt09a18.htm#26>. (Emphasis mine.)

⁴ For details of who Mechon Mamre are, see <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/about.htm>.

⁵ <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=11&page=18>.

⁶ A Metathesis is where two or more sounds or syllables in a word swap places. Metatheses were commonplace in ancient languages and we even find examples in the Bible. Hushim [חֻשִׁים] son of Dan (Gen. 46:23), for example, is also called Shuham [שׁוּחָם] (Num. 26:42). This is the same person, but the letters have been transposed. Likewise, Bath-Sheba’s father is called both Eliam [אֱלִיָּאָם] (2 Sam. 11:3) and Ammiel [אֲמִיֵּל] (1 Chron. 3:5), Bath-Sheba being King Solomon’s mother. We see that the Maonites [מֹנִי] mentioned in Judges 10:12, when we read the chapter carefully, are more correctly Ammonites [אֲמֹנִי]. The Hebrew word for sheep or lamb is usually כֶּבֶד *keved* but in some places (such as Lev. 4:35) it is written כֶּשֶׁב *kesev*. There are therefore plenty of examples to draw from.

⁷ Herodotus, *Histories* v.58.

⁸ It can also be transliterated as *st* or as *psi*, as demonstrated in my paper *The Forgotten Tribe of Naphtali & the Phoenicians*.

מָצָה Ma-Z-Ah, when read backwards, becomes Ἀζυμα Ah-Z[i]-Ma.

Returning to the original topic under discussion, one of the interpretations of the Hebrew word *pesach* is ‘to skip’ having the same meaning as the Middle English *skippen* interpreted as to ‘miss out’, ‘spring lightly’, ‘jump over’, ‘take a run’ or ‘pass over’. Note that ‘take a run’ accords with the translation of יַפְסִיחוּ *yefaschu* as τρέχω *trekhu* in the quote from 1 Kings 18:26 quoted above, though in the Septuagint, the first book of Kings is the third book of Kings, the two books of Samuel being regarded as the first and second books of Kings. It is not known precisely where the English word skip comes from, though it is *suggested* that it might be of Scandinavian origin, from the Old Norse *skopa*.⁹ No one seems to have made the connection, however, with this Greek word σκεπάω *skepau* or with the Hebrew word פָּסַח *Pesach*.

In Exodus 12:23, there are two separate words which are translated as **passed over**. The first is derived from the root of the Hebrew verb *avar* (עָבַר) from which the word **Hebrew** (i.e. עִבְרִי) is derived.¹⁰ This is when the LORD ‘passed over’ or ‘passed through’ the land. The second word is derived from the root verb *pasach* and is used when the LORD sees the blood on the door posts – at which point he will **hold back (pasach)** from smiting the occupants of the house:

“For the LORD will **pass through** [עָבַר *avar*] to smite the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will **pass over/hold back** at [פָּסַח *pasach*] the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.”

The word *pasach*, which is translated as ‘pass over’ in the above passage, could also be translated as ‘protect, cover or defend’ in the sense that the LORD ‘held back’ the destroyer from entering. The word ‘skip’ would also be appropriate.

In Exodus 12:3 we read:

“Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this [first] month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household...” (verses 4-10 explain how to prepare the lamb.) “...This is how to eat it [the lamb]: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your shoes on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste: **It** [i.e. the lamb] is the LORD’s **Pesach**.” (verse 11.)

Notice how the lamb was taken **out** and **kept back** from the rest of the flock for a period of 3½ days. (NB: The Hebrew מִשְׁמֶרֶת *mishmeret*, which is translated in Exod. 12:6 as ‘keep’, can also be translated as ‘guard’ or ‘watch’ or ‘protect’.) Moses called for all the elders of Israel and told them to take a lamb according to their families and to **kill the Pesach**. (Exod. 12:21.) In another place they were told to **sacrifice the Pesach**. (Deut. 16 verses 2, 5 and 6.) The priests during the time of Hezekiah and Josiah took charge of the **killing** of the **Pesachim** (i.e. the plural of **Pesach**). (Refer 2 Chron. 30:17 and 2 Chron 35 verses 7-9 & 11.) The suggestion that the word *pesach* means ‘pass over’ is therefore strained.

During the *seder*, that is the Passover meal, it is the duty of every Jew at the appointed

⁹ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/skip>.

¹⁰ The English word “over” is from the same Hebrew root.

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time in the ceremony to point to the bone on the *seder* plate – a bone which represents the lamb which was originally sacrificed – and to say “**Pesach**”. This is to remind us that this is the name given to the lamb! The Feast of Passover is more correctly the Feast of the Pesach, being the Feast of the Passover Lamb.

The Pesach – Killed at the beginning or the end of the 14th day?

The lamb was called the Pesach (Greek Πάσχα *Pascha*) because it was ‘withheld’ from the rest of the flock from the 10th day of the month until the 14th day when it was killed “between the evenings” (בֵּין הָעֶרְבַּיִם *be’in ha’arbaim*¹¹) which means that it was killed ‘at twilight’ or ‘at dusk’. The exact time is clarified by the following passage:

“...at the place which the LORD your God shall choose to place his name in, there shall you sacrifice the Pesach **at evening** [here the Hebrew word עֶרֶב *erev* is used], at the **going down of the sun** at the season that you came out of Egypt...” (Deut. 16:6.)

This Hebrew word **erev** is also used in reference to the Pesach in Joshua 5:10:

“And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even [עֶרֶב *erev*] in the plains of Jericho.”

There are those (such as Herbert Armstrong’s Church of God) who teach that the lamb was killed at the beginning of the 14th day, using for evidence the first chapter of the book of Genesis, which states that “the evening and the morning were the first day” (Gen. 1:5). Whilst, on the face of it, this interpretation seems plausible, it does not fit other Biblical instructions. Let us, for example, first consider what the Bible says for the Day of Atonement:

“Also on the 10th day of this 7th month there shall be a day of atonement [i.e. *Yom Kippur*]... (Lev. 23:27)

“...It shall be to you a Sabbath of rest and you shall afflict your souls; from the **ninth** day of the month **in the evening** (Hebrew בֵּעֶרֶב *b’erev*), from **evening until evening** shall you celebrate your Sabbath...” (verse 32 - emphasis mine.)

If we were to take “the ninth day of the month **in the evening**” to be the beginning of the 9th day, we would end up keeping the 9th day as the Day of Atonement instead of the 10th! The passage is here saying that the Day of Atonement started at the **end** of the 9th day, this being the start of the 10th.

Having sought clarification from the Bible itself as to how these dates are to be calculated, we can now apply the same understanding to the Feast of Unleavened Bread which starts on the 15th day, but runs from “the 14th day in the evening”:

“...And on the 15th day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread unto the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.” (Lev. 23:6)

“In the first month, on the 14th day of the month **at even** [בֵּעֶרֶב], you shall eat unleavened bread, until the 21st day of the month **at even**. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses.” (Exod. 12:18-19.)

¹¹ Exod. 12:6, Lev. 23:5 & Num 9:3.

Again, if the evening was the start of the day, you would end up keeping the feast from the 14th rather than the 15th. Some Christians even make the mistake of separating the actual Passover sacrifice from the feast. The Pesach (Passover lamb) was to be killed at the end (i.e. in the evening) of the 14th day at the going down of the sun and was to be part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

“Thou shalt eat no leavened bread **with** it [i.e. the lamb]; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread **therewith**, even the bread of affliction.” (Deut. 16:3.)

The Pesach was therefore to be killed at the **end** of the 14th day before the start of the 15th day and was an integral part of the seven day feast!

Did the Apostles also consider the evening to be the end of the day? In John 20:19, we see that Yehoshua (Jesus) first appeared to the disciples on the **evening** of the **first day of the week**. From the sequence of events given in both John chapter 20 and Luke 24:13-39, it is evident that Yehoshua appeared to them at the end of the day at sunset on **Sunday evening** and not on Saturday night, as the first day of the week effectively ran from Saturday evening to Sunday evening. Note that if Yehoshua had appeared to the disciples on Saturday night, then this would have been **before** Mary and Peter (as well as others who were with them) went to the tomb at first light on the Sunday morning. So, the evening of the first day of the week in John 20:19 therefore clearly means the end of the first day. (Refer to table on page 9.)

I should perhaps mention that Jesus is the Anglicised form of the Greek Issus (Ἰησοῦς) which in turn is derived from the Hebrew name which can be written יהושע Yehoshua, יֵשׁוּעַ Yeshua or הוֹשִׁעַ Hoshea. These three names are used interchangeably for Joshua son of Nun who likewise is called Issus (Ἰησοῦς) in the Septuagint. (For Yeshua/Jeshua, see Neh. 8:17. For Hoshea, see Deut. 32:44. In Num. 13:16 we are told that Moses called Hoshea Yehoshua.) A lot of people have difficulty with these sorts of variations in spelling, but this was commonplace in ancient languages. (The city of Tamar in Ireland, for example, appears in ancient Irish documents variously as Temur, Temrach, Teamrach, Temraidh, Teamhair,¹² Temoria, Tara,¹³ Taragh etc.) I shall refer to Jesus throughout the rest of this paper by his Hebrew name Yehoshua.

The Ninth Hour

In three of the gospels, the writers deemed it important to stress the exact hour of Yehoshua's death, being the **ninth hour**. (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34 & Luke 23:44.) Why then is this hour so important?

Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was a priest¹⁴ who officiated in the temple during the time of Yehoshua, supplies us with the answer:

¹² General History of Ireland, [p.146](#).

¹³ On the History and Antiquities of Tara Hill, [p.54](#), George Petrie in Vol. 18 of *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* 1 Jan 1839.

¹⁴ Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* [1](#) where he claimed to be of the first of the 24 priestly courses, which means that he belonged to the priestly course of Yehoiarib (יהוֹיָרִיב AV Jehoiarib). See 1 Chron. 24:7.

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“...So these high priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices from the **ninth hour** to the eleventh...”¹⁵

Therefore, Yehoshua (Jesus) “*gave up the ghost*”¹⁶ at the very hour when the most observant Jews would have killed the **Pesach**. Any other time would have made Yehoshua’s death of no effect! Most people wrongly place the emphasis on his last meal, this being known as the Last Supper, and thereby miss this important understanding – that Yehoshua has become our Pesach; our Passover Lamb. In the Book of Revelation, he is called “the Lamb”,¹⁷ being more specifically, the **Passover** Lamb of God.

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the [Passover] Lamb.” (Rev. 7:13-14.)

“This is my body which is broken for you...” (1 Corinth. 11:24) a body unleavened without spot or blemish. Just like the Pesach, not one of Yehoshua’s bones was broken! (John 19:33.)

“This is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins...” So precious is his blood (1 Peter 1:19) that a mere sprinkling is sufficient. Remember that the blood of the original Pesach offering was sprinkled sparingly onto the doorposts and lintels of the houses using a bunch of hyssop. (Exod. 12:22.)

It should be borne in mind that Yehoshua intentionally kept the *seder* meal (i.e. the main Passover meal which was eaten on the first night of Passover) a night earlier than intended, albeit without the sacrificial lamb, because he knew that he could not keep it at the appointed time. He had to be in the grave at the hour the feast was actually kept, but he “desired greatly” to keep this particular meal with his disciples. (Luke 22:15.) Yehoshua **did not** change any part of the ceremony itself, which included the singing of hymns. (Matt. 26:30 & Mark 14:26.) It is possible that the sopping of the bread referred to in John 13:26-27 likewise refers to the customary dipping of the food in salt water. There is no evidence, however, that they used unleavened bread. The word used by the Gospel writers (Greek ἄρτον) simply means ‘a loaf of bread’. (Matt. 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19.)

To quote the words of the Apostle Paul:

“For even Christ our **Pesach** is sacrificed for us: Therefore **let us keep the feast (i.e. Passover)** not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor. 5 v 7-8)

The Greek word which is translated as “let us keep the feast” is ἐορτάζωμεν *Eortazumen*, whose root ἐορτή *Eortee* means ‘holy day, name day or festival’ and therefore cannot be identified in any shape or form with the so-called ‘Christian’ bread

¹⁵ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* [Book 6, Chap. 9 v 3](#).

¹⁶ Matt. 27:50, Mark 15:37, Luke 23:46 & John 19:30.

¹⁷ Various passages. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” Rev. 5:12. “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Rev. 7:9-10.)

and wine ceremony which is kept today, which, incidentally, has its roots in Mithraism, the pagan religion of Persia. (This will be covered in a short while.)

It is not without just cause that the first century Jews and Christians alike referred to Rome as the New Babylon! The word Babylon is derived from the Hebrew בָּבֶל *Babel* (from which we get the English word *babble*), which name means confusion! When we keep Easter, we are keeping a feast in honour of the goddess of fertility! What have Easter Eggs, Easter Bunnies and Hot Cross Buns, which are all symbols of that goddess's fertility, got to do with the death of Yehoshua the Christ? Easter, known as Ishtar to the Assyrians, is the Biblical Ashtoreth, who was, we are told, an abomination to God:

“And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.” (2 Kings 23:13)

According to the Bible, we are told that Ashtoreth was closely affiliated with another goddess by the name of Asherah. As noted by William Smith:

“**Asherah**, the name of a Phoenician goddess, or rather of the idol itself (A.V. “grove”). Asherah is closely connected with ASHTORETH and her worship (Judg. iii. 7, comp. ii. 3; Judg. vi. 25; 1 K. xviii. 19); Ashtoreth being, perhaps, the proper name of the goddess, whilst Asherah is the name of her image or symbol, which was of wood (see Judg. vi. 25-30; 2 K. xxiii. 14).”¹⁸

In the Authorised Version, the word אֲשֶׁרָה Asherah (plural אֲשֶׁרִים Asherim) is often translated as ‘grove’, but is correctly transliterated in the RSV (Revised Standard Version) and NAS (New American Standard) translations as Asherah.

In the Assyrian texts, Asherah is called Ishhara (variants Easharru and Easharri) and is associated with Ishtar:

“...that temple [i.e. the temple of the Assyrian Ishtar at the city of Ashur], its tower gates, the room of the *šuhuru* of the courtyard, the storeroom of the goddess Ishtar of the courtyard which is called the ‘Inn of the Goddess Ishtar’, and the room of the goddess Ishhara of the courtyard, had again become dilapidated.”¹⁹

Ashtoreth, Ishtar, Eostre and Easter²⁰ are all phonetic variants of the same name. The Latin writer Bede informs us:

“Eosternonath [i.e. Easter month] has a name which is now translated as ‘Paschal month’, and which was once called after a goddess of theirs named Eostre, in whose honour feasts were celebrated in that month. Now they designate that Paschal season by her name, calling the joys of the new rite by the time-honoured name of the old observance.”²¹

In recent years, some Christians, have attempted to divert attention away from the pagan elements of this feast, by renaming Easter Sunday as Resurrection Sunday. They

¹⁸ Entry under *Asherah* on p.54 of *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, 13th Edition, William Smith, LL.D., Spire Books, New Jersey, 1977.

¹⁹ *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* Vol. 1, p.68, §.446, Albert Kirk Grayson, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1972.

²⁰ **Easter**: “Old English *ēastre*, after a Germanic goddess Eostre” Collins Dictionary of the English Language, Patrick Hanks, London & Glasgow, 1980.

²¹ Bede, *The Reckoning of Time* Chap. 15 The English Months on p.54, Faith Wallis, Liverpool University Press, 1999.

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are still keeping the Sunday morning rituals associated with this pagan ceremony attributing them to Christ's resurrection. It will be demonstrated, however, that Yehoshua rose from the grave late on Saturday afternoon – NOT on a Sunday morning as is universally accepted. There is no justification whatsoever for sunrise services on Easter Sunday or Resurrection Sunday, whatever one wants to call it.

The LORD specifically tells us not to learn the ways of the heathen, nor to enquire after their gods saying: "How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou **shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God**". (Deut. 12:30-31.) We would therefore be wise to take notice and to not defile ourselves with such practices.

Let us therefore keep the Passover, also known in Hebrew as חַג הַפֶּסַח *Chag HaPasach* (i.e. the feast of the Pasach or Pesach), with sincerity and truth.

"I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you **I shall not eat it until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.**" (Luke 22 v 16.)

Note then, such is the importance of the Passover feast that it will still be kept when the Kingdom of God is established here on earth. It is one of those signs spoken of in the Hebrew Bible (wrongly referred to as The Old Testament²²) which sets us apart from the rest of the world and shows that we are **His chosen people**! Note also that the Feast of Tabernacles (Hebrew Sukkoth) will also be kept when the LORD sets His throne in Jerusalem:

"And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one..." (Zech. 14:8-9)

"...And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep **the feast of tabernacles**. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep **the feast of tabernacles**. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep **the feast of tabernacles**." (Zech. 14:16-19)

The commandment is to keep God's feast days – NOT the feasts of the heathen!

"Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them." (Jer. 10:2.)

The Crucifixion and Resurrection

Let us look at the sequence of events following Yehoshua's death. As mentioned above, three of the Gospels inform us that he committed his spirit to the Father at the very

²² There is absolutely nothing old about the Hebrew Bible. In fact, it is more relevant today than ever. Approximately sixty percent of the Hebrew Bible is prophetic. Of that sixty percent, approximately sixty percent of those prophecies pertain to these end times. "And the LORD has sent to you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear." Jer. 25:4.

hour being the time the Passover lambs were sacrificed, with John recording that he was put in the tomb before the start of the feast:

“Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (**for that sabbath was a high day**), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away”. (John 19:31 – emphasis mine.)

The word translated as “high” is μεγάλη (megalé) meaning ‘high’ or ‘great’ (as in *mega*). The Jewish rabbis would point out that the first day of Passover was not a ‘high day’, but they miss the point that John was making. John was emphasising the fact that it was not the usual end of the week sabbath. To Jews, a high sabbath (שַׁבַּת הַגָּדֹל *Shabbat HaGadol*) is the Saturday before the Passover sacrifice,²³ but this is not what John is referring to in this passage. He is referring to the first day of Passover:

“And on the fourteenth day of the first month at evening is the LORD’s Pesach (Passover). And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the **first day** ye shall have an holy convocation [i.e. assembly]: **ye shall do no servile work therein**. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the **seventh day** is an holy convocation: **ye shall do no servile work therein**.” (Lev. 23:5-8.)

The first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (often referred to as the Feast of the Passover) are therefore sabbaths, these being in addition to the weekly sabbath.

Mark informs us:

“And **when the sabbath was past**, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, **bought spices**, that they might come and anoint him.” (Mark 16:1-2.)

Despite the word ἡγόρασαν (*egorasan*) in this passage being translated in the AV as “had bought sweet spices”, the Greek is more correctly rendered in the RSV, NIV and other later translations as “bought [as in purchased] spices”. The women

Wednesday 14th	Yehoshua crucified late afternoon “at the ninth hour” of Passover. Feast of Unleavened Bread began late in the evening.
Thursday 15th	First day of Unleavened Bread which day was a sabbath.
Friday 16th	Mary Magdalene and Mary mother of James bought and prepared spices with which to anoint Yehoshua’s body.
Saturday 17th	Yehoshua rose from grave late in the evening just before sundown.
Sunday 18th	Peter and the two Marys went to the tomb in the early hours of the morning. Yehoshua appeared to two people later that same day and then afterwards to his apostles, this latter event being in the evening at the end of the day.
Wednesday 21st	The seventh and last day of Passover which day was a sabbath.

The calendar of events which took place during the Passover week in the time of Yehoshua’s crucifixion. The 14th of the first month (Nisan) began on the Tuesday evening and ended at sundown on the Wednesday, but for the sake of simplicity, I have worked to the main daylight part of the day in the above chart.

²³ See for example https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1692/jewish/Shabbat-Hagadol.htm.

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bought the spices **after** the sabbath, this sabbath being the first day of the feast as distinct from the usual weekly sabbath. Luke even tells us that, **after preparing the spices**, they then **rested on the sabbath day**:

“And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and **rested the sabbath day** according to the commandment.” (Luke 23:56.)

There are therefore two separate sabbaths being referenced here. The first was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the second was the usual weekly sabbath that falls on a Saturday each week. The two Marys purchased the spices with which to anoint Yehoshua’s body **after** this first sabbath of Passover, this first special sabbath falling on a Thursday in the year in question. This means that they purchased the spices on the Friday.

The shops would not have been open either on the Thursday or the Saturday for them to have purchased the spices at any other time. They could arguably have bought them on the Preparation Day (i.e. the day of the Crucifixion), but most people would have been busy at that time preparing for the feast. Mark, moreover, specifically states that they purchased them **after** the sabbath. They would also have needed the time to mix and prepare the spices.

In other words, Yehoshua was killed late on the Wednesday afternoon “between the evenings” and rose from the grave late on **Saturday afternoon** having been in the tomb **precisely three days and three nights** as prophesied!

“For as Jonas was **three days and three nights** in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth.” (Matt. 12:40.)

Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Yehoshua, along with a few others (Luke 24:10), went to the tomb early Sunday morning (Luke 24:1) just after sunrise (Mark 16:2), with John adding that “it was still dark” (John 20:1), to find that Yehoshua had already risen. After this, they went and told the disciples (Luke 24:9) and Peter ran to the tomb to find it empty apart from the strips of linen which had been wrapped around Yehoshua’s body (Luke 24:12). Later that same day (Luke 24:13), Yehoshua appeared to two people (the name of one is given as Cleopas – Luke 24:18) and accompanied them to Emmaus. He ‘broke bread’ with them (verse 30) following which, in the same hour (verse 33), they returned to Jerusalem and found the Apostles gathered together. It was then that Yehoshua appeared to them (verse 36), the evening of that **same day** (John 20:19) being the **evening of the first day of the week**.

I should perhaps point out that the book of Mark contains the following seemingly contradictory passage:

“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.” (Mark 16:9.)

The way this passage is translated could suggest that Yehoshua rose from the dead on the first day of the week. This cannot be correct because that would mean that Yehoshua would have been in the tomb for **four** nights. Matthew (12:40) clearly states that Yehoshua would be in the tomb three days and three nights.

It should be noted that this verse does not appear in all extant copies of Mark. There is

therefore the possibility that this verse (verse 9) and verses 10 to 19 are late additions. The oldest copies of the book of Mark end at verse 9 with verses 9 to 19 in our current copies replacing the following verse:

“9 But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.”²⁴

It is quite possible, therefore, that the rising from the grave on the first day of the week is a late addition made when Christians had become indoctrinated with Roman Catholic teachings, which doctrines are based on Babylonian teachings. (We shall look at this in more detail shortly.)

Having said that, the words Ἀναστὰς δὲ, which are translated in verse 9 of our modern copies as “Now ... was risen”, more correctly mean “now having risen”.²⁵ Again, the translators have translated according to their understanding, which understanding is based on their indoctrination that Yehoshua was crucified on a Friday and rose from the grave on Sunday morning. A strict literal rendering of the Greek (with my punctuation) is therefore:

“Now having risen [Ἀναστὰς δὲ], early on the first [day] of the week he appeared first to Mary the Magdalene from whom he had cast out seven demons.”

Bear in mind that the original Greek and Hebrew writings did not have any punctuation marks. Depending on how you read the above passage and depending on where you place the commas, the meaning of the passage can change. When translated this way, it now says that Yehoshua had already risen before he appeared to Mary on the first day of the week. Most translators assume, however, based on late Christian teachings, that he was resurrected early on the Sunday, so they place the comma after the word week thereby changing the emphasis as well as the meaning.

So, what about the time of Yehoshua’s resurrection? Did he actually rise from the grave on the Saturday?

We shall start with Matt. 28:1, which can be interpreted to read as follows:

“It was the end of the Sabbath (i.e. Ὅψι δὲ σαββάτων), drawing on (i.e. ἐπιφωσκούσῃ) towards the first day of the week [even that day] when Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” went to look at the tomb, and behold there was a great earthquake...”

This passage is a little tricky and ambiguous in a number of ways. The word ἐπιφωσκούσῃ (*epiphoskousé*) is translated as “as it began to dawn” in the AV and “toward the dawn” in the RSV. The root word ἐπιφάνεια (*epiphanéia* or *epiphany*) means ‘appearing’, ‘day-break’ or ‘dawn’.²⁶ It can also be read as ‘drawing toward’ as used by the King James translators and is the translation I have employed above. The root word ἐπιφώσκω likewise means ‘to grow towards daylight’ or ‘to dawn’.²⁷ The

²⁴ “Other ancient authorities add after verse 8 the following:” p.217 in *The R.S.V. Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, The Nestle Greek Text with a literal translation by Reverend Alfred Marshall, London 1978.

²⁵ For this reading of “Now having risen”, see for example: *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9-20* p.137, Nicholas P. Lunn, James Clarke & Co., Cambridge, UK, 2015.

²⁶ *Greek-English Lexicon* p.562, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, New York 1883.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p.564.

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evidence, however, favours the King James translation which uses the words “in the end of the Sabbath”, this being late Saturday afternoon. This would have been precisely three days and three nights after the crucifixion.

Similarly, the words translated as “first day of the week” in the above passage is εἰς μίαν σαββάτων (*eis mian Sabatton*). This use of Sabbath (or more correctly Sabbaths, as *Sabatton* is the plural form of σάββατα *Sabata*) for ‘week’ is not unusual. The use of *mian Sabatton* is also used in 1 Corinth. 16:2 and μιᾶς σαββάτων (*mias Sabatton*) for the first day of the week is also attested in the Septuagint at the start of one of the Psalms.²⁸ Luke (18:12) also uses the word Sabattou for ‘week’ when referring to the Pharisee who, when coming before God to pray, declared that he fasted “twice a week” (δὶς τοῦ σαββάτου). How this confusion between the Hebrew word שָׁבֻעַ *shavua* for week and שַׁבָּת *sabbath* arose is difficult to say, though it should be noted, as a possible explanation, that the Hebrew letter שׁ *ayyin* has sometimes been transliterated as a *t* – as in ‘satyr’, this being a transliteration of the Hebrew word שַׁעִיר *Seir* in Isa. 13:21 and Isa. 34:14.²⁹

The context of when the two Marys arrived at the tomb is reiterated in Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1 and John 20:1 where the words μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων (*mia ton Sabatton*) is once again translated as “first day of the week”.³⁰

In the Authorised Version, the first few words Ὁψὲ δὲ σαββάτων (*opsé de sabatton*) in the above-quoted passage from Matthew have been translated as “In the end of the Sabbath”, but in the Revised Standard Version, this has been translated as “Now after the sabbath”. The word Ὁψὲ (*opsé*) means ‘late’ or ‘late in the day’, ‘at even’ or ‘in the evening’ and its associated word Ὁψιᾶ (*opsia*) means ‘latter part of the day’ or ‘evening’.³¹ The emphasis is therefore on the fact that the earthquake occurred sometime towards the end of the Sabbath. We should bear in mind that the Sabbath ended at sundown on the Saturday and the first day of the week began immediately after that on Saturday night. Both translations suggest, however, that the earthquake occurred at the same time the two Marys visited, but a careful reading of the passage shows this not to be the case.

In verse 2 of Matthew 28, the Greek reads:

“Καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας· ἄγγελος γὰρ Κυρίου καταβὰς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ προσελθὼν ἀπεκύλισεν τὸν λίθον καὶ ἐκάθητο ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ.”

²⁸ Psalm 23 in the Septuagint, though it is Psalm 24 in most Bibles. See for example <https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=24&page=23>. Note that this statement that the Psalm is for the first day of the week only appears in the Septuagint. It does not appear in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in our various English translations of the Bible, whether King James, RSV, NIV or whatever.

²⁹ I provide other examples of this reading of an שׁ *ayyin* as a *t* in my paper entitled *The Forgotten Tribe of Naphtali & the Phoenicians*.

³⁰ It should be noted that Shavuoth (Feast of Weeks) which was known to the Greeks as Pentecost (i.e. count fifty) occurred fifty days after Passover. “And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete.” (Lev. 23:15.) Here, the word sabbath clearly signifies a week comprising seven days. “And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.” (Lev. 25:8.) Again, the “seven sabbaths of years” signifies seven times seven. The word sabbath was therefore used in a sense other than the usual meaning of “rest” which it denoted.

³¹ Entries under Ὁψὲ and Ὁψιᾶ in Greek-English Lexicon p.1103, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, New York 1883.

Which more literally translates as:

“And behold there was a great earthquake: for an angel of the LORD descending from heaven and approaching the stone [had] rolled it away and sat [or was sitting] upon it.”

This tells us that the angel of the LORD stayed at the tomb until the two Marys arrived, so that when we are told that the angel spoke to the women, this would have actually occurred the next morning, hours after the stone had been rolled away. When the two Marys arrived, not only had the stone already been rolled back, but there was no one there apart from the angel (Luke 24:1-2), the guards (Matt. 28:4) by that time having already gone. We should bear in mind that any translation is heavily dependent on the understanding of the translator.

In Mark 16:19, we are told that Yehoshua appeared to his eleven disciples on the Sunday, the day immediately after his resurrection, and that “the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them [i.e. his disciples], was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God”. According to the book of Acts, this event actually occurred 40 days later (compare Acts 1:3 with Acts 1:9-11). It was not until Pentecost (i.e. the Feast of Shavuoth, otherwise known as Feast of Firstfruits) that the apostles were anointed with the Holy Spirit. It was only after Pentecost (Shavuoth) that they went out to the world and started preaching the gospel. This accords with Mark 16:20 which states: “And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it”, but these extra verses in Mark give the impression that this all occurred straight after appearing to his disciples on the Sunday immediately after his resurrection.

Having examined the events which occurred between the crucifixion and the resurrection, let us now consider the passage in Matthew which says that Jesus kept the Last Supper on the first day of unleavened bread. How does this fit in with the course of events leading up to the crucifixion?

“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?” (Matt. 26:17.)

Having demonstrated that Yehoshua committed his spirit to the father at the precise hour the Passover Lamb was slain, then the suggestion that the disciples asked him where they should eat the Passover meal on the first day of Unleavened Bread does not make sense. It also does not make sense if the Passover meal (i.e. the seder) had not yet taken place.

The answer seems to lie in how the disciples interpreted the first day of unleavened bread and is provided by Mark who records:

“And the first day of unleavened bread, **when the Passover [i.e. Pesach] must be killed...**” (Mark 14:12.)

This means that the disciples regarded the Preparation Day as being the first day of the feast. This is a source of some confusion, because the books of Moses tell us that the first day of Unleavened Bread occurred immediately **after** the Preparation Day. Note in particular that the disciples did not ask Yehoshua this question **on** the ‘first day’, but rather on the Tuesday immediately **before** the ‘first day’ had started. This is a subtle yet

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important distinction. The ‘first day’ of the feast they were referring to actually began that evening, being the Tuesday evening at the start of the Preparation Day: “And in the evening he cometh with the twelve” (Mark 14:17 & Matt. 26:20). This means that the AV translation is more reliable than other translations. All later translations would have us believe that the disciples approached Yehoshua **on** the actual first day, which is not what the Gospel writers are trying to convey. The Last Supper took place at the start of the Preparation day. Bear in mind that God’s days run from sundown to sundown – not from midnight to midnight. Yehoshua was crucified later that day, being ‘the next day’ according to our western way of thinking.

The Year of the Crucifixion

Most authorities would argue that the crucifixion occurred on the Friday and that Yehoshua rose from the dead on the Sunday, despite the fact that it is impossible to fit 3 days **and** 3 nights into that timeframe. This adherence to a Friday crucifixion is partly from ignorance of the fact that a ‘sabbath’ is not necessarily a Saturday and partly because of scholars’ adherence to a Sunday morning tradition which Christians have adopted from paganism, this being an important part of the ceremonial worship of the goddess Easter. (This will be covered in more detail later in this current paper.) Also, it does not help that most authorities would date the crucifixion to 31 CE, during which year the Passover fell on a Friday. There is, however, no evidence for a 31 CE crucifixion date, this being based on the **traditional belief** that Yehoshua was crucified on a Friday. In fact, the early writers who have tried to calculate which year the crucifixion took place could not even agree amongst themselves either on the date of his birth or his crucifixion.³²

Having said that, St Clement of Alexandria wrote:

“And from the time that He [i.e. Yehoshua] suffered till the destruction of Jerusalem are forty-two years and three months.”³³

This would firmly place the crucifixion in 28 CE, and in that year, Passover fell on a Wednesday.³⁴ I should point out, however, that there are a number of calculators available on the internet, which purportedly calculate the day on which the Hebrew days fell in relation to the Julian or Gregorian calendars, but these often produce conflicting data. Some use the Parker and Dubberstein system, which is based on the Babylonian calendar, which in turn is based on the assumption that the dates for the Babylonian and Persian kings are correct. In my paper titled *A Radical Review of the Chaldean and Achaemenid Periods*, I have demonstrated how the accepted chronology of the Persian Achaemenid period can be reduced by some 150 years.

³² *The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus* pp.1-8, Solomon Zeitlin, The Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Jul 1964)

³³ *Stromata (The Miscellanies)* [1.21](#).

³⁴ I found this website very enlightening: <http://timeofreckoning.org/category/messiahs-crucifixion-28-ad>. That the Passover fell on the Wednesday in 28 CE, see *Ancient Jewish Calendation* Table 1 on p.232, Grace Amadon in Journal of Biblical Literature Vol. 61, No. 4 (Dec 1942). (1st Nisan was on a Thursday, hence 14th Nisan, which is the Passover day, occurred 13 days later, this being a Wednesday.) Dr John Knight Fotheringham also calculated that the Passover fell on a Wednesday in 28 CE, but he dated the Passover on 31 May, one month later than Amadon. (See *The Date of the Crucifixion* [p.107](#), Journal of Philology, Vol. 29, No. 57, MacMillan, London, 1903.)

Furthermore, as pointed out by Grace Amadon:

“The Pentateuchal Passover date on 14 Nisan, with its recurring long translation periods at the beginning of the month, do not agree with the correspondingly shorter translation periods of the ancient Babylonian calendar, although the Nisan phasis on both the Jewish and Babylonian meridians was of course connected with the same conjunction unless the intercalation differed. However, the Babylonian reckoning did not recognize the second outstanding principle of ancient Jewish time – its full-moon relation to the Passover – and hence does not commonly check with the synchronizing dates of Jewish history. This is demonstrated by the Assuan papyri and their Aramaic dates, only one of which exactly agreed with the Jewish phasis, as determined by Nehemiah and Ezra synchronisms; while two differ by a whole month, one by three days, and the rest by two days.”³⁵

Add to this the difficulty that, according to the Talmud, before the fixed Jewish calendar came into being during the time of Ezra, the month Elul was never intercalated and always consisted of 29 days. (Beitzah 22b.) Interestingly, however, the Parker and Dubberstein calculation shows that Passover (14th Nisan) in 28 CE occurred on 28 April,³⁶ but disagree with most other dates shown in the table produced by Amadon, which table is reproduced as follows:

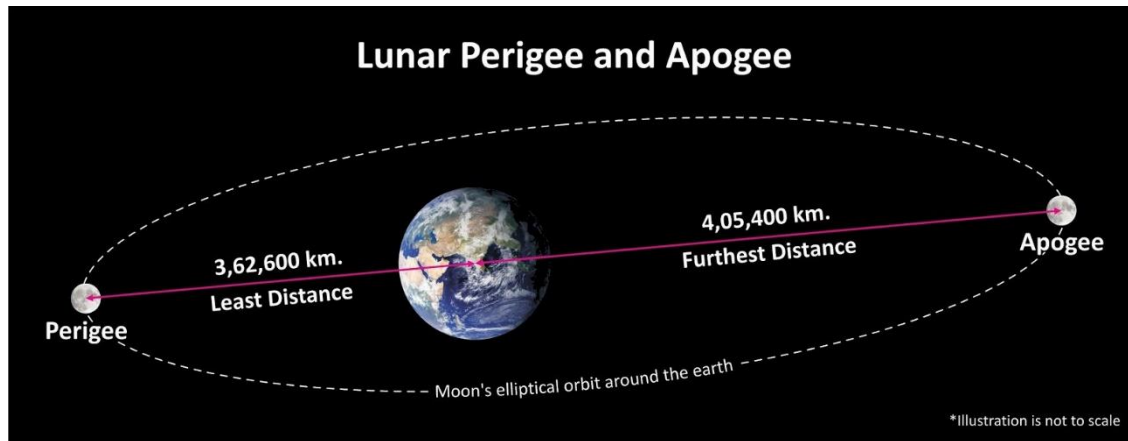
C.E.	Conjunction (new moon)	1 Nisan	Day of Week	Tr. Period (Days)	Full Moon	14 Nisan	Day of Week	Waxing Period (days)	Year Length (Days)
25*	Apr 16.57	Apr 19	Thu	2.2	May 1.58	May 2	Wed	15.01	354
26	Apr 6.28	Apr 8	Mon	1.49	Apr 20.60	Apr 21	Sun	14.32	355
27	Mar 26.83	Mar 29	Sat	1.93	Apr 9.76	Apr 11	Fri	13.93	383
28*	Apr 13.68	Apr 15	Thu	1.09	Apr 27.62	Apr 28	Wed	13.94	355
29	Apr 2.82	Apr 5	Tue	1.95	Apr 17.21	Apr 18	Mon	14.39	355
30	Mar 22.84	Mar 26	Sun	2.92	Apr 6.93	Apr 8	Sat	15.09	384
31*	Apr 10.58	Apr 14	Sat	3.19	Apr 25.94	Apr 27	Fri	15.36	354
32	Mar 29.95	Apr 2	Wed	2.81	Apr 14.47	Apr 15	Tue	15.52	384
33*	Apr 17.90	Apr 21	Tue	2.87	May 3.29	May 4	Mon	15.39	354
34	Apr 7.58	Apr 10	Sat	2.19	Apr 22.40	Apr 23	Fri	14.82	354
35	Mar 28.27	Mar 30	Wed	1.49	Apr 11.43	Apr 12	Tue	14.16	384

*The years marked with an asterisk have an extra month of Adar added. The range of dates from 28 CE to 33 CE which have been highlighted are considered the minimum and maximum for the year of the crucifixion. Of these, 28 CE is the only date which fits all the facts. (Chart extracted from *Ancient Jewish Calendation* by Grace Amadon, Biblical Literature Vol. 61, No. 4, Dec 1942 which data in turn have been taken from Friedrich Karl Ginzels *Handbuch der Mathematischen und Technischen Chronologie; das Zeitrechnungswesen der Völker*.)

As already pointed out, if you use other calculators, you will find that they produce results which are different from what is shown above, which means that they each must

³⁵ *Ancient Jewish Calendation* p.230, Grace Amadon, Biblical Literature Vol. 61, No. 4, Dec 1942.

³⁶ *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.—A.D. 45*, p.45, Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization No. 24, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1942.



The moon's orbit around the Earth is elliptical. The moon's phases occur at the same time wherever you are around the world albeit observable at a different time of day. It is possible for one side of the globe to observe the new moon either one day before or one day after someone on the other side of the world.

use their own special method of calculation. We should bear in mind that the new moon was, at that time, fixed by observation and that the sighting of the new moon may have been delayed by a day or two depending on the weather conditions, including how cloudy it was. Any retrospective calculations we make today are therefore going to be subject to a degree of error as we cannot possibly tell what the conditions were like for any particular date in the past.

So far, a 28 CE date for the Crucifixion is concordant with the information we have been given. Vespasian was the Emperor from July 69 to June 79 CE and was ruling when Jerusalem was taken in the second year of his reign, being 70 CE. If we adopt St Clement's reckoning, 42 years and 3 months back from the second year of Vespasian, being the date that Jerusalem was destroyed, takes us back to 28 CE, which equates to the 14th year of Tiberius Caesar. The problem is that this date would fall a year *before* Yehoshua's ministry is said to have begun!³⁷ (NB: Luke tells us that Yehoshua's ministry started around the 15th year of Tiberius' reign. We shall look at the chronology of this period in more detail in a moment.)

40 years or 42 years?

According to the Babylonian Talmud:

"Forty years before the destruction of the Temple the Sanhedrin went into exile and took its seat in the Trade Halls."³⁸

These Trade Halls were located somewhere on the Temple Mount,³⁹ though not in the Temple itself. Up to this point in time, the Sanhedrin operated from a part of the Temple known as the Chamber of Hewn Stones (also known as the Hall of Hewn Stones), this being the meeting place or council-chamber of the Sanhedrin during the Second Temple

³⁷ Luke 3:1-2.

³⁸ Shabbath 15a.

³⁹ *Ibid.* See note 15 in the Soncino Press edition.

period. The reason why they had to move out of the Temple is because it was made unsafe when the veil in front of the temple was rent in two and the stones in the supporting wall were broken:

“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and **the rocks** (πέτραι *petrai*) **rent/split**” (Matt. 27:51.)

This is clearly referring to the blocks of stone which made up the structure of the wall of the temple. After the Chamber of Hewn Stones was declared unsafe, the Sanhedrin was forced to move to Hanuth (i.e. Trade Halls, hanuth meaning literally shop or bazaar), where it is understood to have operated from the Chambers of the sons of Hanan, a powerful priestly family.⁴⁰ (Note that the name Hanan is a variant spelling of Hananiah.) Forty years or so later, after the fall of the Jewish State in 70 CE, the Sanhedrin moved again, this time to the town of Yabneh (var. Yamnia).⁴¹ This is usually placed somewhere in north west Jerusalem.⁴² Ptolemy more specifically places it somewhere between Emmaus and Jaffa,⁴³ around 50km (30 miles) from Jerusalem.

The Babylonian Talmud also informs us that:

“Originally they used to fasten the thread of scarlet on the door of the [Temple] court on the outside. If it turned white the people used to rejoice, and if it did not turn white they were sad. They therefore made a rule that it should be fastened to the door of the court on the inside. People, however, still peeped in and saw, and if it turned white they rejoiced and if it did not turn white they were sad ...For forty years before the destruction of the Temple the thread of scarlet never turned white but it remained red.”⁴⁴

On the face of it, this suggests a 30 CE date for Yehoshua’s crucifixion (i.e. 70 CE minus 40 years), but we need to understand how the Talmudists calculated those 40 years. Rashi, in his commentary to the Talmud (tractate Avodah Zarah 9b, s.v. *v’siman*), and Maimonides⁴⁵ both believed that the Temple was destroyed in 68 CE, two years earlier than the generally accepted date. According to their reckoning, the 40 years would then date from 28 CE!

How Long Did Yehoshua’s Ministry Last?

St Clement commented that Yehoshua preached for only one year.⁴⁶ Eusebius, however, informs us that his ministry lasted for slightly less than 4 years.⁴⁷ What I shall proceed to demonstrate is that both writers were correct! Note that Eusebius disagrees with St Clement in that he dates the 15th year of Tiberius to the fourth year of the 201st

⁴⁰ French: famille puissante, meaning ‘powerful family’ – See *Essai sur l’histoire et la géographie de la Palestine, d’après les Thalmuds et les autres sources rabbiniques*, Vol. 1, p.467, Joseph Derenbourg, Paris, 1867. Note that Hanan is written Ḥanan with a dot below the letter H to show that it is aspirated – hence pronounced as the *ch* in the Scottish word loch.

⁴¹ Rosh HaShanah 31a. See note 48 for the comments concerning Hanan. See also Eiruvim 13b.

⁴² Shabbath 11a. See note 18 in the Soncino Press edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

⁴³ Ptolemy, *Geography* 5.16.6.

⁴⁴ Rosh HaShanah 31b.

⁴⁵ See, for example, the commentaries of Tosafot, Ramban, Ritva, et al. on Talmud, Avodah Zarah and Erchin.

⁴⁶ *Stromata (The Miscellanies)* 1.21. Eusebius similarly records, when discussing the Gospel according to John: “For it is evident that the other three evangelists only wrote the deeds of our Lord for one year after the imprisonment of John the Baptist”, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.24.

⁴⁷ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.10.2-6.

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Olympiad (i.e. 28 CE), this being the year “our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ appeared among humankind”.⁴⁸ Such then is the state of what has been preserved by the various ‘church fathers’. They all give contradictory information. Even so, the fact that 42 years previous to the destruction of the temple sticks in their minds suggests that this date is important, even if Eusebius has misinterpreted the information. 28 CE for the start of Yehoshua’s ministry is too late a date as it would mean that he would have been born after Herod had died. As I see it, the only reason why Eusebius did not date the **crucifixion** to this date is because it does not correlate with the accepted dates for Tiberius Caesar’s reign. Again, we shall examine the chronology of this period more closely in a moment.

We know that Caiaphas was the high priest at the time of Yehoshua’s crucifixion. (Matt. 26:3 & John 18:28.) We also know that Annas was high priest when John (Yochanan) the Baptist began his ministry, though Jack Finegan argued that Luke is referring to an earlier Annas⁴⁹ for which there is no evidence. It is possible that there is a copying error in our current copies of Luke’s gospel, as Annas (Greek Ἄννα i.e. Anna or Hannah) is a transliteration of the Hebrew word חַנָּה *Chana*, this being a woman’s name. This was the name of Samuel’s mother (1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2). Hannah appears in the Septuagint as Anna (Ἄννα) – the very same spelling used by Luke for the name of the High Priest. Josephus likewise uses this form of the name for Samuel’s mother in his translation into Greek.⁵⁰ Luke also refers to a **prophetess** by the name of Anna (Ἄννα). (Luke 2:36.)

The High Priest that Luke was referring to was the person Josephus called Ananus (Greek Ἀνάνου and Ἀνανον), a person who Josephus, later in his book, referred to as Ananias (Greek Ἀνανίας and Ἀνανίου).⁵¹ Both Ananus and Ananias are transliterations of the Hebrew name חַנַּנְיָה *Chananiah* (AV Hananiah) and this is clearly the name which should appear in Luke 3:2.

Concerning this High Priest Annas or, more correctly, Ananus, Josephus writes:

“He [i.e. Tiberius Nero Caesar] was now the third emperor; and he sent Valerius Gratus to be procurator of Judea, and to succeed Annus Rufus. This man [i.e. Gratus] deprived Ananus of the high priesthood, and appointed Ismael, the son of Phabi, to be high priest. He also deprived him in a little time, and ordained Eleazar, the son of Ananus, who had been high priest before, to be high priest; which office, when he had held for a year, Gratus deprived him of it, and gave the high priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus; and when he had possessed that dignity no longer than a year, Joseph Caiaphas was made his successor.”⁵²

Bear in mind that there was only ever the one high priest at any one time, so when Luke says that these things happened “in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas” (Luke 3:2.), he is relating the sequence of events from the time Yehoshua was baptised by John the Baptist up to the time of the crucifixion. If Eleazar held office for a year and

⁴⁸ Eusebius, *Chronicon* 42.

⁴⁹ *Light from the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion* p.220, Jack Finegan, Princeton University Press 1946.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 5.341-347. He also uses the form Ἄννας.

⁵¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.205 & 208.

⁵² Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.2 (Whiston) 33-36 (Thackeray).

Simon held it for a year, then Yehoshua's ministry cannot possibly have lasted less than two years.

Yehoshua's ministry must have started shortly after John started his ministry, Hananiah (Ananus/Ananias) being at that time High Priest. If so, this would then make Yehoshua's ministry more than three years but less than four years, which is also what Eusebius claimed. More realistically, we are looking at 3½ years.

The books of Matthew (4:1), Mark (1:12) and Luke (4:1) all tell us that, after being baptised by John the Baptist, Yehoshua went "immediately into the wilderness" where he stayed for 40 days. The book of John, however, seems to give a different account. We are there told that Andrew and his brother Simon heard the words of John the Baptist and followed Yehoshua home (John 1:40) whilst the other writers tell us that Yehoshua sought after Simon and Andrew. John does not mention the 40 days in the wilderness, so John's narrative seems to start sometime after that event. (In a moment, we shall demonstrate that John only relates the final year of Yehoshua's 3½ year ministry.)

After the miracle in Cana in Galilee, which is not mentioned by any of the other three gospel writers, John informs us that "he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers **and his disciples**; and there they stayed for a few days" (John 2:12). This statement is a little vague as "a few days" could literally mean a few days or it could mean a number of weeks. He then travelled to Jerusalem. We should bear in mind that Capernaum is around 180 kilometres (110 miles) from Jerusalem, which itself must have taken a few days to travel. If this was shortly before the Passover (John 2:13 and 2:23), the miracle in Cana in Galilee must have been at least a couple of weeks before the feast. The fact that it was the first miracle Yehoshua performed (John 2:11) does not necessarily indicate that he did not start preaching prior to that time. Note also that Yehoshua had by that time already chosen his disciples (cf. John 1:42, 2:12 etc). Bearing in mind that his 40 days in the wilderness also preceded these events, his Baptism must have occurred a relatively long time before the Passover being referenced in this chapter of John.

We should also bear in mind that part of Yehoshua's ministry was to the northern House of Israel, which to this day has not returned to their homeland. This part of Yehoshua's ministry has been deliberately hidden from us. The only reference to this special ministry is contained in the books of Matthew and Mark:

"Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, ***I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.***" (Matt. 15:21-22.)

According to the prophet Isaiah, every part of the Bible (the Word of God) is "precept upon precept ... line upon line ... here a little, there a little..." (Isa. 28:10.) In other words, we therefore need to look at all the references and not rely on a personal interpretation of just the one passage.

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To get to this region of Phoenicia, we read that Yehoshua had travelled from Gennesaret,⁵³ which is on the north western shore of the Sea of Galilee. He must have followed the main road which runs between these regions. (See map below. The dotted lines show the main roads.) We are told that he and his disciples were staying in overnight accommodation somewhere between Tyre and Sidon – Tyre to the south and Sidon to the north. This journey from Gennesaret to this region of Tyre is a distance of around 80 miles. Why then did he and his disciples travel all that way north?

When we compare the above quoted passage from Matthew with the one in Mark:

“And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter...”

“... And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.” (Mark 7:24-31.)

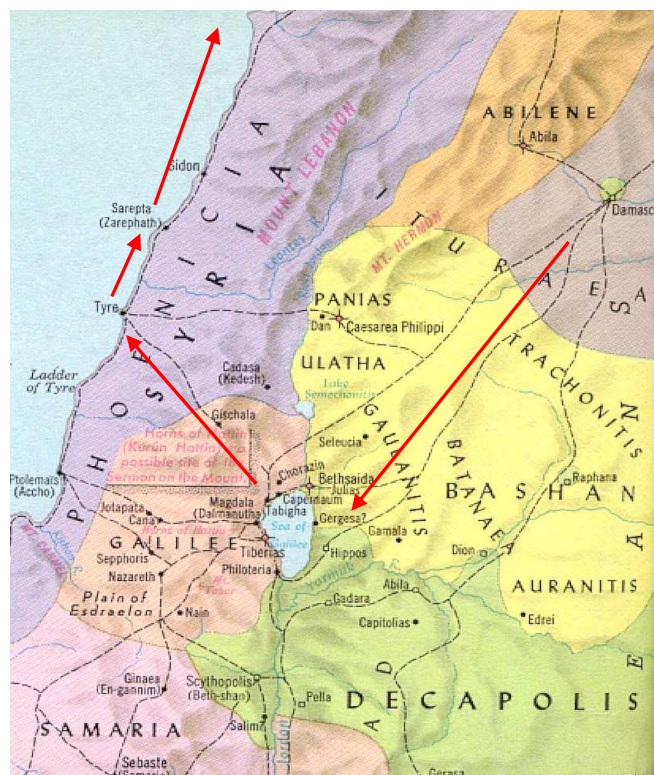
The Alexandrian copy of Mark differs from the Authorised Version in that verse 31 reads as follows (emphases mine):

“Then he returned [or ‘again going forth’] from the region of Tyre, and went **through** Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, **through the region of Decapolis**”

By going **through** Sidon, Yehoshua must have been travelling **northwards** to Syria/Armenia. Even without this added statement that he went northwards **through** Sidon, the fact that he returned through the region of Decapolis, which is the other side of the country, shows that he returned from north Syria. To return through the region of Decapolis, he would have had to come back down the Damascus road.

As for the House of Israel, Josephus tells us that, even in his day:

“there are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and



The route taken by Yehoshua (Jesus) as recorded in Matthew Chap. 15 and Mark Chap. 7. (Decapolis is the region in green in the bottom right-hand corner of the map.)

⁵³ Matt 14:34 & Mark 6:53

not to be estimated by numbers".⁵⁴

When Yehoshua says he came not other than to go to the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel, he meant precisely that. He was actually, at that time, on his way north to visit the House of Israel. (Refer to *The Forgotten Tribe of Naphtali & the Phoenicians* for details of where the various tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel disappeared to after being taken captive by the Assyrians.)

As already stated, St Clement claimed that Yehoshua preached for one year. The suggestion that Yehoshua visited the Ten Tribes **and** preached to the Jews all in one year, however, does not stand up to scrutiny. Eusebius tells us that he preached for between 3½ to 4 years, which would then make allowance for this mission to the Ten Tribes. In fact, it makes perfect sense if we accept that Yehoshua spent between two to two and a half years of his ministry preaching to the Ten Tribes with the one year preaching to the Jews in Judaea occurring **after** he returned from visiting the Ten Tribes. This final year of his ministry is therefore what St Clement is referring to.

According to the prophet Daniel, the Moshiach (Messiah) "shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease". (Dan. 9:27.) Not only was Yehoshua crucified on a Wednesday, which is the middle of the week, but we are told that he will "confirm the covenant" with his chosen ones for a week, being 7 days, which in Bible prophecy is often equivalent to seven years in fulfilment. This suggests that his ministry would last for three and a half years. (There is the suggestion that the other three and a half years will be fulfilled when he takes his people into the wilderness for three and a half years in the end days – see the section *A Second Exodus* later in this paper.)

It is also recorded by John, that when Yehoshua 'started his ministry', it had been forty-six years since work had started on the building of the temple. (John 2:20.) We know that Herod's temple was started in 20 BCE, which dates this episode in the second chapter of John to 27 CE. Yehoshua was crucified a year later. This means that John is recording the final year of Yehoshua's ministry, this being **after** Yehoshua had returned from Syria where he had already spent two years preaching to the 'Lost Sheep' of the House of Israel. The baptism therefore occurred 2½ years before this Passover mentioned in the second chapter of the book of John! This then is the one year's ministry spoken of by St Clement, which means that he and Eusebius (who credits Yehoshua with a three and a half year ministry) were both right!

It should be noted that the Passover mentioned in John 6:4 does not sit well in that chapter. The mention of the Passover just before the miracle of seven loaves and two fishes is out of place and was possibly added at some late date. There was no reason to mention Passover at that point in the narrative and in Chapter 7 (verse 2) we find that shortly afterwards "the feast of Tabernacles was at hand". The only other possible explanation would be that John was trying to draw attention to the fact that he was

⁵⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [11.5.2](#) (Whiston) or [11.133](#) (Thackeray). Nachmanides, in his work *Sefer HaGeulah* (Book of Redemption) likewise says that the Ten Tribes had not returned adding that only a small percentage of Jews had actually returned from Persia. Many Jews, following the first exile, settled in Spain and to date have not returned to the Promised Land. (A copy of the Hebrew version can be downloaded or read online at <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/38457>.)

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relating the events leading up to the specific Passover when the Crucifixion took place. The Greek word ἐγγύς *engys* can mean 'near', 'coming near' or 'soon'. As to whether this can mean more than half a year later is debatable. It should be noted that this verse does not appear in the Hebrew Gospel of John,⁵⁵ which lends support to it being a late insertion.

The 15th year of the reign of Tiberius, which is when Luke (3:1) tells us John the Baptist began his ministry, would have been from September 24 CE to 25 CE, so the start of John's ministry could effectively be placed any time between Succoth 24 CE and Passover 25 CE. John's record of Yehoshua's ministry begins with the final year beginning Passover 27 CE and ends with the crucifixion at Passover in 28 CE.

Chronology of the New Testament Period

Over the centuries, there have been numerous attempts by scholars to correlate the Biblical narrative with the historical records, but without much success. So, you may be asking why this paper should be any different. Well, to start with, the majority of those scholars have started with a Friday Passover date and have shoe-horned their theories into that false assumption. As we have demonstrated above, Yehoshua was crucified on a Wednesday, and when we come to that realisation, we find that the only possible date for the crucifixion is 28 CE.

Most authorities date the accession year of Tiberius Caesar to 14 CE and the year of his death to 37 CE, his reign lasting for just under 23 years. This would then mean that the 15th year of Tiberius (Luke 3:1), which is the year Yehoshua is said to have started preaching, would have fallen sometime between September 28 CE and September 29 CE. This clearly does not tie in with what either St Clement of Alexandria or the Talmudists are claiming.

We know from Talmudic sources that Jerusalem was taken the year after the Shemitah year, a Shemitah (שְׁמִטָּה) being the Biblical year of rest which occurred every seven years when the land was not to be sowed or the vineyard pruned. (Exod. 23:11 & Lev. 25:3-7.) It was a year when all debts were released, hence the word Shemitah means release. (See Deut. 15:1-4.) We know that the Shemitah occurred in the year which runs from around Sep 68-69 CE. The temple was destroyed in the month of Av in 70 CE, which corresponds to July/August in the Gregorian calendar. There can therefore be no question, if Yehoshua died 42 years and 3 months previously, that the crucifixion must have occurred in 28 CE, a date which is confirmed by the Talmudists. Any suggestion that the 15th year of Tiberius fell in the period September 28 to 29 CE must therefore be challenged.

St Clement actually provided two sets of dates for the Roman rulers. There was therefore a difference of opinion on the lengths of reigns even in his day. If we examine the table below (on the top of the next page), we can see that both of St Clement's sets of dates are reasonably accurate with most of them only differing by a matter of a few

⁵⁵ <https://www.nehemiaswall.com/john-6-4-new-testament-part-1>.

	St Clement				Conventional Dates	
	First set of dates		Alternative set of dates		Length of reign	Dates
Emperor	Length of reign	Dates	Length of reign	Dates		
Augustus	43yrs	30 BCE – 14 CE	46yrs 4mths	37 BCE – 10 CE	40yrs 7mths	16 Jan 27 BCE – 19 Aug 14 CE
Tiberius	22yrs	15 CE – 37 CE	26yrs 6mths	10 CE – 36 CE	22yrs 6mths	18 Sep 14 – 16 Mar 37
Caius	4yrs	37 CE – 41 CE	3yrs 10mths	37 CE – 41 CE	3yrs 10mths	16 Mar 37 – 24 Jan 41
Claudius	14yrs	41 CE – 54 CE	13yrs 9mths	41 CE – 54 CE	13yrs 9mths	24 Jan 41 – 13 Oct 54
Nero	14yrs	54 CE – 68 CE	13yrs 8mths	54 CE – 68 CE	13yrs 8mths	13 Oct 54 – 09 Jun 68
Galba	1yr	68 CE	7mths	68 CE	7mths	08 Jun 68 – 15 Jan 69
Otho	Omitted	68 CE	5mths	68 CE	3mths	15 Jan 69 – 16 Apr 69
Vitellius	Omitted	69 CE	7mths	69 CE	8mths	16 Apr 69 – 22 Dec 69
Vespasian	10yrs	69 CE – 81 CE	12yrs	69 CE – 81 CE	9yrs 11mths	01 Jul 69 – 24 Jun 79

months. The glaring exceptions to this are that the lengths of reign he gives for the two emperors relevant to our investigation, namely Augustus and Tiberius, differ vastly from those given by other writers. From the very meagre information that we have on these two emperors, it is not possible to state for certain how long each of these two emperors reigned. Those who have given lengths of reign for these two emperors cannot even agree amongst themselves.

As can be seen, there is relative consistency until we get to Augustus and Tiberius. Pay particular attention to the alternative length of reign given by St Clement for Tiberius Caesar of 26½ years which information is going to be key to our understanding going forward. Whilst St Clement, for his alternative dates, says that “some set down the dates of the Roman emperors thus”,⁵⁶ he does not actually state his sources, which is not very helpful. The fact that there were differences of opinion even among the classical writers, however, shows that the information they have provided is not as reliable as we would like to think. Luke was working to a reign of 26½ years for Tiberius Caesar, as will shortly be demonstrated.

When we examine those historical records which have survived to this day (for many others have disappeared without trace), we discover that for the reign of Tiberius, the dates are fairly consistent among the various writers:

Josephus: 22 years 6 months and 3 days⁵⁷

Tacitus: about 23 years⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* [1.21](#).

⁵⁷ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* [2.180](#), but 22 years 5 months and 3 days in *Antiquities of the Jews* [18.224](#).

⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* [6.51](#).

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Cassius Dio: 22 years 7 months and 7 days⁵⁹

Eusebius about 22 years⁶⁰

St Clement: 22 years or (according to some) 26 years 6 months

They all quote roughly the same length of reign, though the disagreement on the precise length shows that they could not have had accurate records to refer to. For Augustus Caesar, however, we have a wide range of results:

Cassius Dio: 13 days short of 44 years “having been sole ruler, from the time of his victory at Actium”⁶¹

Eusebius: 57 years⁶²

Tacitus: 56 years⁶³

Josephus: 57 years 6 months and 2 days⁶⁴

St Clement: 43 years or 46 years and 4 months

None of these figures match the 40 years and 7 months which has been accepted by our own historians as being the authentic dates for this emperor. It is essential, however, that we understand how these writers calculated these dates. Tacitus, for example, dated the start of Augustus Caesar’s reign from the death of Julius Caesar, whilst Eusebius and Josephus seem to suggest that there was a one year co-regency between Augustus Caesar and Julius Caesar. Cassius Dio, however, dated his reign from the death of Mark Antony at the battle of Actium. It should be noted that St Clement informs us that Augustus was made consul at least four times.⁶⁵ This might partly explain the confusion. To understand what has been recorded, however, we need to know which method of dating has been used by each of the writers in question. When St Clement tells us that “some set down the dates of the Roman emperors thus” and then proceeds to tell us that **some** claimed that Tiberius Caesar ruled for “twenty-six years, six months, nineteen days”, no one has even considered the possibility that Luke would be one of those people who was working to this figure.

I would here point out that St Clement either dates Augustus Caesar’s first year from 30 BCE, this supposedly being the year that Augustus defeated Mark Antony at the battle of Actium (NB: Josephus dates it a year earlier to 31 BCE), or (using his alternative dates) from 37 BCE, this being seven years before the battle of Actium. Most scholars date Augustus Caesar’s accession to 27 BCE, three or four years after the battle of Actium. To understand what these early historians are telling us, however, we need to look at what dates they were actually using. By working to a reign of 57 years, Josephus was working to an even earlier date and even comments that “Antony has shared authority with him for fourteen years of this period”.⁶⁶ This not only means that Augustus Caesar would

⁵⁹ Cassius Dio, *Roman History* [58.28.5](#).

⁶⁰ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* [2.4](#).

⁶¹ Cassius Dio, *Roman History* [56.30.5](#).

⁶² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* [1.9](#).

⁶³ Tacitus, *Dialogue on Oratory* [17](#).

⁶⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [18.32](#).

⁶⁵ *Stromata op. cit.* [1.21](#).

⁶⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [18.32](#).

have started ruling from 45 BCE, which is just before Julius Caesar died, it also means that the Battle of Actium must have occurred in 31 BCE, which then accords with the following statement:

“Meanwhile the battle of Actium took place between Caesar and Antony, in the seventh year of Herod’s reign, and there was an earthquake in Judaea, such as had not been seen before, which caused great destruction of the cattle throughout the country.”⁶⁷

Henry St. John Thackeray had this to say on the matter:

“Apparently the earthquake occurred in the spring of 31 B.C., several months before the battle of Actium in September of that year. But it is dated in the spring of 30 B.C. by Schwartz, *apud* Otto, p.49, and the same date is assumed by Judah Goldin, *Journal of Religion*, 26 (1946), 270, who believes that it influenced Hillel in ruling that the paschal lamb may be offered on the Sabbath, whereas the priests feared that the people could not afford it during a Sabbatical year, since Goldin further assumes that a Sabbatical year had begun in the autumn of 31 B.C. If, however, the reckoning of Sabbatical years adopted in this translation is correct (see *Ant.* xii. 278 note a, xiii. 234 note b, xiv. 475 note a), the Sabbatical year in question began in the autumn of 30 B.C.”⁶⁸

30 BCE is the commonly accepted date for this battle, but this is not the date Josephus was working to. We do not know whether Josephus got his calculations wrong or whether he believed that there was a one year co-regency between Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar. We should bear these sorts of discrepancies in mind when considering these early works, whether of Josephus, Tertullian, St Clement or whoever. (NB: If we can recall, Tacitus claimed that Augustus Caesar ruled for 56 years, one year less than that proposed by Josephus.)

In connection with Tiberius Caesar, Tacitus records that “the histories of Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, and Nero, while they were in power, were falsified through terror”.⁶⁹ This should put us on alert, as it is telling us that there were a number of false historical records circulating in the first century CE, and, despite what has been preserved, we have no way of telling how reliable the information we possess actually is. We should also be aware that there was a civil war after Tiberius’ son Caius (Gaius Caligula) died, so essential records may have at that time been destroyed. The majority of the works relating the achievements of Augustus and Tiberius were written around 40 years after the death of Tiberius, so any evidence from those two kings’ reigns would, by that time, have become lost and obscured.

Despite the assuredness with which Josephus lists the dates of Augustus and Tiberius, there is no evidence to show that he was correct in his calculations. Bear in mind that when Josephus was taken into captivity by the Romans, he would no longer have had access to the records in Jerusalem, so he would, by necessity, have been working from whatever records he had taken with him. He was clearly using the Jewish historical records and correlating them with the Roman historical records. We are therefore heavily reliant on his calculations being correct and how reliable his other sources were. We should not assume that he has got it all right.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* [15.121](#).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* fn. b.

⁶⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* [1.1](#).

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I am inclined to accept that Tiberius reigned for 26 years 6 months rather than the 22-23 years usually assigned to him, as this fits the data being presented here. It seems that the first four years of Tiberius' reign overlapped with the last four of Augustus Caesar. That Augustus Caesar fell ill is confirmed by Tacitus who records:

"Whatever the fact was, Tiberius as he was just entering Illyria was summoned home by an urgent letter from his mother, and it has not been thoroughly ascertained whether at the city of Nola he found Augustus still breathing or quite lifeless. For Livia had surrounded the house and its approaches with a strict watch, and favourable bulletins were published from time to time, till, provision having been made for the demands of the crisis, one and the same report told men that Augustus was dead and that Tiberius Nero was master of the State."⁷⁰

Cassius Dio also had this to say about Augustus Caesar's last days:

"Now when Augustus was growing weary by reason of old age and the feebleness of his body, so that he could not attend to the business of all those who needed his care, though he continued personally, with his assistants, to investigate judicial cases and to pass judgment, seated on the tribunal in the palace, he entrusted to three ex-consuls the embassies sent to Rome by peoples and kings; these, sitting separately, gave audience to such embassies and made answer to them, except in matters in which the final decision had of necessity to be rendered by the senate and Augustus."⁷¹

Despite the statement by Cassius Dio that Augustus had been "sole ruler" since the battle at Actium⁷² (a statement which is shown to be false), a co-regency might well be confirmed by him when he informs us, in connection with Tiberius' war against the Dalmatians, that:

"In this way the war was ended after the loss of many men and immense treasure; for ever so many legions were maintained for this campaign and but little booty was taken. On this occasion, also, Germanicus announced the victory; and because of it **Augustus and Tiberius** were permitted to add the title of *imperator* to their other titles and to celebrate a triumph..."⁷³

As already stated, forty-two years prior to 70 CE takes us back to 28 CE. In that year, Passover occurred on a Wednesday in late April. If Luke was working to a 26½ year reign for Tiberius, this 28 CE date would then equate to the 18th year of Tiberius. This would then support the 3½ year ministry which we have proposed above. Note that if Tiberius only ruled for 23 years, calculating 42 years back from the destruction of the temple in 70 CE would place the crucifixion in the 14th year of Tiberius' reign, but Luke (3:1) clearly states that John the Baptist started preaching in the 15th year of Tiberius! This is probably the reason why Eusebius argued that Yehoshua's **ministry** started 42 years before the destruction of Jerusalem,⁷⁴ rather than the Crucifixion, because he could not get the dates to align. It also explains why most scholars today cannot work out the Biblical chronology.

Both Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian believed that the birth of Yehoshua and the

⁷⁰ Tacitus, *The Annals* [1.5](#).

⁷¹ *Dio's Roman History* [55.33.5](#).

⁷² *Dio's Roman History* [56.30.5](#).

⁷³ *Dio's Roman History* [56.17.1](#). (Emphasis mine.)

⁷⁴ Eusebius, *Chronicon* [42](#).

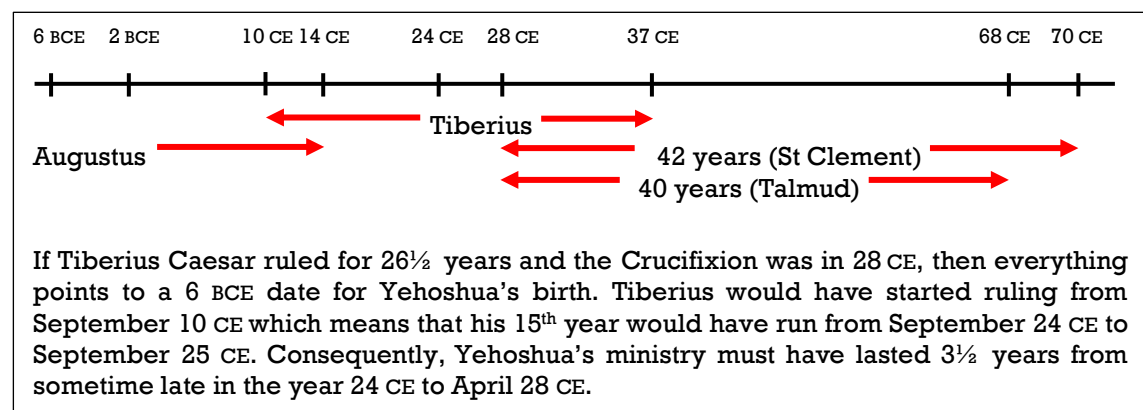
taxation both occurred in the 28th year of Augustus Caesar's 43 year reign.⁷⁵ This dates the birth to 2 BCE. Eusebius dates both of these events (the census and the birth) to the 42nd year of Augustus,⁷⁶ but he has worked on the basis that Augustus ruled for 57 years. This also places the birth in 2 BCE.

Tertullian and St Clement both allegedly performed their calculations from the time when “Antony killed himself at Alexandria ... when Augustus was made consul for the fourth time”.⁷⁷

"In his treatise, 'An Answer to the Jews' he [i.e. Tertullian] wrote, 'Let us see, moreover, how in the forty-first years of the empire of Augustus, when he had been reigning XX and VIII years after the death of Cleopatra Christ is born.' Thus Tertullian placed the date of the birth of Jesus in the twenty-eight year after Cleopatra's death. She died on the first day of the seventh month, renamed Augustus, in the year 30 BCE. Twenty-eight years after the death of Cleopatra would be the year 2 BCE."⁷⁸

We should bear in mind that there are no extant records, either in the Roman records or in the Jewish records, which give a date for the taxation mentioned by Luke other than the one preserved by Josephus, which we shall look at in a moment. Bear in mind that, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, the temple, along with any records contained therein, would have been destroyed by the conflagration. Both Tertullian and St Clement would have had to calculate backwards using the Gospels as a guide.

Let us then put ourselves in their shoes. Their **only** evidence for the date of Christ's birth is the entry in Luke 3:1-2 which tells us that Yehoshua was "about 30" years of age in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. If Eusebius, Tertullian and St Clement all based their calculations on a 22-23 year reign for Tiberius Caesar, they would have arrived at a 2 BCE date for his birth. If, however, Luke was working on the basis that Tiberius ruled for 26½ years, being the number of years some writers claimed he ruled for (as revealed by St Clement), then the date of birth gets pushed back to 6 BCE. Tertullian states, in his treatise against Marcion, that in the time of Yehoshua a census was taken in Judaea by Sentius Saturninus, who was the governor of Syria during the years 9-6 BCE, and that there was historical proof to this effect.⁷⁹ No one has yet found



⁷⁵ *The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus* op. cit. p.3. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.21.

⁷⁶ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.5.

⁷⁷ *Stromata op. cit.* 1.21.

⁷⁸ *The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus op. cit. p.3.*

⁷⁹ *The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus* op. cit. p.3.
The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus p.3, Solomon Zeitlin, The Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Jul 1964).
 Tertullian, *Treatise Against Marcion* 4.19.

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what that 'historical proof' comprised, but a 6 BCE date certainly better fits the facts and also aligns with a 4 BCE date for the death of Herod.

The Date of Herod's Death

Everyone is so geared towards fitting the crucifixion to a Friday Passover that they all look for a Friday crucifixion date which is no earlier than 31 CE. Consequently, they calculate his birth to around 2 BCE or later, but this then means that he was born *after* Herod died. To get around this conundrum, several scholars, instead of challenging the traditional Friday Passover date, have instead proposed that the 4 BCE date for Herod's death should be challenged. These include W. E. Filmer, Ernest L. Martin, Ormond Edwards, and (in the latest edition of his *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*) Jack Finegan, who have all argued that the date usually assigned to Herod's death is much too early.⁸⁰ Most scholars have assumed that, when talking of the lunar eclipse which occurred shortly before Herod's death,⁸¹ Josephus was referring to the partial eclipse which occurred on 13 March 4 BCE. This would have been about a month before the beginning of Passover, which they claim fell on 11 April of that year. It is being proposed by the aforesaid scholars, however, that Herod died in 1 BCE, arguing that the eclipse which Josephus was referring to was the one which occurred on the 10 January 1 BCE, about three months before the Passover, which they calculate to have fallen on 8th April of that year.⁸² None of these scholars have even entertained the thought that the crucifixion could have been as early as 28 CE.

The main objections to this revision of the date of Herod's death is that Josephus reports that:

- Herod was appointed king of Judea by the Roman Senate in the Roman year (running from January to January) when Caius Domitius Calvinus (for the second time) and Caius Asinius Pollio held the office of consul,⁸³ this being 40 BCE.⁸⁴
- Herod conquered Jerusalem in the consular year of Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus,⁸⁵ which occurred in 37 BCE.
- Herod reigned 34 years after his conquest of Jerusalem and 37 years after he was appointed king of Judea by the Senate.⁸⁶

One reason why these dates may be viewed as trustworthy is that the most likely source

⁸⁰ *The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great*, W. E. Filmer, *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1966): pp.283-298; *The Birth of Christ Recalculated*, 2d ed. Ernest L. Martin, Pasadena, Calif.: Foundation for Biblical Research, 1980; *Herodian Chronology*, Ormond Edwards, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (1982): 29-42; *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Jack Finegan, rev. ed. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998, pp.122-123, 291-301. Finegan's earlier endorsement of 5/4 BC may be found in his *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p.392.

⁸¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [17.167](#). ([17.6.4](#) in Whiston's translation.)

⁸² Finegan, *Handbook op. cit.*, rev. ed., 295. The Passover in 1 BCE actually occurred on the 7th April – not 8th April as these scholars claim.

⁸³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [14.14.5](#). ([14.386](#) in Thackeray's translation).

⁸⁴ *Chronology of the Ancient World* p.181, E. J. Bickerman, New York, 1968 & *Handbook of Biblical Chronology op. cit.*, rev. ed., p.84, Jack Finegan.

⁸⁵ Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* [14.16.4](#) ([14.487](#) In Thackeray's translation).

⁸⁶ Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* [17.8.1](#) & *Wars of the Jews* [1.33.8](#).

of precise Roman dates for events connected with Herod's reign, about a century before Josephus' time, was Nicolaus, who was Herod's official historiographer.⁸⁷ Josephus is at pains to tell us, that although he consulted the writings of Nicolaus, he dismissed the author's flattering slant on Herod's character and achievements.⁸⁸ He states earlier in his work that he had also drawn information from Herod's memoirs.⁸⁹ (The rendering "memoirs", offered by Ralph Marcus and Allen Wikgren,⁹⁰ is probably a better translation than William Whiston's "commentaries".) Although the second source was probably distinct from the first, Josephus' knowledge of it may have been limited to whatever was transmitted in the writings of Nicolaus. We may therefore be assured that Josephus was working with reliable information and that Herod died in 4 BCE and not 1 BCE as some scholars are suggesting.

Timothy Barnes, on the other hand, has suggested that the lunar eclipse intended by Josephus is not the partial eclipse on 13 March 4 BCE but the spectacular total eclipse on 15 September 5 BCE.⁹¹ As this correction is fully concordant with a 6 BCE birth, there is no reason why this earlier date cannot be accepted, as it still allows plenty of time for all of the events (such as the arrival of the wise men and Herod killing all male children in the Bethlehem region which were 2 years of age and under) mentioned in the Bible. Herod died a short time after this eclipse (whether the eclipse was in March 4 BCE or September 5 BCE), though Josephus does not say how long afterwards.

One of the biggest complaints by those who study the Gospels is that Herod is known to have died in 4 BCE, but everyone wants to date Yehoshua's birth to sometime after this date! They cannot let go of the teaching that the crucifixion occurred on a Friday.

Herod ordered that every child two years or younger should be slaughtered. (Matt. 2:16.) This then dates the birth of Christ no later than 6 BCE (i.e. two years before Herod's death), so a 6 BCE date perfectly fits all the available evidence. It also accords with the statement by Tertullian that a census was taken in Judaea by Sentius Saturninus, who was the legate of Syria during the years 9-6 BCE.⁹² But, of course, everyone assumes that this date is wrong.

The evidence therefore suggests a 28 CE date for the crucifixion and a 6 BCE date for the birth. It should be noted that Mary and Joseph took Yehoshua to Jerusalem 40 days after the birth (see Lev. 12:1-8) and offered up a poor man's sacrifice of two turtle doves (Luke 2:24). They had not yet been visited by the wise men, who must have arrived around a year or more after the birth, as Mary and Joseph would otherwise have used some of the gold which the wise men gave to them. We are told that the wise men found the family staying in a house (Matt. 2:11). They were no longer staying at the inn. The reason why Herod killed all the male children in Bethlehem "two years old or under" (Matt. 2:16) is because he had ascertained from the wise men when roughly the star

⁸⁷ Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* [16.7.1](#) ([16.183](#)) In Thackeray's translation).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* [15.6.3](#) ([15.174](#)) In Thackeray's translation).

⁹⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, Books XV-XVII, trans. Ralph Marcus and Allen Wikgren (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1990).

⁹¹ *The Date of Herod's Death*, p.209, Timothy D. Barnes, *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968).

⁹² *The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus* p.3, Solomon Zeitlin, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Jul 1964).

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had appeared. The birth therefore had to be sometime within that two year period but longer ago than a few months.

As for the naming of the wise men as Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, this spurious teaching originated in the 7th Century CE. The Bible does not name the wise men and it certainly does not mention how many there were. Someone has looked at the three gifts which are specifically mentioned in Matthew. 2:11 (i.e. gold, frankincense and myrrh) and have invented three names to go with them. It was customary, when entering the presence of a king, to bring a gift of gold. All of the wise men will therefore have brought a gift of gold. We should not assume that these were the only gifts they brought with them either. Christianity has become so full of these false traditions that it has become difficult to separate the truth from the fiction.

Yehoshua was killed during the time of Pontius Pilate, who is understood to have been procurator of Judaea from 26 CE to 36 CE.⁹³ This, however, is problematic seeing that Luke records:

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” (Luke 3:1-2.)

If Yehoshua started his ministry in 24 CE, then Pontius Pilate did not become governor of Judaea till two years later. The solution to this conundrum is actually in the statement that Annas (i.e. Ananias/Hananiah) and Caiaphas were high priests. Luke has therefore summarised Yehoshua's three and a half years' ministry in one sentence. We have already demonstrated that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests at separate times with three high priests (Ismael, Eleazar and Simon⁹⁴) officiating in between. Whilst Pontius Pilate was not governor for the first part of Yehoshua's ministry (unless he was working alongside his predecessor Valerius Gratus), he was certainly governor for the last two years.

It should be noted that Eusebius, quoting Josephus, believed that Pontius Pilate was appointed procurator in the 12th year of Tiberius and that Yehoshua started his ministry three years later in the 15th year of Tiberius.⁹⁵ The problem with this is that the only reference by Josephus to the date of Pontius Pilate's appointment appears to be in Book 18 of his *Antiquities* where he first lists the appointment of the priests from Annas to Caiaphas (mentioned above) by Valerius Gratus. Pontius Pilate actually succeeded Valerius Gratus **after** the appointment of Caiaphas. Josephus gives no indication of when Pontius Pilate actually took office. It is interesting to note, however, that the 12th year of Tiberius, if Tiberius only ruled for 22½ years, would fall in 26 to 28 CE, which is when Pontius Pilate is understood to have actually assumed office. This means that Eusebius was basing his calculations on a reign of 22½ years for Tiberius Caesar thereby making Yehoshua's ministry start 3 years later, being the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar

⁹³ *Ibid.* pp.4 & 6.

⁹⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [18.2.2](#) ([18.33-34](#), Thackeray.)

⁹⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* [1.9.3](#).

according to the conventional dates. As you can see, by recognising that Luke was working to a 26½ year reign for Tiberius Caesar, these ‘anomalies’ are easily overcome.

From this, it should become apparent that the information which has been preserved by these early church historians is faulty and it would be unwise to assume that what has been accepted as a firm chronology for this period is reliable. By making these adjustments to Tiberius Caesar’s length of reign, the chronology is now re-established on a more solid foundation. No longer can there be any dispute over the dating of Yehoshua’s birth or crucifixion, nor with the 4 BCE date for Herod’s death. It now becomes abundantly clear that Luke was working on the basis that Tiberius ruled for 26½ years – **not** 22½ years as has been proposed and accepted.

The Birth

There is an inscription on a marble statue of a seated male figure, which was discovered in the cemetery of the Via Tiburtina in Rome, where Hippolytus, a second century theologian, was buried. On the chair is an inscription giving the day and month of Yehoshua’s birth. The inscription clarifies an entry in a fragment of a manuscript where the date of Yehoshua’s birth has been deliberately removed:

“In his own *Commentary on Daniel*, probably composed in 202, of which only a fragment survives, Hippolytus says, with a gap in the extant text, ... that the first appearance of our Lord in the flesh took place in Bethlehem ‘on the fourth day before the . . . of April, on the eighth day before the Kalends of January on a fourth day (of the week, i.e., Wednesday)’ (πρὸ τεσσάρων ἀπριλίων ἐγένετο πρὸ ὀκτῶ καλανδῶν Ἰανουαρίων ἡμέρᾳ τετράδι). Likewise in the cycle of Easter dates inscribed on the sides of the marble chair of Hippolytus (discovered in 1551 at the burial place of Hippolytus on the Via Tiburtina, now in the Lateran Museum) one item contains the abbreviated words π(ρὸ) ὁ νω(νῶν) ἀπρ(ει) (λίωv), ‘the fourth day before the Nones of April,’ against which is the notation γένεσις Χ(ριστο)ῦ, ‘birth of Christ.’ Therefore the text in Hippolytus’ *Commentary on Daniel* may be completed as reading ‘on the fourth day before the Nones of April,’ and since the Nones are the fifth day of the month the date, counted inclusively, is the second day of April.”⁹⁶

This means that whilst most manuscripts of Hippolytus’ *Commentary on the Prophet Daniel* have December 25th as the day of Yehoshua’s birth, we have an older copy of the manuscript which gives an April date. This suggests that Hippolytus’ works have been doctored at some early date to conform to a 25th December date. We should bear in mind that when Jerusalem fell to the Romans, there were strong anti-Jewish sentiments. Anyone who continued to adhere to the Jewish feasts and Jewish practices were branded as ‘Judaizers’ and heretics. The 25th December had already been proclaimed by Julius Caesar to be the Winter Solstice and was to become the day which was venerated by the Romans. When Emperor Aurelian dedicated his temple to *Sol Invictus* (the unconquered sun), the 25th December became the official state holiday and it was not long before it was adopted by Christians as the birthday of Yehoshua.

⁹⁶ *The Archaeology of the New Testament: the Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church* [p.xlvj](#), Jack Finegan, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1992. See also *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* [p.275](#), Allen Brent, E.J. Brill, Leiden, New York, Koln 1995.

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Due to the drifting of the calendar, the Winter Solstice today falls on the 21st December, but for many years, the Romans recognised the 25th December as being the Winter Solstice. Concerning this fixing of the 25th December as the day of the Winter Solstice, Pliny records:

“The winter solstice begins at the eighth degree of Capricorn, the eighth day before the calends of January, in general...”⁹⁷

The eighth day before the calends of January works out as being the 25th December. Pliny proceeds to describe the division of the year and the agricultural labours during each season, ascribing the divisions of the year to Caesar – referring to Julius Caesar. This 25th December date was to become a special day of festivity when Emperor Aurelian dedicated the day to *Sol Invictus*, ‘the unconquered sun’.

Quoting Bamber Gascoigne:

“The Romans had a collector’s attitude to religion and every aspiring ruler was on the look-out for any new god powerful enough to help him grab and then hold on to the throne. In 274 Aurelian believed that the sun-god had brought him victory in Syria. He set up a state cult to Sol Invictus, the unconquered sun: and announced that the birthday of the sun, a day of special festivity, was December 25th. The sun’s halo, as well as the date of his birthday, would later be borrowed by Christianity. A little later Diocletian declared Mithras, who was very popular with the army, to be the god who was ‘protector of the empire’. After slaying the bull, Mithras made a sacrificial meal of it: and his followers re-enacted this with a ritual of bread and wine. The Christians, understandably, were outraged at the infringement of their rites.”⁹⁸

The 25th December therefore has absolutely nothing to do with the birth of Christ. Later in this paper we shall consider evidence that the first Christians were keeping the feasts which God gave to us at the hands of his servant Moses, the feasts which most people today dismiss as being ‘Jewish’. The Roman Catholic church abolished the feast days, which the apostles had taught and kept, and substituted them with their own!

It should be stressed that Hippolytus believed that Yehoshua was born in the 42nd year of Augustus Caesar, which works out to be 2 BCE. Note that he likewise assumed that Augustus Caesar’s reign began in the year that Julius Caesar died. Hippolytus also believed that the crucifixion occurred in the 18th year of Tiberius Caesar “in his thirty-third year of life”.⁹⁹ If Yehoshua was born at Passover in 6 BCE and died in 28 CE, then Yehoshua had in fact just that very day attained the age of 33, as 6 BCE to 28 CE is precisely 33 years. Again, Hippolytus would have calculated backwards from the 15th year of Tiberius and would have wrongly assumed that Luke was working to a reign of 22½ years for Tiberius Caesar. Just to confuse matters, Hippolytus introduced the idea that the crucifixion occurred “when Gaius (Caligula) was consul for the fourth time together with Gaius Cestius Saturninus”, which event is known to have occurred in 41 CE.¹⁰⁰ Hence in this, Hippolytus was mistaken.

⁹⁷ Pliny, *Natural History* 18.59. (See footnote 29 on [p.78](#) in *The Natural History of Pliny* Vol. 4, John Bostock and Henry Thomas Riley, Bohn Classical Library, London 1856.)

⁹⁸ *The Christians* pp. 29-30, Bamber Gascoigne, Granada Publishing, London, Toronto, Sydney and New York, 1980.

⁹⁹ *The Archaeology of the New Testament* op. cit. [p.xlvi](#).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

For some reason or other, G. Salmon calculated that Hippolytus was dating Christ's birth to 1 BCE and the crucifixion to 29 CE, but went on to point out that this then meant that Yehoshua would only have been 29 years of age at his death!¹⁰¹ Furthermore, unable to let go of the December birth date, G. Salmon argued that the April date was actually the date of conception rather than the date of birth. This paper shows that these assumptions have shaped people's interpretation of the evidence rather than allowing the evidence to speak for itself.

14 th Nisan 6 BCE	Birth of Yehoshua. In this same year Sentius Saturninus is replaced by Publius Quinctilius Varus as governor of Syria.
4 BCE	Herod dies.
6 CE	Judea is annexed to Syria and Cyrenius taxes the Jews a year later in 7 CE.
14 th Nisan 7 CE	Yehoshua preaches in the temple at 12 years of age
Late 24 CE	Yehoshua baptised by John the Baptist. (15 th year of Tiberius who ruled for 26 years and six months.) Yehoshua was 29½ years old.
14 th Nisan 28 CE	Yehoshua crucified at the 9 th hour of Passover being the very hour when the most observant of the Jews killed the Passover lambs. Yehoshua was precisely 33 years old.
9 th Av 70 CE	The temple in Jerusalem destroyed 42 years and 3 months after the crucifixion.
The course of events from the birth to the destruction of the temple.	

We have seen that St Clement and the Talmud both provide evidence to show that the crucifixion occurred in 28 CE. Working backwards, Yehoshua's birth must have occurred in 6 BCE, though we should bear in mind that when Luke tells us that Yehoshua was "about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23), he could be saying that Yehoshua was 29+ or that he was 30+ years of age. Nevertheless, an April date in 6 BCE perfectly matches all the evidence. In Jerusalem, the 14th Nisan (i.e. Passover) would seemingly have fallen on or around the 2nd April in 6 BCE (according to the Julian Calendar, which is what Hippolytus would have been working to).¹⁰² If we accept the 2nd April date provided by the statue of

Hippolytus, then Yehoshua must have been born at Passover in 6 BCE, which, it seems, would have fallen on a Friday in that year – not a Wednesday as calculated by Hippolytus.

A 6 BCE Passover date for Yehoshua's birth therefore seems to fit all the facts, including the realisation that this would perfectly accord with a 4 BCE date for the death of Herod the Great. Further evidence for a Spring birth is provided by the second century Church Father St Clement of Alexandria who recorded:

¹⁰¹ *The Commentary of Hippolytus on Daniel* p.171, G. Salmon, Hermathena Vol. 8, No. 18, Trinity College Publications, Dublin 1892.

¹⁰² Information provided to me in a personal email from the United States Naval Observatory (USNO) on 24 Feb 2020 who tell me that the new moon occurred on the 19 March at 9pm, being the 1st of Nisan. The 14th of Nisan would therefore have occurred on 1st April. We cannot be ultra-precise as it depends on the sighting of the new moon as well as the difference between the Dynamical Time (defined by a fractional amount of the Earth's orbit around the Sun) against Universal Time (based on the Earth's rotation about its axis). The Julian date is also subject to any adjustments which Augustus will at that time have made to the calendar. (NB: I subsequently found the following website which also gives the same 1st April date: <http://www.observadores-cometas.com/cometas/Star/Passover.html>.)

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“And there are those who have determined not only the year of our Lord’s birth, but also the day; and they say that it took place in the twenty- eighth year of Augustus, and in the twenty-fifth day of Pachon...

Further, others say that He was born on the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of Pharmuthi.”¹⁰³

Pachon and Pharmuthi are both names of Egyptian months. The problem is that the Egyptian calendar wandered, but in 81 CE, according to the Alexandrian calendar, the month Pharmuthi fell in March/April and the month of Pachon fell sometime in April/May and it is believed “on mathematical grounds” that the Alexandrian and Julian calendars have remained fairly similar since around 26 BCE, though, “on historical grounds [the German archaeologist Karl Richard] Lepsius came to the conclusion that it must have been introduced between 8 B.C. and 5 A.D.”.¹⁰⁴

To put the problem into context:

“When Julius Caesar reformed the calendar in 46 B.C., he provided a year of 365 days with an extra day every fourth year, but the pontiffs misunderstood the intercalation and added a day every third year. The consequence was that after 36 years there would have been 12 intercalations instead of 9. Augustus to remedy this directed that there should be no intercalation in the 37th year, 41st year, or 45th year, so that the calendar would be brought back to its original position... ...While this change is well known to Roman chronologists, it has been usually completely overlooked by authors dealing with the date of introduction of the Alexandrian calendar.”¹⁰⁵

The writer goes on to explain that in the years 5 BCE to 2 BCE, the month of August only had 30 days, and between 1 BCE to 4 CE only 29 days.

Either way, the amount of deviation in 6 BCE would not have been noticeable, meaning that these Egyptian months would still have fallen sometime in the Spring months. St Clement lived in the second half of the second century CE (ca. 150 CE to ca. 215 CE) which makes this and the Hippolytus statue the earliest records we possess of anyone considering the date of Christ’s birth and they clearly show that the people of that time believed that Yehoshua was born in the Spring – **not** in the middle of Winter! The 25th December date came much later.

It is interesting to note, that according to Rabbinical tradition, the patriarchs died on the same day and in the same month in which they were born:

“R. Jehoshua, says: In Nissan the world was created, and in the same month the patriarchs were born, and in Nissan they also died; Isaac was born on the Passover; on New Year’s Day Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were visited, Joseph was released from prison, and the bondage of our fathers in Egypt ceased. In Nissan our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt, and in the same month we shall again be redeemed.”¹⁰⁶

As already pointed out, Luke tells us that Yehoshua was “about thirty years of age” when

¹⁰³ *Stromata* [1.21](#).

¹⁰⁴ Scheme of Egyptian Chronology [p.316](#), Duncan MacNaughton, Luzac & Co., London, 1932.

¹⁰⁵ Scheme of Egyptian Chronology [p.317-8](#), Duncan MacNaughton, Luzac & Co., London, 1932.

¹⁰⁶ Tractate [Rosh Hashanah 1](#). Also “As the Master said (*Tosefta* 11:7): Moses died on the seventh of Adar, and Moses was born on the seventh of Adar.” ([Sotah 12b:17](#).)

he started his ministry. (Luke 3:23.) In Luke 2:41-3, we are told that Yehoshua was 12 years of age when he went up to the Passover. Notice that he does not say that Yehoshua was “about 12 years of age”. This suggests that Yehoshua had just reached that age. Although Jews nowadays regard boys as reaching manhood at the age of 13 (which is when they have a Bar Mitzvah ceremony), this practice is unattested prior to the 13th Century CE, which is when it first became a French Jewish custom.¹⁰⁷

Josephus, however, informs us that boys were considered men from the age of 12 upwards. In discussing the return from Babylon which occurred during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, Josephus records:

“However, the total number of those who went from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and were **at least twelve years of age** was 48,462.”¹⁰⁸

He also tells us that Samuel was 12 years old when he began to prophesy.¹⁰⁹ Whilst the Bible does not confirm either of these statements, it is clear that in Josephus’ day the twelfth year (rather than the thirteenth) was regarded as being the age for attaining manhood. The important thing to note is that Yehoshua was 12 years of age when ‘his parents’ went up to keep the Passover. As Luke does not use the expression ‘about 12 years of age’ (as he does when he talks about the start of Yehoshua’s ministry) Yehoshua must have only just attained that age giving credence to a March/April birth. Also, Joseph was presumably at that time still alive, as I am certain that Luke would have named his parents if they had been anyone else.

If Yehoshua had been born in December 6 BCE, then he would only have been 28 years of age when he started his 3½ year ministry in 24 CE, but Luke says that he was ‘about 30’. If we are to accept a December birth, then we would have to push his birth back to December 7 BCE, but then you have to assume that Tertullian, St Clement, Hippolytus and Eusebius were all one year out with their calculations. The fact is that we have an inscription on a statue dated to the second century CE which states the date of birth as being 2 April. We also have the statement by St Clement, likewise dated to the second century CE, that Christians at that time were recognising a Spring birth (either Pharmuthi or Pachon). This, combined with the fact that Luke records that Yehoshua was 12 years old at Passover, and the evidence which shows that the Roman Church substituted God’s feast days with pagan ones, all tips the scales in favour of a Passover birth.

The Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night

We are informed that, when Christ was born, the shepherds were ‘living in the fields’ and ‘watching their flocks by night’. The Greek word ἀγραιοῦντες *agraiountes* translated as ‘abiding in the field’ or ‘out in the field’ means just that! The Greek word translated as ‘watch’ is φυλακᾶς *phulakas* which means to ‘watch’ or ‘keep guard’. The

¹⁰⁷ Section *How Bar Mitzvah Began* in *Bar Mitzvah, A History* p.13, Rabbi Michael Hilton, University of Nebraska Press, Jewish Publication Society, 2014 – referring to the book *Sefer Hattur* by Rabbi Isaac the son of Abba Mari of Marseilles, Provence (c.1122 - c.1193).

¹⁰⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [11.69](#).

¹⁰⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [5.10.4](#) (Whiston) or [5.348](#) (Thackeray).

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question has been raised, “why were they watching/guarding their flocks?”

The suggestion has been made by some Christians that the shepherds were watching the sheep because it was the lambing season. They go on to conclude that this was in the Spring because, in the western nations, this is when the lambing season occurs. Putting two and two together, they are then presenting this as proof that Yehoshua was born in the Spring. On the face of it, this explanation sounds reasonable, but it has already been dismissed by most Biblical scholars who point out that the lambing season in the Middle East generally occurred during the months of December and January. In fact, the lambing season for Awassi sheep, this being the breed of sheep which is popular in Syria and Jordan today, lasts between November and early February.¹¹⁰

More importantly, do the Jewish records provide any information on when lambing used to take place? The answer is in the affirmative. The Talmud contains the following information:

“R. Meir reasoned: When do the rams mount the sheep? At the time when the valleys are covered over with corn. And when are the valleys covered over with corn? In Adar. The sheep conceive in Adar and bear in Ab.”¹¹¹

The month of Ab is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar, hence falls roughly in July/August. We are therefore hard pressed to argue for a March/April lambing season.

There are also a growing number of Christians who argue that the shepherds would not be watching their flocks in the middle of Winter because of the cold weather. Again, the Talmud shows that this assumption is also wrong:

“To what extent is a paid bailee bound to guard [his flock]? Even as far as, Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, **and the frost by night?** ... He [i.e. Abaye] raised another objection: If a shepherd, who was guarding his flock, left it and entered the town, and a wolf came and destroyed [a sheep]; or a lion, and tore it to pieces, we do not say, ‘Had he been there, he could have saved them;’ but estimate his strength: if he could have saved them, he is responsible; if not, he is exempt. Surely it means that he entered [the town] when other people generally do? – No. He entered when people do not generally enter. If so, why is he not responsible? Where there is negligence in the beginning, though subsequently an accident supervenes, he is liable! [i.e. for the loss of the sheep.]”¹¹²

This confirms that shepherds *did* guard their flocks even in the cold weather. They were guarding against wolves and lions. Luke’s statement that they were watching their flocks at night cannot therefore be used for the purposes of dating as they could effectively have been watching their flocks at any time during the year.

Likewise, some Christians are pointing to an alignment of the planets, which they claim occurred in 6 BCE, as the reason for the wise men visiting Jerusalem. The Gospel of Matthew, however, which is the only book which mentions these wise men, talks about the **appearance** of a specific star “in the east”. (Matt. 2:2.) Herod likewise mentions the “appearance” of the star (Matt 2:7), which, we are told, “went before them, till it came

¹¹⁰ *Awassi Sheep Reproduction and Milk Production* pp.1320-21, Abdelsalam Talafha and Mohammed Ababneh, Tropical Animal Health and Production, Vol. 43(7), April 2011.

¹¹¹ *Rosh HaShana* 8a (Babylonian Talmud).

¹¹² *Baba Metzia* 93b and 106a (Babylonian Talmud).

and stood over where the young child was". (Matt: 2:9.) The wise men therefore followed a moving star. This then was **not** an alignment of planets!

We therefore have to be very careful what we accept as evidence and not jump to conclusions simply because something initially sounds credible. We should test everything and not read more into what is recorded unless we can find corroborative supporting evidence to validate such interpretation.

Zechariah and the Priestly Course of Abiyah

In Luke 1:26, we are told that Yehoshua was conceived in Mary's womb in the **sixth month** of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Elizabeth conceived immediately after her husband Zechariah performed his duties in the temple. Zechariah was of the priestly course of Abia (Luke 1:5 Ἀβιά or אֲבִיָּה AV Abijah), who are 8th on the priestly rota. (1 Chron. 24:10.) Whilst there was some slight overlap from year to year, Zechariah would have performed his priestly duties at the end of the second/beginning of the third month of the Hebrew calendar (late April/May) and again at the end of the eighth/beginning of the ninth month (late October/November). Six months from then brings us back round to either of these two periods. Nine months from then (assuming a normal gestation period) brings us either to the **eleventh/twelfth month** (Feb/Mar) or the **fourth/fifth month** (Aug/Sep) of the Hebrew calendar.

On this basis, a December or January date would therefore be completely out of the question. A late March or early April date would, however, be perfectly feasible. That said, when we come to look at the Qumran Texts, we find that in one particular year the priestly course of Abijah performed their priestly duties at Passover. Again, those who use this passage as a means of dating need to exercise caution. Unless we know precisely when the course of Abijah performed their services in the year prior to Yehoshua's birth in 6 BCE, it is impossible to use this statement in Luke as a means of calculating when Yehoshua was born.

Yehoshua's Genealogy

There are some, on the authority of Eusebius, who claim that Jacob, the father of Joseph, was the brother of Eli (or Heli), and that when Jacob died, his wife remarried Eli. This, according to Eusebius, is why Joseph is called 'son of Jacob' in the book of Matthew and 'son of Eli' in the book of Luke.¹¹³ This explanation, however, does not stand up to scrutiny. We should bear in mind that Yehoshua was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was **not** the biological father of Yehoshua. Luke does **not** say that Joseph was the son of Eli:

"And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli..." (Luke 3:23.)

¹¹³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* [1.7](#).

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We should bear in mind that there is no punctuation or brackets in the original Greek or Hebrew texts. The above passage can therefore also be translated as follows:

“And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed the son of Joseph) the son of Heli...”

This simple change moves the emphasis from Yehoshua being a son of Joseph to being a son of Heli. Luke is therefore presenting us with Mary’s genealogy rather than that of Joseph.

The Census

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was **first made** when Cyrenius **was governor of Syria**.)” (Luke 2:1-2.)

We will often hear a date of around 6 CE being proposed for this taxation:

“Luke tells that Jesus was born at the time when Cyrenius (Quirinius) the legate of Syria took a census of all the inhabitants of Judaea on the order of Augustus Caesar...”

“The first census that Cyrenius had taken was at the time when Archelaus was deposed from his kingdom and Judaea became a province of Rome...”

“When Augustus Caesar confirmed Archelaus as ethnarch of Judaea, in accordance with the will of Herod, Rome did not take a census of Judaea as it was an independent state. Rome took a census of Judaea when it became a province of Rome in the year 6 CE.”¹¹⁴

This information comes from the statement in Josephus which states:

“Quirinius, a Roman senator who had proceeded through all the magistracies to the consulship and a man who was extremely distinguished in other respects, arrived in Syria, dispatched by Caesar to be governor of the nation [i.e. of Syria] and to make an assessment of their property. Coponius, a man of equestrian rank, was sent along with him to rule over the Jews with full authority. Quirinius also visited Judaea, **which had been annexed to Syria**, in order to make an assessment of the property of the Jews, and to liquidate the estate of Archelaus.”¹¹⁵

He continues by informing us that this taxation occurred “in the thirty-seventh year after [Augustus] Caesar’s defeat of Antony at Actium”,¹¹⁶ this battle having occurred in September 31 BCE according to Josephus’ calculations, but most scholars would date the battle to 30 BCE. Year 1 of the Actian era was the year in which the battle took place, being “the year *ending* 22nd September, B.C. 31, although the battle of Actium was fought as late as 2nd September, 31 (so that year 1 of this era came to an end three weeks after it began)”.¹¹⁷ If we follow Josephus’ calculations, then the 37th year would equate to 6 CE, but if we move the Battle of Actium to 30 BCE, then we would need to move the census forward a year to 7 CE. It is therefore important that we understand to

¹¹⁴ *The Dates of the Birth and the Crucifixion of Jesus* pp.1-2, Solomon Zeitlin, *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Jul 1964).

¹¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [18.1-2](#) (emphasis mine).

¹¹⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [18.26](#).

¹¹⁷ *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?: A Study on the Credibility of St. Luke* [p.222](#), Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, London, 1898.

what dates these writers were working, in order to correctly interpret the evidence. Whether technically those dates are correct is immaterial.

Most scholars today regard the census which occurred in 6 CE as being the **first** census taken of Judaea and use the statement by Josephus as evidence for this. Clearly the birth of Christ cannot be reconciled with this 6 CE date as it is around 9 years after Herod died and the Gospel writers quite specifically state that Yehoshua was born whilst Herod was alive. As a result, it is argued that Luke has made a mistake.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to point out that the statement by Solomon Zeitlin quoted above that “Luke tells that Jesus was born at the time when Cyrenius (Quirenius) the legate of Syria took a census of all the inhabitants of Judaea” is simply false. Luke made no such claim. Luke only said that the census took place **when** Cyrenius was governor of Syria. He did not say that Cyrenius **conducted** the census. That is an **assumption** which Zeitlin and others have made. Syria had no control over Judaea until 6 CE which is around 12 years later! Is it any wonder then that historians and Bible scholars cannot reconcile the Bible with the historical records?

In 1898, Sir William Ramsay put forward cohesive arguments for a census having taken place in 6 BCE, but for some reason, most scholars today ignore Ramsay’s work and still try to discredit Luke’s statement that Quirinius was governor of Syria that early. The key to understanding what Luke tells us is that we are told “in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled/taxed” (Luke 2:1 RSV translation). We know that a taxation occurred in Syria in the year 8-7 BCE:

“The first enrolment in Syria was made in the year 8-7 B.C., but a consideration of the situation in Syria and Palestine about that time will show that the enrolment in Herod’s kingdom was probably delayed for some time later.”¹¹⁸

That there was more than the one enrolment is confirmed by archaeological evidence:

“The evidence for the second periodic enrolment in Syria lies in the chance preservation of an inscription in which a Roman officer recorded his service at Apameia; but this evidence was long discredited as a forgery, made in modern times by some person who wanted to illustrate Luke, and pretended to have copied the inscription from a stone. The demolition of a house in Venice revealed the stone, and justified the inscription.

“The evidence for the fourth periodic inscription is found in Tacitus. Had the authority been a mere Christian, his words would have been ridiculed and disregarded.”¹¹⁹

There was therefore more than the one taxation. The taxation everyone looks at, however, is the one which Josephus records, which occurred in 6 CE when Judaea was **annexed** to Syria. The reason why Josephus specifically mentioned this particular census is because of the Jewish revolt which took place in that year. The Syrians had of old been enemies to the Jews. It was no doubt the annexation of Judaea to Syria which sparked the revolt rather than the taxation itself.

The Romans did not consider censuses taken outside of Rome to be of any consequence:

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* [p.174.](#)

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* [p.168.](#)

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“In a number of cases nothing except the census of Roman citizens is recorded. Almost all Romans, with characteristic Roman pride, regarded a census of the subject population as beneath the dignity of historical record. Augustus himself, in that famous record of his achievements, which is commonly known as the *Monumentum Ancyranum*, mentions only his census of Roman citizens. Distinct evidence exists that the first and second periodic enrolments were carried out in Syria; but the Emperor thought them unworthy of notice in his review of his services to the State.”¹²⁰

It was not until evidence emerged from “the graves and rubbish-heaps of Egypt” that we had any idea of the amount of detailed information the Romans collected in those censuses or that such censuses were frequent.¹²¹ If that data had not survived, we would be none the wiser. When people look at the comment made by Josephus and **assume** that this was the **only** census undertaken, then they are making a false assumption.

This now brings us to the all-important question of the date of Quirinius’ governorship of Syria. Josephus clearly states that Quirinius took charge of Syria in 6 CE (or 7 CE depending on whether the battle of Actium occurred in 31 BCE or 30 BCE) which clearly causes complications. Furthermore, Josephus informs us that Sentius Saturninus was governor of Syria until 6 BCE, after which the position was held by Publius Quinctilius Varus until just after Herod’s death in 4 BCE. How then does Quirinius fit into the equation?

In 1784, a Latin inscription was discovered near Tivoli, located about twenty miles east of Rome. This inscription, known as the *Lapis Tiburtinus* inscription and now in the Lateran Museum of Christian Antiquities, has proved to be controversial.

According to Sir William Ramsay:

“The inscription records the career and honours of a Roman official who lived in the reign of Augustus, and survived that emperor. He conquered a nation; he was rewarded with two *Supplicationes* and the *Ornamenta Triumphalia*, i.e., the gorgeous dress of a triumphing general, with ivory sceptre and chariot, etc.; he governed Asia as proconsul; and he twice governed Syria as *legatus* of the divine Augustus.

Though the name has perished, yet these indications are sufficient to show with practical certainty (as all the highest authorities are agreed – Mommsen, Borghesi, de Rossi, Henzen, Dessau, and others), that the officer who achieved this splendid career was Publius Sulpicius Quirinius. His government of Syria, A.D. 6-9, was therefore his second tenure of that office. He had administered Syria at some previous time.”¹²²

This understanding, however, is not without its difficulties:

“The supreme authority on the subject, Mommsen, considers that the most probable date for Quirinius’s first government of Syria is about B.C. 3-1; but the question is involved in serious doubts, which Mommsen fully acknowledges.”¹²³

This, of course, dates his governorship to sometime after the death of Herod and we have already dated the birth of Yehoshua to 6 BCE.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* [p.166.](#)

¹²¹ *Ibid.* [p.170.](#)

¹²² *Ibid.* [pp.227-8.](#)

¹²³ *Ibid.* [p.228.](#)

Ramsay goes on to explain that Luke does not specify exactly what was the Roman office which Quirinius (Cyrenius) held when this first enrolment was made:

“The Greek word which he uses occurs elsewhere in his History, indicating the office of procurator; and the noun connected with it is even used to indicate the supreme authority exercised by the reigning Emperor in a province... [Luke iii. 1; so ἡγεμῶν, Acts xxiii, 24, 26, 33; xxiv, 1, 10; xxvi. 30.]

“Hence the word, as employed by Luke, might be applied to any Roman official holding a leading and authoritative position in the province of Syria. It might quite naturally denote some special mission of a high and authoritative nature; and many excellent authorities have argued that Quirinius was despatched to Syria on some such mission, and that Luke, in assigning the date, mentions him in preference to the regular governor.”¹²⁴

Ramsay continues by scrutinising what little we know about Quirinius’ career and puts forward a strong case for dating his rule of Syria sometime no later than 5-3 BCE, “and may have been earlier”.¹²⁵ By demonstrating that Yehoshua was born in 6 BCE, it becomes clear that Quirinius must have started ruling from Syria in 6 BCE.

The problem lies in the fact that Josephus tells us that Sentius Saturninus, who was governor of Syria from 9 BCE to 6 BCE, was succeeded by Quintilius Varus:

“At this time there happened to be in Jerusalem Quintillius Varus, who had been sent to succeed Saturninus as governor of Syria and had come at Herod’s request to advise him about the present situation.”¹²⁶

There are two things to bear in mind here. First of all, Josephus is our prime source for this information. We take it for granted that Josephus has not made a mistake. Secondly, if, as Ramsay contends, Quintillius Varus started governing from Syria in July to September 7 BCE, this supposedly being demonstrated by coins of Antioch dating to Actian year 25, then this governorship predates the birth of Yehoshua. He does state, however, that “coins of the Actian year 26 mention the twelfth consulship of Augustus, which did not begin till 1st January, B.C. 5”,¹²⁷ which means that Actian year 25 would have run from sometime in 6 BCE through to 5 BCE. If Varus started minting coins from the time he became governor, there is every possibility that he became governor in the latter half of the year in 6 BCE. There is therefore every likelihood that Quirinius could have held office for a short time after Saturninus up until the time that Varus arrived.

There is, however, no reason why Varus and Quirinius could not have been jointly ruling Syria. This division of military power has already been noticed with other governors:

“The question will be put, and must be answered, whether such a temporary division of duties in the Province is in accordance with the Roman Imperial practice. Such a theory is not permissible, unless it is defended by analogous cases and by natural probability. The theory was first suggested to my mind by the analogous case of the African administration, which from the time of Caligula onwards was divided in such a way, that the military power, and with it the foreign policy of the Province, was

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* [p.229](#).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* [p.236](#).

¹²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [17.89](#).

¹²⁷ *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? op. cit.* NOTE I on [p.247](#).

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controlled by a Lieutenant of Augustus (*Legatus Augusti pro praetore*), while the internal affairs of the Province were left to the ordinary governor, a Proconsul.

“Almost simultaneously with my papers on the subject there appeared a memoir by Monsieur R. S. Bour, in which he quotes some other analogies to justify this view. He points out that Vespasian conducted the war in Palestine, while Mucianus was governor of Syria, from which Palestine was dependent. Tacitus (*Histories* 1.10) styles Vespasian *dux*, which is not a strictly official title, but exactly describes his actual duty. He was a Lieutenant of the reigning Emperor Nero, holding precisely the same title and technical rank as Mucianus. We suppose that Quirinius stood in exactly the same relation to Varus as Vespasian in regard to Mucianus. Quirinius was a special Lieutenant of Augustus, who conducted the war against the Homonadenses [in Cilicia], while Varus administered the ordinary affairs of Syria.”¹²⁸

We return to the word ἡγεμών *egemon* used by Luke and translated as ‘governor’. In his discussion of Varus’ appointment, Josephus uses the word ἀρχὴς *arkhes* for governor. This word is more indicative of someone with overall authority and can be translated as ‘leadership, power, rule, magistrate, government, territory or empire’. The word used by Luke indicates some lower authority.

“The question will perhaps be put whether Luke could rightly describe the authority of Quirinius by the words ‘holding the *Hegemonia* of Syria’. The preceding exposition leaves no doubt on this point. The usage of Luke shows that he regards *Hegemonia* in the provinces as the attribute both of the Emperor and of the officers to whom the Emperor delegates his power. Now that is quite true in point of fact. The Emperor primarily held the supreme authority in Syria (which was one of the Imperial provinces, as distinguished from those which were administered by the Senate through the agency of its officers, entitled Proconsuls). But the Emperor could not himself be present in Syria or in Palestine, hence he delegated to substitutes, or Lieutenants, the exercise of his authority in the various provinces which were under his own direct power. These substitutes, when of senatorial rank, bore the title *Legatus Augusti pro praetore*, and when of equestrian rank the title *Procurator cum jure gladii*; but both *Legati* and *Procuratores* are called by Luke *Hegemones*, as exercising the *Hegemonia* that belongs to the Emperor.”¹²⁹

“Again, Corbulo commanded the armies of Syria in the war against Parthia and Armenia, while Ummidius Quadratus and Cestius Gallus were governors of Syria. Josephus speaks of Gallus, but never mentions the name of Corbulo. We suppose that Quirinius stood in the same relative position as Corbulo, and Josephus preserves the same silence about both.”¹³⁰

Verse 2 of Luke 2 clearly states that he is referring to “the first enrolment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria”. The census in Syria occurred in 8-7 B.C.E. so the one in Judaea must have occurred sometime shortly after – **not** some twelve years later as contended by some scholars.

“He [Luke] tells [us] that this was the first enrolment of the series, but the moderns are determined to misunderstand him. They insist that Luke confused the use of comparative and superlative in Greek, and that we cannot take the full force of the word ‘first’ as ‘first of many’. They go on to put many other stumblingblocks in the way, but

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* [pp.238-9.](#)

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* [p.245.](#)

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* [p.240.](#)

none of these cause any difficulty if we hold fast to the fundamental principle that Luke was a great historian who wrote good Greek of the first century kind.”¹³¹

There is every good reason to accept what Luke has recorded as being factually correct. Admittedly we do not have absolute proof that Quirinius was ruling from Syria in 6 BCE when Yehoshua was born, but by the same token, there is nothing to say that he wasn't.

People like things to be black and white, but life is simply not like that. One group of people will argue that the Bible is the inspired word of God and will not accept that it contains any errors. This is dangerous. The people who have written the Bible, whilst they were certainly inspired by God, were still human and, being human, made errors. When errors are discovered, the natural reaction of these people is to reject the Bible in its entirety.

Another group of people argue that, because the Bible contains errors, it cannot be the inspired word of God. This stance is also dangerous, and the majority of the people in this group tend to dismiss everything that is written in the Bible. If we were to adopt this attitude, every single book on ancient history would need to be binned. The true situation lies somewhere in between these two views. The Bible is a record of history made by writers who tried to produce an accurate record of events, but they were prone to make mistakes. Sometimes those 'mistakes' turn out to be later additions or alterations made by copiers.

We have already mentioned the possible insertion in John 6:4 of a rogue reference to a Passover which was not at that time even remotely close. A more fundamental error is found in the long genealogy found in the first chapter of the Book of Matthew. In verse 8, Matthew jumps straight from Joram (AV Jehoram) to his great great grandson Uzziah (also known as Azariah) missing out Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:25 & 2 Chron. 22:1), Jehoash (2 Kings 12:1 – called Joash in 2 Kings 13:1) and Amaziah (2 Kings 14:1). Uzziah was the son of Amaziah (2 Chron. 26:1).

Matthew has also omitted Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah and father of Jechoniah, in verse 11 (compare 2 Kings 23:34 and Jer. 24:1). Jechoniah, who is also called Coniah by Jeremiah (22:24) and Jehoaichin in the Second Book of Kings, was a son of Jehoiakim and the father of Shealtiel (the latter called Salathiel in 1 Chron. 3:17). Both the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint include these four kings, so it is difficult to understand why Matthew has not included them. In other words, Matthew's statement that "from David to the deportation to Babylon" were "fourteen generations" does not agree with the eighteen generations recorded both in the Hebrew Bible (often referred to as the Old Testament) and the Septuagint! (There are also problems with the genealogies given in the Hebrew Bible, but we shall not go into that here.) Do we then dismiss everything Matthew says simply because the genealogical records do not match? Of course not. But there are some 'purists' who think that this sort of error invalidates everything else that is written.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* [pp.246-7.](#)

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As for Luke's statement that the census took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria, there is no reason why we should not believe what he says. What I find intriguing, however, is that Tertullian claimed that the census occurred whilst Sentius Saturninus was governor of Syria:

"But there is historical proof that at this very time a census had been taken in Judæa by Sentius Saturninus, which might have satisfied their inquiry respecting the family and descent of Christ."¹³²

This indicates that Tertullian believed the census occurred during the time Sentius Saturninus was governor of Syria rather than Quirinius, hence giving us the impression that this was what Luke had originally recorded. It is not impossible then that someone in antiquity has changed the text so that the name Quirinius has been inserted in place of Saturninus. Maybe someone looked at Josephus' comment and assumed that the census which was taken in 6 CE was the one being referred to by Luke. We just do not know.

By proving that Yehoshua was born in 6 BCE and died in 28 CE, we have enough evidence to say that the census in question must have occurred in 6 BCE and it is therefore irrelevant whether Saturninus, Varus or Quirinius was at that time governor of Syria.

What Do We Mean by "Breaking Bread"?

There are a number of instances in the New Testament where reference is made to the breaking of bread. With our Babylonian mindset, there is a tendency to assume that this refers to the breaking of bread which occurred at the Passover meal which Yehoshua kept just before his death, a feast which is usually called The Last Supper, though the Bible does not use these specific words for that last meal. Nothing could be further from the truth!

As shown above, Yehoshua said that he will not eat of the Passover until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. He even said that he will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come (Luke 22:18), yet in Luke 24:30, which is after Yehoshua had risen from the dead, we are told that Yehoshua took bread, gave thanks and broke it. Is then Yehoshua a liar? God forbid no! The expression 'to break bread' is an ancient Greek as well as an ancient English phrase which merely means 'to have a meal'.¹³³ Hence, when it says that they "broke bread together" in Acts 2:42-47, it simply means that they partook of their 'meal' together. It was the Passover meal which Yehoshua will not eat of again until the Kingdom of God is established here on earth.

Also, in Hebrew, the word לֶחֶם *lechem* not only means bread, but can also mean food in general or a meal. For example:

"Let us destroy the tree with the fruit (לֶחֶם *lachmo*) thereof..." (Jer. 11:19)

¹³² Tertullian, *Treatise Against Marcion* 4.19.

¹³³ See **break** sense 44 in Collins Dictionary of the English Language op. cit. where we are told "**44. break bread. a.** to eat a meal".

The word לֶחֶם (*lachmo*), which word is derived from the root Hebrew word לָחַץ *lechem*, can here be translated as 'its fruit' but can equally be translated as 'its bread'. The following are further examples of where the word לָחַץ *lechem* means something other than 'bread':

"Wherefore cometh not the son of Yishai [Jesse] to meat (לֶחֶם *lachem*) neither yesterday nor today?" (1 Sam. 20:27)

"And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food (לֶחֶם *lechem*), for the food (לֶחֶם *lechem*) of thy household and for the maintenance of thy maidens." (Prov. 27:27)

1 Corinthians Chapter 11 is one of the most overused, misunderstood passages in the New Testament. Remember that what is often referred to as the Lord's Supper, although kept by Yehoshua and his disciples a night early, *is* the Passover *seder*:

"When you meet (congregate) together it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat ... [in other words, "You are not keeping the feast as it is meant to be kept"] ... for in eating everyone goes ahead with his own **meal** (Grk. ΔΕΙΠΝΩΝ *Deipnon* – supper or dinner) and one is hungry [i.e. he misses out on the food because others have 'helped themselves'] whilst another is drunk..." (1 Cor. 11:20-21.)

This then was an actual feast which the followers of Yehoshua were keeping **on an annual basis** in remembrance of Christ – not some bread and wine ceremony in which the churches partake every Sunday morning. It is a memorial or remembrance service. The Jews celebrate the Passover in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. (Exod. 12:14.) Many Christians were either thrown into prison, or were unable to keep Passover every year for some other reason, hence the use of the words, "As **often** as you eat of **this** bread and drink of **this** cup..." (1 Corinth. 11:26) referring to the Passover meal. This is **not** a licence to keep it every week!

Bamber Gascoigne aptly describes the circumstances surrounding the adoption by the Roman Catholic church of the pagan elements which now make up their so-called Christian religion and the corruption of the teachings of Christ and his apostles in the following words:

"Gradually three religions pulled ahead of the field, all of them from the east. From Persia, the god Mithras who killed and ate a sacred bull; from Syria, the worship of Sol, the sun; and from a little farther west, Jesus Christ. By the third century it seemed certain that if Rome adopted a new state religion it would be one of these – or a combination of elements from all three.

"It was a time of chaos in the empire. Emperors followed each other in a bewildering and rapid progression. Twelve successive emperors reigned an average of three years each, and not one of them died in his bed. The Romans had a collector's attitude to religion and every aspiring ruler was on the look-out for any new god powerful enough to help him grab and then hold on to the throne. In 274 Aurelian believed that the sun-god had brought him victory in Syria. He set up a state cult to Sol Invictus, the unconquered sun: and announced that the birthday of the sun, a day of special festivity, was December 25th. The sun's halo, as well as the date of his birthday, would later be borrowed by Christianity. A little later Diocletian declared Mithras, who was very popular with the army, to be the god who was 'protector of the empire'. After slaying the bull, Mithras made a sacrificial meal of it; and his followers re-enacted this with a

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ritual of bread and wine. The Christians, understandably, were outraged at this infringement of their rites.”¹³⁴

The bread and wine ceremony which has been adopted by Christians and which is partaken of every Sunday morning is yet another pagan practice which has been adopted by the Roman church.

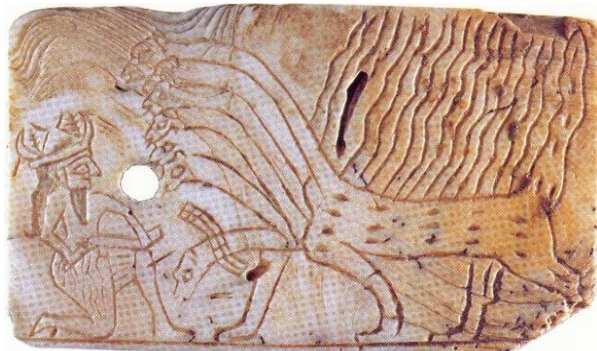
Babylon the Mystery Religion

These Roman Catholic practices are still held today by most mainstream churches. It does not matter what these churches call themselves. They have all, to a greater or lesser extent, held on to the basic doctrines of the Roman church.

The book of Revelation refers to a seven-headed beast upon which sits a woman “arrayed in purple and scarlet colour”. (Rev. 17:4.) To understand who this beast represents, we need to read the book of Daniel (Chap. 7) and look to extrabiblical sources for enlightenment.

In the Ugaritic story of Baal and Mot, for example, there is mention of a seven-headed beast known variously as Lotan, Litan, Litanu and Leviathan.¹³⁵ This seven-headed beast is described as follows:

“for all that you smote Leviathan the slippery serpent (and) made an end of the wriggling serpent, the tyrant with seven heads?”¹³⁶



Sumerian carving of Lotan the seven-headed beast.

In the Bible, Leviathan is similarly described as a crooked serpent:

“In that day (i.e. the day when the LORD will set His throne in Jerusalem) the LORD with His sore and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the slant serpent, and leviathan the tortuous serpent; and He will slay the dragon that is in the sea”.¹³⁷

The ‘sea’ spoken of here is referring to the nations of the world. In Bible parlance, rivers can sometimes refer to armies, whilst seas often refer to peoples or nations:

“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” (Rev. 17:15.)

The prophet Isaiah likewise records:

¹³⁴ *The Christians* pp.29-30, Bamber Gascoigne, Granada Publishing, New York, 1980. (ISBN 0 586 08338 3)

¹³⁵ For the identification of Lotan with Leviathan, see *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, fn. 10 on p.137, James B. Pritchard, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1969. See also *Historia Religionum* Vol. 1, Religions of the Past p.250, Claas Jouco Bleeker & Geo Widengren, E.J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands 1969 (ISBN: 90-04-08928-4). Wikipedia also provides a reasonable brief explanation: <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lotan&oldid=994229753>.

¹³⁶ *The Identities of the Beast from the Sea and the Beast from the Land in Revelation 13*, p.27, Joseph Poon, Pickwick Publications, Oregon, 2017.

¹³⁷ Isa. 27:1.

“Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks.” (Isa. 8:7.)

The king of Assyria being referenced here is Sennacherib. It is interesting to note that the Assyrian army under his command broke off into smaller military units so that they could assail a number of cities at once – hence the expression to “go over all his [or its] channels and go over all his [or its] banks”.¹³⁸

King David likewise prophesied that the ‘heads’ of Leviathan (note ‘heads’ plural) would one day be crushed and fed to the people of the wilderness.¹³⁹

In *Legacy of Edom*, it is demonstrated that the Latini who settled in Rome were descendants of Duke Lotan. The Sabini, who settled to the north of the Latini, were descended from Duke Zibeon, a name which can also be written Sibeon. The Rutuli who settled to the south of the Sabini were likewise descended from Duke Reuel.¹⁴⁰

Leviathan (var. Lotan) is therefore clearly identified with Rome and it is obvious that the Biblical Book of Obadiah, when describing what will befall Edom in the end days, is describing the fall of Rome, a city which is also associated with Babylon because of its Babylonian practices and doctrines. This idea that it does not matter how we worship God, that we can all worship together seeing that ultimately we are all worshipping the same God, is Babylonian thinking. This idea might seem appealing, but is actually contrary to the teachings of God who tells us that we are **not** to learn the ways of the heathen:

“When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God [i.e. you shall not worship God this way].” (Deut. 12:29-31. See also Deut. 8:19, Psalms 106:35 & Jer. 10:2.)

The Roman Catholic church loves its idols, but God categorically commands us not to make any graven image to bow down to:



Distribution of Edomite tribes of Latini, Sabini and Rutuli in northern Italy. The Samnites who used to dwell in Italy are descended from the Israelite tribe of Shimon who at one time dwelt with Edom in Mount Seir. (1 Chron. 4:42-3.)

¹³⁸ The Hebrew words אֶפְיָקָו *afikav* and גְּדוֹתָו *gedotav* can be read as ‘his’ or ‘its’ channels/banks respectively.

¹³⁹ Psalms 74:14.

¹⁴⁰ For the identification of this and the other Italian tribes, see my paper entitled *Legacy of Edom*. The name Rutuli is derived from the Hebrew word רְעוּלָל *Reuel* where the letter ר *ayyin* has been transliterated as a t. This is in the same way that the Hebrew word שְׂעִיר *Seir* is transliterated as ‘satyr’ in Isa. 13:21 and Isa. 34:14.

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“Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God.” (Lev. 26:1.)

Leviathan is the seven-headed beast of the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. These books expound on who this seven-headed beast is with Daniel informing us that the seven heads represent rulers of four world kingdoms. The explanation appears to be as follows:

Head of a lion: The Chaldean Empire.

Head of a bear: The Persian Empire – often referred to as the Medo-Persian Empire.

Four heads of a leopard: The Greek Empire. Alexander the Great died before he could enjoy the fruits of his labours, which meant that his kingdom was divided into four main parts between his generals (hence the four heads of a leopard), two of whom (the Seleucids who ruled in the north and the Ptolemies who ruled in the south) became greater than the others (i.e. the Attalids and Antigonids).¹⁴¹

Head which was dreadful and terrible and exceedingly strong: The Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire came to a close in 476 CE, but Daniel’s vision did not end there. The ten horns which he saw coming out of the head of the last beast can be summarised as follows:

The first three horns which were “plucked up by the roots”:

Vandals (Gaeseric aka Genseric took control of Rome)	455 CE to 476 CE
Heruli (Odoacer’s government ¹⁴²)	476 CE to 493 CE
Ostrogoths ¹⁴³	493 CE to 494 CE

After this:

“behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things”.¹⁴⁴

This horn then had authority over the last seven of the ten horns, identified as follows:

4th Horn: Imperial Restoration of Empire by Justinian 554 CE.

5th Horn: Frankish Kingdom. Charlemagne was crowned by Pope Leo III in 800 CE.¹⁴⁵

6th Horn: Holy Roman Empire (German rule). Otto the Great was crowned by Pope John XII in 962 CE.¹⁴⁶

7th Horn: Hapsburg Dynasty (Austrian rule). Charles V took over the Hapsburg Monarchy on 28 June 1520 after the death of his paternal grandfather Maximilian but he did not become Holy Roman Emperor until 24 February

¹⁴¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigonid_dynasty#Legacy.

¹⁴² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odoacer#King_of_Italy.

¹⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostrogothic_Kingdom.

¹⁴⁴ Dan. 7:8.

¹⁴⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlemagne#Imperial_Diplomacy.

¹⁴⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_I,_Holy_Roman_Emperor#Imperial_title.

1530 when he was crowned by Pope Clement VII.¹⁴⁷

8th Horn: Napoleon's Kingdom. Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned by Pope Pious VII in 1805.¹⁴⁸ On Napoleon's defeat in 1814 at the hands of the coalition forces comprising armies from Prussia, Austria, Sweden, Russia, Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal in what is known as the War of the Sixth Coalition (also known in Germany as the War of Liberation),¹⁴⁹ after a rule lasting precisely 1,260 years,¹⁵⁰ the once powerful Holy Roman Empire temporarily came to an end.

9th Horn: Italy united by Giuseppe Garibaldi¹⁵¹ which restoration lasted from 1840 to 1945.

10th Horn: The Holy Roman Empire will come to power one final time. This time the leader will be German. Turkey, which once formed part of the original Roman Empire, has to reunite with Europe. Even now the Turks are desperate to become part of the European Union, often referred to as the Treaty of Rome. When they do become part of Europe, it will be a brittle alliance, or as the prophet Daniel put it: "iron mixed with miry clay".¹⁵²

Rome is Babylon. As already stated, the name Babylon, which in Hebrew is written בָּבֶל *babel*, means 'confusion'. The Roman Catholic teaching is just that – a confused conglomeration of meaningless 'mysteries' derived from pagan religions, – and like all deceptions, there is always a little bit of truth mixed in.

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters [i.e. many nations]: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." (Rev. 17:1-6.)

The following verse even tells us who that woman is:

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." (Rev. 17:18.)

¹⁴⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_V,_Holy_Roman_Emperor#Holy_Roman_Empire.

¹⁴⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_I#French_Empire.

¹⁴⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_the_Sixth_Coalition.

¹⁵⁰ "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [more correctly 'half a time']". (Dan. 7:25.) A 'time' is a year of 360 days, 'times' being two 360 day years and 'half a time' being half of 360 = 180 days. Add these up and we get 360 + 720 + 180 = 1,260 days. This equates to 1,260 years in Biblical fulfilment.

¹⁵¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Garibaldi.

¹⁵² Dan. 2:41-42.

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The city which at one time reigned over the “kings of the earth” and is due to do so again is Rome. Rome is clearly the city of Babylon being referred to here, though the Roman Church and the Roman State are inseparable. Note that the word Catholic means ‘universal’ and the intention of the Babylonian church is to bring all religions together and to worship as one. This Babylonian religious system is also being referred to as ‘Church Unity’.

Notice that the woman who sits on the beast (hence controlling it) is referred to as “the mother of harlots”. Being a mother, she has many daughters, that is, offspring. It does not matter whether you call yourself Church of England, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Christadelphian or whatever. If you are still adhering to the Roman Catholic teachings even in part and are still keeping their pagan festivals, then you are still part of that Babylonian religious system. These words might seem harsh, but are nonetheless true. Nevertheless, knowing that His people would become part of this false religious system, the LORD cries out to us saying “Come out of her, **my people**, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”. (Rev. 18:4.) Unfortunately, despite giving us the opportunity to repent and amend our ways, the Bible tells us that most people will simply not listen.

The Levitical Priesthood

By contrast, the LORD has chosen the tribe of Levi specifically to be his ministers:

“And I, behold, I [the LORD] have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine.” (Num. 3:12.)

They were chosen specifically to be intercessors between the Almighty and man:

“But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.” (Num. 18:23.)

In the time of Yehoshua’s ministry, the Pharisees were in charge of the temple administration. A lot of Christians are confused by this, as they argue, quite rightly, that the Pharisees were not necessarily Levites. The important thing to bear in mind is that the Pharisees recognised the importance of the Levitical priesthood and upheld it:

“The Pharisees formed a league or brotherhood of their own (‘ḥaburah’), admitting only those who, in the presence of three members, pledged themselves to the strict observance of Levitical purity, to the avoidance of closer association with the ‘Am ha-Areẓ (the ignorant and careless boor), to the scrupulous payment of tithes and other imposts due to the priest, the Levite, and the poor, and to a conscientious regard for vows and for other people’s property (Dem. ii. 3; Tosef., Dem. ii. 1). They called their members ‘ḥaberim’ (brothers), while they passed under the name of ‘Perishaya,’ or ‘Perushim.’”¹⁵³

The Pharisees therefore upheld the Levitical system.

¹⁵³ Jewish Encyclopedia Vol. 9, entry under [Pharisees on p.661](#), Isidore Singer et al, Ktav Publishing, New York 1906.

“The very institution of the synagogue for common worship and instruction was a Pharisaic declaration of the principle that the Torah is ‘the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob’ (Deut. xxxiii. 3, Hebr.). In establishing schools and synagogues everywhere and enjoining each father to see that his son was instructed in the Law (Yer. Ket. vii. 32c; Kid. 29a; Sifre, Deut. 46), the Pharisees made the Torah a power for the education of the Jewish people all over the world, a power whose influence, in fact, was felt even outside of the Jewish race (see R.Meir in Sifra, Aḥare Mot, 13; Matt. xxiii. 15; comp. Gen. R. xxviii.; Jellinek, ‘B. H.’ vi., p. xlvi.). The same sanctity that the priests in the Temple claimed for their meals, at which they gathered with the recitation of benedictions (I Sam. ix. 13) and after ablutions (see Ablution), the Pharisees established for their meals, which were partaken of in holy assemblies after purifications and amidst benedictions (Geiger, ‘Urschrift,’ pp. 121-124). Especially were the Sabbath and holy days made the means of sanctification (see Kiddush), and, as at the sacrifices, wine was used in honor of the day. A true Pharisee observed the same degree of purity in his daily meals as did the priest in the Temple (Tosef., Dem. ii. 2; so did Abraham, according to B. M. 87a), wherefore it was necessary that he should avoid contact with the ‘am ha-arez’ (Hag. ii. 7).”¹⁵⁴

Even Yehoshua himself acknowledged their importance:

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” (Matt. 23:2-3.)

People gloss over this instruction and concentrate instead on the polemic attack Yehoshua makes which follows in the next few verses of Matthew. To understand what Yehoshua is saying, we need to look at what *some* Pharisees were doing to warrant such rebuke. The Jewish Encyclopedia enlightens us as follows:

“R[abbi]. Joshua b[en]. Hananiah, at the beginning of the second century, calls eccentric Pharisees ‘destroyers of the world’ (Soṭah iii. 4); and the term ‘Pharisaic plagues’ is frequently used by the leaders of the time (Yer. Soṭah iii. 19a).

“It is such types of Pharisees that Jesus had in view when hurling his scathing words of condemnation against the Pharisees, whom he denounced as ‘hypocrites,’ calling them ‘offspring of vipers’ (‘hyenas’; see Zebu’im); ‘whited sepulchers which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men’s bones’; ‘blind guides,’ ‘which strain out the gnat and swallow the camel’ (Matt. vi. 2-5, 16; xii. 34; xv. 14; xxiii. 24, 27, Greek). He himself tells his disciples to do as the Scribes and ‘Pharisees who sit on Moses’ seat [see Almemar] bid them do’; but he blames them for not acting in the right spirit, for wearing large phylacteries and *zizit* [i.e. fringes], and for pretentiousness in many other things (*ib.* xxiii. 2-7). Exactly so are hypocrites censured in the Midrash (Pes. R. xxii. [ed. Friedmann, p. 111]); wearing tefillin [i.e. phylacteries] and *zizit*, they harbor evil intentions in their breasts. Otherwise the Pharisees appear as friends of Jesus (Luke vii. 37, xiii. 31) and of the early Christians (Acts v. 38, xxiii. 9; ‘Ant[iquities of the Jews].’ xx. 9, § 1).”¹⁵⁵

Note that the apostle Paul adhered to the Pharisaic law:

“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; **as touching the law**, a Pharisee.” (Philip. 3:3-5.)

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* [pp.661-2.](#)

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* [p.665.](#)

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In the book of Acts, he plainly announced that he was “a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee”. (Acts 23:6.) There is no indication that Paul or his father actually officiated in the temple services. What he is saying here is that he was an adherent to the Pharisaic teachings and there is no other way of interpreting these two passages. This would be in the same way, for example, that a Methodist would claim that he and his father were Methodists.

In Orthodoxy, the three divisions of the priesthood are still recognised and adhered to up to this day:

“The Holy Temple was destroyed millenia ago, but Conservative and Orthodox Jews still acknowledge the three-fold division of ancient Israel into Kohanim, Leviim and Yisraelim. Reform Jews do not believe any congregant should have a different status than another, and therefore do not acknowledge these divisions...

“Today, Leviim [i.e. Levites] are believed to be the direct patrilineal descendants of Levi, while Kohanim are Leviim who descend directly, through their fathers, from Aaron. Other Jews are assumed to come from one of the other tribes and are called, simply, Yisraelim. A convert to Judaism takes the status as a Yisrael. The only valid method of being a Levite (or Kohen) is to have an unbroken tradition, passed from generation to generation, stretching back to the time of Moses. In many Jewish communities, meticulous records were kept throughout the generations to ensure that ancestral lines remained clear. If one has no clear evidence, such as a family tradition, of descending from Levi or Aaron one should assume he/she is a Yisrael. Traditionally, women adopt the status of their husband, thus if a *bat Kohen* (daughter of a father who is a Kohen) marries a Yisrael, she and her children are Yisraelim.

“Today in many synagogues, the first two *aliyot* (people called up to the Torah) are given to a Kohen and a Levi. Yisraelim, the majority of Jews, are called to the Torah only after the second *aliyah*.”¹⁵⁶

The Levitical priesthood is as important today as it has ever been. It is therefore worth repeating what is recorded in the book of Matthew:

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, **that observe and do**; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.” (Matt. 23:2-3.)

In the copy of the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew in the British Library (Ms. Add. No. 26964), the words “they say” in the above passage is rendered with the word *yomer* (meaning “he says” or “it says”) instead of *yomru*, leading some Torah observant Christians to argue that the passage is referring to obedience to the law of Moses rather than obeying the Pharisees. This copying error (the dropping of the final *vav*) also appears in the Ms. Opp. Add. 4° 72 in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. However, **all seven other copies** of the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew in our possession clearly show the final *vav*,¹⁵⁷ so the fact that two of the nine copies show something different does not invalidate the original reading in the Greek. Also, it should be stressed that all nine extant copies of the Hebrew Gospels date between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries,¹⁵⁸ hence postdate the Greek texts by more than a thousand years. Being

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-tribes-today-kohens-levis-and-visraels>.

¹⁵⁷ *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* p.112 (see footnote), George Howard, Mercer University Press, Georgia, USA, 1995.

¹⁵⁸ *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* p.xii, George Howard, Mercer University Press, Georgia, USA, 1995.

copies, we simply do not know how reliable they are. To suggest that we ‘rewrite’ our understanding of this passage on the basis of just two manuscripts is very unwise.

It should also be borne in mind that in the Hebrew gospel of Luke (1:8) held in the Vatican (*Biblioteca Apostolica ebr. 530, part 1, fragment 11, folio 1r*), someone started writing the name Adonai (אֲדֹנָי) but overwrote it with the usual יְהוָה form.¹⁵⁹ This tells us that the word יְהוָה, which most people transliterate as Yehovah or similar, was even then pronounced Adonai in the same way that it is pronounced in synagogues around the world today and actually supports the Jewish reading of the name. The true meaning and origin of the word יְהוָה and why it is pronounced as Adonai is explained in my paper entitled *The Ineffable Name of God*.

The scribes and Pharisees sat in the seat of authority whilst the priests (Hebrew כֹּהֲנִים *kohanim*) are descended specifically from Aaron of the tribe of Levi. Remember that Elizabeth’s husband, Zechariah, was of the priestly course of Abiah (AV Abijah – compare Luke 1:6 with 1 Chron. 24:10) hence was a Levite. When Paul learned that he had been addressing the high priest, he replied:

“I did not know that he was the high priest; for it is written that you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people”. (Acts 23:5.)

We likewise should show respect to the Jewish rabbis, who are supposed to be our teachers. As it is written, “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day” (Acts 15:21). The original intention was for Christians (though they were not known as Christians from the outset) to go to the synagogues to learn about the law. They would therefore place themselves under the tuition of the rabbis, and many of those rabbis were adhering to Pharisaic teachings. People today tend to forget that they did not have their own Bibles in those days. The only place where you could hear the word of God was in the synagogue. It never was the intention that Christians should worship separately from Jews.

Nowadays, anyone can become a rabbi if they go through the correct training process and graduation. Nevertheless, the priesthood belongs by divine right to the tribe of Levi, more specifically to the sons of Aaron, whilst other Levites were:

“musicians and singers who accompanied the *Kohanim* [i.e. priests] as they offered the sacrifices in the Temple. In addition, the *Leviim* served as teachers of Torah [i.e. law of Moses], touring the country and instructing the people in the ways of the Torah. Because of their special duties, they were not given a portion in the land to cultivate as were the other tribes, rather they lived in cities dotted around the country.”¹⁶⁰

A lot of Christians seem to think, however, that the church has replaced the Levitical system which had been instituted by God. This again is contrary to the teachings of the apostles.

Each one of the twelve tribes was represented by a precious stone on the ephod worn by Aaron. Levi’s stone was a בָּרֶקֶת *bareketh*, which name is derived from the Hebrew

¹⁵⁹ https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ebr.530.pt.1/0072.

¹⁶⁰ For further information on the tribe of Levi, see https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2313791/jewish/Kohanim-and-Leviim.htm?gclid=CjwKCAjwg4-EBhBwEiwAzYAlsmjE4l8jmR9iOylpvuxH5ujV7_jDv6QVxhiM6pHqa-vg4a3zEj2NXhoC4O4QAvD_BwE.

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word **בָּרַק** *barak* meaning ‘lightning’. The Midrash would have us believe that Levi’s stone was tri-colour: white, black and red,¹⁶¹ but this is clearly wrong. You will not find the colour red in a lightning bolt. The identification of the stones, however, is the subject of much scholarly debate.

The Septuagint and Josephus have both clearly confused Levi’s stone with that of Judah as they give emerald for Levi and carbuncle for Judah, which is the opposite way round to that given in the Authorised Version. The Septuagint also says that the stones on the shoulders of the ephod were emerald whilst Josephus says that they were sardonyx. All other authorities say they were onyx. The Hebrew Bible clearly states that the stone on the shoulders of the ephod were a **שֹׁהַם** *shoham* (Exod. 28:9-12), this being the same colour as Joseph’s stone. (Exod. 28:20.) This demonstrates the extent of disagreement which existed from an early period as to which stones represented which tribe and there is still uncertainty even to this day.¹⁶²

It does not help that the names of stones have changed over the centuries. Without going into too much detail, consider the name of Reuben’s stone as preserved in the New Testament book of Revelation where we are told that it is a jasper. (Greek ἵασπις *yaspis* Rev. 21:19.) If you are familiar with a jasper, you will know that this is a dull reddish stone which is opaque. The book of Revelation, however, tells us that jasper is “clear as crystal” (Rev. 21:11), which means that the ruby is intended. In fact, the name ruby is derived from the name Reuben. In German, this stone is called a rubinstein – literally “stone of Reuben”.

The Midrash also informs us that each of the tribes had their own flag, and that the flag was the same colour as their respective stone on the breastplate.¹⁶³ Joseph’s flag was black, which means that Joseph’s stone, which is also the stone which was on the shoulders of the ephod, is the more expensive black onyx. This appears to be confirmed by the book of Job which calls it “the precious onyx”. (**יָקָר שֹׁהַם** *shoham yakar* Job 28:16.)

As already stated, Levi’s stone is a **בָּרֶקֶת** *bareket*, a name which is derived from the word **בָּרַק** *barak*, meaning ‘lightning’. According to rabbinical tradition, this is “a ‘flashing, brilliant’ stone”,¹⁶⁴ which is clearly intended to convey the fact that it is the **colour** of a lightning bolt – not that the stone itself is flashing or brilliant in appearance. When we look at a bolt of lightning, we see that the dominant colour is light (chalcedony) blue. Interestingly, for Levi’s stone, the NT book of Revelation gives chalcedony (χαλκηδών).¹⁶⁵ We should bear in



Levi’s colour is clearly light blue – the colour of lightning.

¹⁶¹ See <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl08.htm>.

¹⁶² See, for example, some of the various possibilities presented at <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/studies-words/stones-of-the-ephod.htm>.

¹⁶³ Midrash Numbers *Rabba* ii.

¹⁶⁴ *Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 5, entry under Gems on p.594, Isidore Singer et al, New York 1900.

¹⁶⁵ Rev. 21:19.

mind that the New Testament was written at an earlier date than the Midrash, which was compiled between 200 CE TO 1000 CE.¹⁶⁶ Consider the fact that chalcedony blue is usually one of the colours on the tallit (Jewish prayer shawl) as well as on the Israeli flag. It is known that the Jews used blue as the colour of their standards during the second temple period, but that standard was Levi's colour – **not** Judah's.

In the book of Numbers, we are told that the Almighty instructed the people to make fringes on the edges of their garments and to "put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband [פְּתִיל *p'til* means 'thread'] of blue".¹⁶⁷ The reason for putting these fringes on the garments was twofold: Firstly, it was to remind the people of God's laws, statutes, testimonies and commandments. Secondly, the inclusion of the blue thread was to remind the people that the Almighty had chosen the tribe of Levi to be his ministers: "And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts".¹⁶⁸

Referring to the Jews allegorically as an olive tree, the Apostle Paul also stressed to the Gentiles the importance of not contending with them:

"And if some of the branches be broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were to be grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, you bear not the root, but the root you. You will then say 'The branches were broken off that I might be grafted in'. Well then, because of their unbelief, they were broken off, but you stand by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, beware lest he spares not you either." (Rom. 11:17-21.)

The Jews are therefore the true olive tree into which Gentiles are supposed to have been grafted. Instead, most Christians today are followers of the Roman Catholic doctrines which are contrary to the teachings of the '*New Testament*' writers. These breakaway churches are still adhering to some extent to the original Catholic doctrines, which are based on Babylonian teachings, hence are simply 'daughters' of that 'mother church'.

There are those who desire to deprive the Jews of their birthright by trying to break them away from the true olive tree and to plant them on their own wild olive tree, whose roots are firmly embedded in Babylonian traditions. This idea that all you have to do is believe that Jesus is the Christ (i.e. Messiah), this being sufficient for salvation, is a false teaching. By introducing Jews to the Babylonian form of worship which has been accepted as 'Christian', those Christians are causing the Jews to err. It was the intention that Christian converts should be grafted into the Jewish olive tree – **not** the other way round! Beware then those who hold out their right hand in fellowship whilst their left hand is concealed behind their back, ready to stab you with a knife when you express even the slightest disagreement with their doctrines.

¹⁶⁶ See <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/midrash-101/>. The entry under Midrash in *Collins English Dictionary*, London & Glasgow, 1979, however, says 400 CE to 1200 CE.

¹⁶⁷ Num. 15:38 & Deut. 22:12.

¹⁶⁸ Malachi 2:4.

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Ministers have a responsibility for the LORD's flock. Whilst ministers other than Levites (such as Christians) are not approved by the Almighty, they are safe provided that they teach the things of God, even that law which was **given to us by the Almighty through his servant Moses**. Otherwise, the blood of their congregation is on their hands. Unfortunately, most of these Christian ministers are teaching the precepts of men rather than those of God. They are holding on tight to the Babylonian doctrines introduced by the Roman Catholic church.

It was the Roman Emperors Aurelian and Constantine who established the Roman Catholic church and caused the Christian church to be cut off from the Jews, declaring anyone who continued keeping the "Jewish" festivals and sabbaths to be Judaisers and heretics. They hated Jews and anything Jewish, so they made sure that these 'Jewish' elements were removed from Christianity, replacing them with their own pagan practices. Even those Christians who are coming to the realization that the law of Moses is as relevant today as it has ever been (i.e. Torah observant Christians), are still making the mistake of adhering to this Babylonian mindset which teaches that we should not listen to what the Jews tell us, because "the Jews have got it wrong".

The following warning by the prophet Malachi is directed at those who would set themselves up as priests or ministers:

"And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, **that my covenant might be with Levi**, saith the LORD of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; **ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi**, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law." (Mal. 2:1-9.)

The LORD has chosen Levi to be his ministers. This is an **everlasting** covenant, and by everlasting, the LORD means precisely that.

"For I am the LORD, **I change not**; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6.)

Anyone who says that the LORD has changed his mind concerning even the smallest thing, that person is a liar and the truth is not in him!

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:4.)

Admittedly many of the Jewish rabbis today are not Levites. Anyone who converts to Judaism can effectively, if they go through the rigorous training required, become a rabbi. Nevertheless, despite many trials and tribulations as well as much persecution, many Jews have continued to hold firm to their teachings and traditions. Christians

would do well to pay heed. Most Christians have been brought up with a Babylonian mindset which says that the Jews are walking in error and need to be converted to their own form of paganised Christianity, little realising that they are in danger of depriving the Jew of their birthright, and in so doing, they are heaping up coals of fire upon their heads.

The apostles kept the feasts which most Christians dismiss as being 'Jewish', regarding them as being only for the Jews. Pentecost, for example, is the Greek name for the feast which in Hebrew is known as Shavuoth or 'Feast of Weeks'. Paul likewise commands us to keep the feast of Passover, for Jesus "Christ our Pesach [i.e. Passover Lamb] is slain for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinth. 5:7-8.) In Acts 20:16 we are told that Paul tried to get to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Shavuoth (known to the Greeks as Pentecost). Surely this is a clear indication that he was keeping the feasts. It was not always possible, however, to keep the feasts. This is also what Paul is saying when he writes:

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (1 Corinth. 11:26.)

It is a **memorial** feast in remembrance of Christ's death. A memorial is an **annual** event. It is not something which is to be celebrated every week as most Christians do. The bread and wine ceremony which Christians partake of is a pagan practice derived from Mithraism. It has absolutely nothing to do with the memorial of Christ's death. In fact, these pagan observances are detracting from the true meaning of Christ's birth and death.

The Observance of Easter

In the records of Eusebius, we read how the churches in Asia Minor (i.e. modern day Turkey) withstood the Roman church and still kept the Passover as late as 190 CE. Polycrates, the bishop of the church at Ephesus, argued on their behalf that they were keeping it "as instructed by the Apostles".

"As for us, then, we keep the day without tampering with it, neither adding, nor subtracting ... [Polycrates then lists a number of people including the apostles Philip and John, and Philip's daughters who all kept the Passover.] ... These all observed the fourteenth day for the Pascha [i.e. Pesach] according to the Gospel, in no way deviating therefrom, but following the rule of faith."¹⁶⁹

Of course, it was the Roman church which was causing the conflict. They wanted everyone instead to keep the Sunday in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, simply because this suited them better, as it was already established as the day of worship to their own gods. They could then connect the feast to the rising of Tammuz from the netherworld, which feast occurred on the first Sunday after the Vernal Equinox.

Quoting the Irish historian, Thomas Moore:

¹⁶⁹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V.23-5 – *The Paschal or Quartodeciman Controversy*.

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“Very early in the annals of the Christian church, a difference of opinion with respect to the time of celebrating Easter [more correctly, Passover] had arisen; and it was not till the great council of Nice[a], A. D. 325, had prescribed a rule by which the day of this festival was to be fixed, that, throughout the Asiatic and Western churches, a uniformity of practice in the time of celebrating it was observed. Owing to the difference, however, of the cycles, used by different churches, in making their calculations, it was soon found, that to preserve this desired uniformity would be a matter of much difficulty. By the decree of the Council of Nice, it was fixed, that the Paschal festival should be held on the Sunday next after the fourteenth day of the first lunar month. In determining this time, however, the church of Rome and the church of Alexandria differed materially; the former continuing to compute by the old Jewish cycle of eighty-four years, while the latter substituted the cycle of nineteen years, as corrected by Eusebius; and the consequence was a difference, sometimes of nearly a month, between the Alexandrian and Roman calculations.”¹⁷⁰

According to Assyrian and Sumerian traditions, the goddess Ishtar (a variant spelling of Easter), who was also known as Inanna, descends to the netherworld and can only return to earth if she sends someone in her place. According to the Sumerian version of the story, after a long search, the goddess eventually finds her husband (sometimes called her son) Tammuz seated on the throne, but he is not mourning her departure. In her anger, she calls on the demons to send Tammuz to the underworld as her replacement. She later has a change of heart and brings Tammuz back from the netherworld bearing him in her bosom.¹⁷¹

“On the day when Tammuz plays for me on the flute of lapis lazuli, playing it for me with the porphyry ring. Together with him, play ye for me, ye weepers and lamenting women!”

That the dead may rise up and inhale the incense.”¹⁷²

The story continues by saying that Tammuz would spend half a year in the underworld and the other half of the year on earth. His return would mark the beginning of Spring when the earth would wake from the dead of Winter. At this time of the year, on the rising of the sun, his worshippers would break out into rejoicing and singing.

“Thus we see that in his resurrection Tammuz was compared to the rising of the sun and moon.”¹⁷³

More significantly:

“Certain it is that the son of a virgin mother, whom the shadows of the nether world each year claimed as a divine sacrifice for man and beast and vegetation, forms an important part of the earliest known religious worship. This cult can be traced from before 3000 B.C. to the century preceding our own era, and, as we have already seen, the name and perhaps also a considerable portion of its worship passed into the Mediterranean basin.”¹⁷⁴

“One of the phases of nature which profoundly impressed the ancient Sumerians is the regular recurrence of the periods of growth and decay. In this they saw the death and resurrection of the son of mother earth who is the incarnation of the grain, or vegetation,

¹⁷⁰ *The History of Ireland*, Chap. XIII, p.229, Thomas Moore, Philadelphia, 1835.

¹⁷¹ See for example <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishtar> and entry under *Mysteries (Babylonian)* in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. 9, p.70, edited by James Hastings, Edinburgh and New York, 1917.

¹⁷² *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* op. cit. p.71.

¹⁷³ *Tammuz and Ishtar, a Monograph Upon Babylonian Religion and Theology* p.31, S. Langdon, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1914.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p.3.

or the beneficent floods. He is a more concrete divinization of life than mother earth. She represents apparently the productive powers of the earth, the son represents rather what is produced. We have here the idea of a virgin mother and a divine son who suffers death and returns to life. It is he whom the Sumerians called the *damu-zi*, the 'faithful son'.¹⁷⁵

If this last statement seems familiar, it is because this is what many Christians do today on Easter Sunday morning. Remember that Yehoshua rose from the dead at the end of the Sabbath – **not** on a Sunday morning! The Roman Catholic church have simply replaced the raising of Tammuz from the grave with that of the resurrection of the Christ.

Tammuz was even referred to as "the shepherd who had left his sheep",¹⁷⁶ so it is not surprising that the Catholic Church was able to convince people to adopt these pagan practices. In the Autumn, Tammuz would 'descend into the netherworld' ready to be resurrected once more in the Spring. This Autumn descent into the netherworld was celebrated by his followers by a period of weeping, a ceremony which is recorded in the book of Ezekiel as an abomination known as 'weeping for Tammuz'. (Ezek. 8:14.) The Spring 'resurrection' was celebrated with rejoicing at the Spring Equinox in the form of a sunrise ceremony. Christians are perpetuating this ceremony today in their Easter Sunday morning service, even that ceremony which they have recently renamed 'Resurrection Sunday' in an attempt to conceal its true origins.

Similarly, when the Roman church sent its first emissaries to England in the beginning of the 8th Century CE, they were surprised to find that the word of God had already been preached there. Bede, who was a Catholic, tells us that England and southern Ireland were all keeping the Passover on the 14th day of the first lunar month as instructed by the Apostles. Again, it was the Roman Catholic Church who were stirring things!

Bede records:

"So John, in accordance with the custom of the law, began the celebration of Easter Day [sic] in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, regardless of whether it fell on the Sabbath or any other day."¹⁷⁷

Even the Catholic delegate had to admit:

"Far from me to charge John with foolishness: he literally observed the decrees of the Mosaic law **when the Church was still Jewish** in many respects..."¹⁷⁸

In other words, the church was originally keeping the "Jewish" feasts and "Jewish" calendar, but the Roman Catholic church was still trying to distance itself from anything remotely "Jewish" even at that late date. I would here point out, however, that the feasts were given to us **by God!** They were **God's feast days** and not solely for the Jews.

In the end, the Catholic emissaries beguiled Oswy king of England by referring to the words of Yehoshua when he said, "You are Peter [Πέτρος meaning 'stone'], and upon this rock [Πέτρα *petra* meaning 'rock'] will I build my church". (Matt. 16:18) They

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* [p.5.](#)

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* [p.14.](#)

¹⁷⁷ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* [Book 3 Chap. 25.](#)

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* (Emphasis mine.)

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argued that the keys of the kingdom, which were given to Peter, were subsequently vested in the Roman Church.

Two things need to be clarified here. Firstly, Peter was not an apostle to the Gentiles. It was Paul who was the chosen vessel, ordained by God to bear the Gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts 9:15 and 2 Tim. 1:11.) The other apostles were commanded not to go into any of the ways of the Gentiles or into any city of the Samaritans, but to go only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matt. 10:6 & Matt. 15:24.), who at that time had not returned to the Promised Land. We are told that when Paul arrived in Rome, the Jews there had not previously heard the gospel from anyone else. (Acts 28:21-24.) There is no evidence to substantiate the teaching that Peter went to Rome!

Secondly, the Greek word translated as **Peter** is Πέτρος **petros**, which means ‘a stone’ and Henry Liddell comments that it “is thus distinguished from Πέτρα [petra]. Liddell continues by informing us that, “There is no example, in good authors, of Πέτρα [petra] in the sense of Πέτρος [petros], [meaning] a stone”.¹⁷⁹ By contrast, the word Πέτρα **petra**, which is translated as ‘rock’, refers to something more substantial such as that which runs out from a beach, a ledge or shelf of rock.¹⁸⁰

John also informs us:

“And he brought him [i.e. Simon] to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, “Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas”, which is by interpretation, ‘A stone’.” (John 1:42.)

The Hebrew word for rock is either צור **tsur** or סֶלָע **sela**, the latter meaning ‘a rock or a cliff’. Both of these words are used in relation to the LORD who is regularly referred to as being the rock of our salvation:

“The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.” (Psa. 18:2.)

“He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.” (Psa. 62:2.)

“In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.” (Psa. 62:7.)

The Hebrew word כֶּף **keph** from which the word **Cephas** is derived, is unattested in the singular form, whilst the plural form (i.e. כְּפִים **cephim**) is understood to mean ‘rocks’ (e.g. Jer. 4:29). The word כַּף **kaph**, which is sometimes translated as ‘hand’ (e.g. Exod. 33:23) and sometimes as ‘hollow’ (e.g. Gen. 32:32 or 32:33 in the Hebrew Bible) and sometimes as ‘sole’ (of the feet – e.g. Gen. 8:9), refers to the ‘cup’ shape of the hand or foot and infers something which is small as opposed to something large or substantial. It should be noted, however, that there is a distinction being made here between Yehoshua, who is our rock, and between Peter, who is a stone. Nowadays, the distinction between the words rock and stone is not so clear cut. Geologists will use the

¹⁷⁹ *Greek-English Lexicon* p.1207, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, New York, 1883. The first quotation is under the heading of Πέτρος and the second under Πέτρα.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p.1206.

two terms interchangeably to refer to both rocks and rock samples. We must bear in mind, however, that this is modern terminology.

Consequently, Peter was **not** the rock on which the church was to be built – Yehoshua (Jesus) Christ was that rock, for “that rock was Christ”. (1 Corinth. 10:4.) He is the stone which the builders (i.e. the Jews) rejected and has now become the head of the corner, or cornerstone. (Matt. 21:42.) Bear in mind that a cornerstone is the **foundation stone** of a building! The LORD is the rock of our salvation. (Psa. 89:26.) He is our rock and our fortress. (Psa. 71:3.) Not Peter!

It is probably worth mentioning here, that the Hebrew gospel of Matthew translates the above passage as follows:

“I say to you [i.e. to Peter]: you are a stone and I will build upon you my house of prayer.”¹⁸¹

The person responsible for this copy has therefore adopted the Roman Catholic doctrine. There is no way that an original Hebrew document would have made Peter the rock on which the church was to be built.

This is not the only anomaly which shows that these copies of the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew cannot be from an original manuscript. Having demonstrated that Yehoshua travelled northwards to Syria to preach to the Ten Tribes, we read in all nine of the Hebrew Gospels that, **after** Yehoshua had returned from visiting the Ten Tribes:

“After this Jesus entered a boat and came to the land of Macedonia.” (Matt. 15:39.)

Comparing this with our copies of the Bible which have been taken from the Greek:

“And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.”

We are told that “Rabbinical accounts are clear only in indicating Magdala as situated near Tiberias”¹⁸² with a number of sources confirming this. The place was therefore located somewhere on the Sea of Galilee. This makes more sense than to suggest that Yehoshua travelled to Macedonia in Greece.

It should also be pointed out that this name Macedonia is written a number of different ways in the various copies of the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, hence we have מאצידוניא, מאסידוניא and מאסידוניא. In every instance, the name is written either with the Hebrew letter צ *tsadi* or ס *samekh*. Samekh is usually transliterated as an s whilst tsadi can be transliterated either as an s, as in Sidon, as a z, as in Zidon, or as a t, as in Tyre. Macedonia, here in the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, is therefore to be pronounced Massedonia. This pronunciation, however, is of much later date. The Greek writers always wrote the name with a *kappa* and it was always pronounced Makkedonia. The apostle Paul also likewise wrote the name as Μακεδονίας i.e. Makkedonias, as in Acts 16:10, Acts 19:22, Romans 15:26 etc. In the first century CE, when the gospels were written, people never used the form Massedonia. Even in the Babylonian Talmud, which

¹⁸¹ “ואני אומר לך שאתה אבן ואני אבנה עליך בית תפילתי.” *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, pp.80-81, George Howard, Mercer University Press, Georgia, USA, 1995.

¹⁸² Entry under [Magdala](#) in *Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 8, p.249, Isidore Singer et al, Ktav Publishing House, New York 1906.

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was compiled around 500 CE (though it has undergone subsequent amendments), the name was written מַקֶּדוֹנְיָה *Makkedonia*.¹⁸³ There is no way that Matthew would have used the forms which appear in any of the nine Hebrew Gospels which are being attributed to him. We must therefore be wary of anyone who is trying to convince us that these are copies of an authentic original Hebrew gospel. If anything, they have been translated from some other language into Hebrew.

Bible Mistranslations

The first Christian converts kept the “Jewish” feasts. However, even in the Apostle Paul’s time (early in the first century of the Common Era) the Gentiles were starting to revert back to keeping pagan feasts:

“Formerly **when you did not know God**, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are not gods, but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you **turn back again** to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits whose slave you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! [As opposed to the new moons and Sabbaths which the Jews were keeping.] I fear lest I have laboured over you in vain...” (Gal. 4:8-11.)

The days, months, seasons and years being spoken of in this verse having nothing to do with the new moons and sabbaths which Jews keep. Paul is here talking about the pagan observances – hence the reference to Gentile converts **returning** to their old pagan practices. The law of Moses clearly commands us not to be “observers of times” (Lev. 19:26 and Deut. 18:10 & 18:14) like the nations which they were going to take possession of. These nations kept the times which we have already discussed – Saturnalia (now known as Christmas, even though it was formerly celebrated as the Greek festival of Kronia which was held in the middle of summer), Easter, Lent, Valentine’s Day, Halloween, Beltane etc.¹⁸⁴ Consider also the pagan practice of reading horoscopes where each day was considered to be subject to the control of celestial forces. These were the things that Paul was addressing in his letter to the Galatians – not the new moons and sabbaths which we are commanded by God to keep.

By contrast, we have:

“Let no one **judge** you in food and in drink nor in respect of feasts or new moons or Sabbaths which [**judgment**] **is** (Grk. ἔστιν *estin* = which is) a shadow of things to come.” (Col. 2:16.)

Here is another highly significant point to consider. Even though it is acknowledged that the Greek word ἔστιν *estin* is the third person singular form of the verb, every translator, using a Babylonian mindset, has assumed that the writer made an error, and have translated the verse as “which **are** a shadow of things to come”. This interpretation, however, is meaningless. Think about it! How can food and drink be a shadow of things to come? (NB: The plural form would be εἶσιν *esin*.)

¹⁸³ [Yoma 10a.](#)

¹⁸⁴ See for example https://www.ancient.eu/Wheel_of_the_Year/.

The judgment spoken of here came within the course of the ensuing few years when all true followers of Christ (i.e. those who were adhering to His teachings including the keeping of the law) were stigmatised and branded “Judaisers” and were eventually either excommunicated or put to death in the arena for refusing to conform to the Roman Church’s ideals. This is what Paul means when he talks about a judgment which was “a shadow [or foretaste] of things to come”. In other words, the keeping of God’s feasts and sabbaths, as well as the keeping of kashrut (i.e. only eating those things which are kosher or clean), came to be frowned upon even though they were in accordance with the teachings of Christ and his apostles. The Roman Church replaced these “Jewish” teachings with their own doctrines.

Bear in mind that the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are sabbaths:

“And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them”. (Exod. 12:16.)

The Feast of Shavuoth, which is a one day festival, also known as the Feast of Firstfruits, Pentecost¹⁸⁵ or Feast of Weeks (Num. 28:26), is also a sabbath day. The Day of the Blowing of Trumpets (Num. 29:1), Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement (Num. 29:7) and the first and eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:35-36) are also sabbaths. There are therefore seven special sabbaths throughout the year in addition to the weekly sabbath.

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: **for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations**; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.” (Exod. 31:13.)

“Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, **to be a sign between me and them**, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.” (Ezek. 20:12-16.)

At the Last Supper, Yehoshua said that he would not be able to partake of the Passover with his disciples again until “it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16), which shows that the keeping of that feast did not cease with his death and resurrection. God’s feast days are important. They are a sign between Him and His people.

The Law of Circumcision

“And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall

¹⁸⁵ The Greek word Pentecost means “count 50”, Shavuoth occurring 50 days after Passover.

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be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.” (Exod. 12:48.)

In Acts chapter 15 we read that a dispute arose concerning the subject of circumcision.

“And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissention and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” (Verses 1 & 2.)

Notice that the purpose of their visit to Jerusalem at this stage was with the sole intention of resolving this one issue – the law of circumcision. When they arrived at Jerusalem:

“there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying that it was needful to circumcise them, **and** to command them to keep the law of Moses.” (Verse 5.)

From this, we would assume that a further item for debate had now been introduced – the keeping of the law of Moses. However, in *all* extant copies of the Greek texts, the word καὶ *kai*, which means ‘and’ is conspicuously absent. This means that we **cannot** separate the meaning of the second part of the verse from the first. In other words, the Pharisees were not saying that it was necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised **and** to keep the law of Moses, but rather “That it was needful to circumcise them, to command/exhort/encourage them [παραγγέλλειν] to keep the law of Moses”, for does not the law state that no uncircumcised person shall eat of the Pesach? (See above quotation from Exod. 12:48.) The Gentiles were keeping the Passover, therefore the Pharisees were in fact trying to follow the instructions contained in the law of Moses.

Before taking this further, let us look at the decision the elders came to:

“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from the Gentiles are turned to God; But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.” (Verses 19-20.)

Now notice the proviso:

“For Moses **of old time** hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.” (Verse 21.)

The Gentiles were to hear the reading of the law in the synagogues, for the Gentiles, who by nature were keeping the law, whilst they continued to keep the law, were a law unto themselves. (Rom. 2:14.) The above stipulations were imposed by the elders with this in mind.

Similarly, the whole of Paul’s letter to the Galatians is about one thing and one thing only – the law of circumcision.

“But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised... (Gal. 2:3.)

It is not until verses 11 to 13 that we discover the real reason for Paul’s letter:

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the

circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” (Gal. 2:11-13.)

He rounds off his letter with the following:

“As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution [i.e. “so that they avoid/do not suffer persecution”] for the cross of Christ ... For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Gal. 6:12-15.)

The covenant given to Abraham that he and his sons should inherit the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession required the circumcision of his male offspring. (Gen. 17:7-14.) It is **this promise** which has been given to the Gentiles; “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”. (Gal. 3:14.) “And if you are Christ’s, then are you **Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise**” (Gal. 3:29), this being the promise given to Abraham that his offspring shall inherit the land of Israel.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made ... And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed [by the circumcision of his son] before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after [i.e. after Abraham’s time], cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” (Gal. 3:16-17.)

To put this passage into plain English, the law which was given to Moses does not nullify the covenant of circumcision which was given to Abraham 430 years earlier. The Law of Circumcision is tied into this promise concerning the inheritance of the land of Israel. Those who left Egypt rebelled – hence were destined not to make it into the Promised Land.

Paul goes on to say that the law is “our schoolmaster **to bring us** unto Christ”. (Gal. 3:24.) This means that we should be using the law as a foundation for our faith. As an analogy, consider someone who is learning to drive. Whilst they are learning, they are under the supervision of tutors, known as driving instructors. Before they can pass their driving test, they are required to learn the Highway Code (generally referred to as ‘Rules of the Road’ in the USA) and they need to be able to demonstrate that they are able to handle the car and drive competently and safely before being let out on the road by themselves. At that time, they will be issued with a piece of paper known as a driving licence. Think of the law of Moses as our Highway Code and Yehoshua as our driving licence.

The law of Moses tells us what is right and what is wrong. It tells us what sin is and warns us of the consequences of breaking those laws. The Ten Commandments are so important that they were actually written with the finger of God, and if it were not for the law, we would be none the wiser as to what is required of us by God. As Paul is on record as saying:

“I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (Rom. 7:7.)

Where does this distinction between right and wrong comes from? Where did it originate if not from God? By rejecting God’s laws, society today is falling apart.

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“Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.” (Deut. 12:28.)

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?” (Deut. 10:12-13.)

When asked what one should do to have eternal life, did Yehoshua respond with: “all you have to do is confess with your lips that I am the Messiah”? No! He said:

“Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” (Mark 10:19-21.)

The word translated as “loved” is *ἠγαπήσεν* *egapesen* which can also be translated as “was well pleased with”. Note that Matthew adds “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 19:17-19), which means, seeing that Mark does not include this commandment, that Matthew and Mark have both paraphrased what Yehoshua had actually said. There are those who would select only those laws they want to hear. Bear in mind that one of the Ten Commandments is to remember the sabbath day and to sanctify it, a commandment which is ignored by the overwhelming majority of Christians who believe that the Old Testament is “done away with”.

The other thing to point out is that the expression “sell whatsoever thou hast” does not mean sell everything you own. This would be ludicrous, because then that person would also become poor. Yehoshua was merely saying that he should give *some* of his wealth to the poor. Again, this commandment can also be found in many places in the Torah (law of Moses):

“If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.” (Exod. 22:25.)

“And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.” (Lev. 19:10.)

“And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.” (Lev. 23:22.)

“And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.” (Lev. 25:35.)

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release (i.e. *שְׁמִטָּה* *shemitah*), is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou

givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.” (Deut. 15:7-11.)

Yehoshua was therefore simply reminding the young man of what was recorded in the law of Moses and that this is what the LORD expects of us if we are to be saved.

We should also worship the father (i.e. the father – **not** Yehoshua, who is only our intercessor¹⁸⁶) with humility and a pure heart. The story of the Pharisee and the publican, which is related as a parable in Luke 18:9-14, warns us to not be high-minded or haughty or to think that we are any better than our fellow man. We are also instructed to “first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” [or prayer] to God. (Matt. 5:24.)

In other words, we should be keeping the law according to the spirit of the law, and not, as many were doing, adhering solely to the letter of the law.

“I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (1 Corinth. 6:5-8.)

If anyone has a dispute with their fellow man, they should first try to resolve their differences amicably before it gets to the stage where it goes to court. As Paul says, “why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?”. This is the difference between being “under the law” and living according to “the spirit of the law”. (Note that there are some Christians who contend that the opposite of being “under the law” is to be “above the law”, meaning to be exempt from the law, which interpretation is not supported by Paul’s writings. For as long as you continue to keep the law, however, you are beyond reproach, and unless your accusers give false testimony, they cannot touch you concerning the law.)

Abraham made the mistake of circumcising Ishmael, Hagar’s son. Being the firstborn, Ishmael should by rights be entitled to the promise given by God (his offspring were nevertheless blessed with being in charge of a vast empire – the Islamic Empire), but we are told that God chose to bestow the spiritual blessing on Sarah’s son, Isaac.

“For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman (Hagar), the other by a freewoman (Sarah). But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.” (Gal. 4:22-23.)

Paul goes on to use this as an allegory, likening those who desire to be wrapped up in the intricacies of the law as sons of the bondwoman, whilst those who walk according to the freedom of the Spirit are likened to the sons of the freewoman. Freedom of the

¹⁸⁶ When we pray, we are to pray “Our father, who art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9 & Luke 11:12) – **not** to Jesus, Yeshua, Yehoshua or to any other name. Yehoshua is made the high priest for ever after the order of Melchi-Tsedek (AV Melchisedek meaning ‘King of Righteousness’ Heb. 5:6). A high priest is there to offer up sacrifices to the father on your behalf. You do not pray to or worship the high priest.

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Spirit does not mean that you can forget about the law. It means that we should be keeping the law with the original spirit and intent. Before the time of Moses, every nation did what they thought was right in their own eyes. The Law of Moses was introduced to instruct us, to help us differentiate between what is right and what is wrong.

Nevertheless, those who seek to follow God's laws and commandments are heavily criticised even today by those who do not even know God:

"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so is it now." (Gal. 4:29.)

To put this more simply: They who are circumcised in the flesh are sons of the bondwoman; they who are circumcised in the heart are sons of the freewoman. For "the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart", (Deut. 30:6) and He says: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people". (Jer. 31:33.) Notice what it is that is to be written on their hearts – it's the Torah – better known as the 'law of Moses'! This writing of the law on our hearts will take place **after** the LORD takes his people into the wilderness and shortly before He sets his throne in Jerusalem. This event has not yet happened! Do not let anyone fool you into thinking that this has already taken place.

The whole of Paul's letter to the Galatians is about one thing and one thing only – the law of circumcision. It is **not**, as many Christians would argue, about the law of Moses. His letter to the Romans provides further enlightenment:

"For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, **if it fulfil the law**, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, **and not in the letter**; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Romans 2:25-29.)

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and **not in the oldness of the letter**." (Romans 7:6.)

As with many other parts of Paul's teachings, these passages are often misquoted as meaning that the law no longer applies. That is not what Paul is saying. He is actually saying that we should keep the law according to its original spirit and intent and not as some Pharisees were doing, as they were interpreting the law as they saw fit. They were applying the strict letter of the law rather than applying righteous judgment.

It is especially relevant to note that they who were born during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, during the time of Moses, were not circumcised until immediately before entering the Promised Land:

"Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised." (Josh. 5:5.)

It should once again be stressed that circumcision relates to the promise given to Abraham concerning possession of the land of Israel. This promise has not yet been fulfilled, a promise which has been extended to those gentiles who will follow Christ and keep his commandments, which includes the keeping of the law.

So, when we keep the Passover, we should make sure that we are circumcised – not in the flesh, but in our hearts. “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body”. (1 Corinth. 11:29.) This does not mean that circumcision of the flesh is wrong, but a person can be circumcised in the flesh and still not be circumcised in the heart.

“Thus saith the LORD God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, **nor uncircumcised in flesh**, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.” (Ezek. 44:9.)

Circumcision of the flesh is also important, but those who have not already been circumcised will be circumcised when the time is right. This will be just before they enter the Promised Land; just before the Moshiach (Messiah/Christ) comes to set his throne in Jerusalem.

It should be stressed that the scribes and Pharisees were circumcised in the flesh, but some were not circumcised in their hearts.

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” (Acts 7:51.)

Circumcision is not wrong. Circumcision forms part of the covenant between the LORD and Abraham. That promise says that Abraham and his seed shall inherit the land of Israel for an **everlasting** possession. (Gen. 17:8, 17:19 & 48:4) Abraham has not yet received of this promise, which promise is reserved until the time the LORD sets his throne in Jerusalem. This is even the promise of eternal life which Yehoshua the Christ preached and which his Apostles taught, a promise which the Roman Catholic church has corrupted beyond all recognition.

Clean and Unclean Meats

Having argued that the law of Moses is still relevant today, where do we stand with the distinction the law makes between clean and unclean animals? Does this distinction still hold true today? The answer to this question goes back to creation.

When Noah was told to build the ark, the LORD told him to take two of every animal, male and female:

“Of every **clean** beast thou shalt take to thee by **sevens**, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.” (Gen. 7:2.)

There were therefore 14 [i.e. seven pairs] of each of the clean animals and 2 of each of the unclean animals on board the ark. After the flood waters had subsided, we are even told that Noah built an altar and took of every **clean** beast and of every **clean** fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar. (Gen. 8:20.) This tells us that the distinction between clean and unclean animals existed long before the time of Moses. It means

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that God had made this distinction from the outset; from the day of creation. It is not something which was only introduced during the time of Moses.

What confuses most people is the verse where the LORD says to Noah:

“Every moving thing [שׂמֶרֶם *remés*] that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.” (Gen. 9:3.)

People read this verse and use it as an excuse to eat anything. They ignore the prior references to clean and unclean beasts and focus on this one verse which, because of the way it is translated, gives the *impression* that we can eat all things. They also completely ignore the fact that some animals are poisonous, so we clearly cannot eat “all things”.

Note that the word translated as “moving thing” is שׂמֶרֶם *remés*. On this, John H. Walton, an Old Testament scholar and professor at Wheaton College in Illinois, has this to say:

“Note also that the category given for food is *remeś* (NIV ‘everything that moves’). The noun (*remeś*) and the associated verb (*rms*) each occur seventeen times in the Old Testament, ten times each in Genesis 1-9. This word group is distinct from both the wild (predatory) beasts and domesticated flocks and herds. Neither verb nor noun is ever used to refer to larger wild animals or to domesticated animals. In no place is *remeś* a catch-all category for all creatures. It is one category of creature only. The division of the Hebrew terms used up to this point in Genesis reflects the nature of the animal (not the locomotion, genre, species, or the morphology).

“If this is true, we are mistaken to translate *remeś* as if it describes a type of locomotion (e.g., ‘creeping things’). An alternative is suggested by the Akkadian cognate *nammašu/nammaštu*, which typically refers to wild animals that travel in herds; they are distinct from wild animals that hunt or scavenge, from the domesticated cattle, and from the docile beasts that do not tend to be found in herds. It is most familiar as the group that Enkidu watched over in his precivilized days in the Gilgamesh Epic. These animals were typically characterized as being the prey of hunters and predatory beasts. The most common members of this group were wild cattle, antelope, fallow deer, gazelle, and ibex.”¹⁸⁷

Notice that “in no place is *remeś* a catch-all category for all creatures. It is one category of creature only.” According to the book of Leviticus, the animals he quotes above as falling within this category of *remeś* are all clean animals. They are wild animals which are typically hunted by man. When viewed in this light, Gen. 9:2 then makes much more sense:

“And the **fear of you** and the **dread of you** shall be upon every beast [not including the *remés*] of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth [שׂרָמִים *tirmos* – from the root word *remés*, this being animals in the *remeś* category] upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.”

Animals are instinctively wary of humans. This is not the case with insects and other small crawling creatures. However, if we are talking about wild animals such as deer, gazelle etc, then we can begin to better understand what the writer is saying.

In the very first chapter of Genesis, we read:

¹⁸⁷ The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis [pp.341-342](#), John H. Walton, Zondervan, 2011.

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle [בְּהֵמָה *behemah*], and creeping thing [רֶמֶשׁ *remes*], and beast of the earth [חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ *chayath-ha'aretz* – literally living things of the soil] after his kind: and it was so.” (Gen. 1:24.)

There is therefore a distinction here being made between cattle, *remes* and other types of creatures “of the soil”. The animals which were considered to be *remes* were therefore distinct from insects and other creatures which live in the soil.

We should bear in mind that many insects do not have a “male and his female”. In a colony of bees, for example, you have only a queen bee who is serviced by a number of worker bees who feed and protect her. Insects are also capable of surviving on floating leaves, logs and other floating mats. They did not have to be on the ark to survive. The fact that the *remes* were taken on board the ark “in twos, the male and his female” shows that we are not talking about insects or other creeping creatures, so the interpretation a lot of people place on this commandment to Noah that he and his family can eat “every moving thing that liveth” to mean anything and everything is clearly wrong.

The other thing to point out is that Noah and his family were not permitted to eat any of the animals they took on board. They were commanded to:

“take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be **for food for thee, and for them** (i.e. the animals)” (Gen. 6:21.)

Notice that the animals ate the same food as Noah and his family. Had they eaten the animals, then there would have been none to replenish the earth. One of the questions people also ask is why the animals did not eat one another whilst on the ark. The answer to that question is likewise answered in the book of Genesis:

“And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth [רֹמֵשׁ *romes*] upon the earth, wherein there is life, **I have given every green herb for meat.**” (Gen. 1:29-30.)

This tells us that, before the flood, all the animals were herbivores. They do not have to eat meat. The story of Little Tyke, the lioness who was raised by Georges and Margaret Westbeau and who refused to eat meat, is testimony to this.¹⁸⁸

Many Christians also twist the New Testament passages to justify themselves for eating unclean animals. The most common example is the passage in Chapter 10 of the book of Acts when the LORD presented Peter with a vision in which he was told to eat unclean animals. They ignore the *interpretation* of this vision which Peter himself gives:

“And he said unto them [i.e. Cornelius and his party], Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should **not call any man** common or unclean.” (Acts 10:28.)

¹⁸⁸ Just type in “Little Tyke lioness” in a Google search to find a number of sites which mention this amazing story of a lioness who was brought up by Georges and Margaret Westbeau on a diet of cooked grain, raw eggs and milk. Their book *Little Tyke: The True Story of a Gentle Vegetarian Lioness* is still available (Quest Books, 1986). There are also a number of videos available to watch on YouTube. See also “The Lion that Wouldn’t Eat Meat” by David Catchpole at <https://creation.com/the-lion-that-wouldnt-eat-meat>.

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It is perfectly clear from this that the LORD was **not** teaching Peter to eat unclean meats!

Another oft misquoted passage is the following:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God ***hath created to be received*** with thanksgiving ***of them which believe and know the truth***. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” (1 Tim. 4:1-5.)

Notice that Paul is specifically talking about meats which God has created to be eaten. A pig, for example, was not created to “be received with thanksgiving”. People look at the part of the sentence which says “of them which believe and know the truth” and apply their own Christian interpretation. They overlook the fact that Paul was a Jew who kept the Torah (the law of Moses) and that the apostles were also all Jews who kept the Torah. When he talks about those who believe and know the truth, he is referring to those who were adhering to the Jewish teachings which the Christian church were at that time following.

Also, the Greek word translated as “sanctified” is ἀγιάζεται *agiazetai* from ἀγίζω *agizu* meaning ‘set apart by or to God’, ‘to hallow’ or ‘to make sacred’.¹⁸⁹ By the very fact that they are ‘set apart’ shows that there are creatures which are not set apart, hence are not to be eaten. Leviticus 11 informs us what animals have been ‘set apart by God’ for eating and ends by saying:

“This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.” (Lev. 11:46-47.)

Consider yet another verse which is often quoted as a reason for eating all things:

“For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.” (Rom. 14:2.)

Again, Christians interpret “all things” literally and argue that this is further proof that we can eat whatever we like. Bear in mind that he who “eateth herbs” is someone we today call either a vegetarian or vegan. When viewed in this light, the contrast becomes clear. Paul is most categorically **not** talking about eating unclean meats. The same passage continues by talking about fasting:

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. ***He that eateth***, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and ***he that eateth not***, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.” (Rom. 14:5-6.)

There is nothing in this passage which gives us licence to keep any festival we want to celebrate, but Christians use these arguments as an excuse to do just that. From experience, I find that people will always interpret things according to what they want

¹⁸⁹ A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament [pp.4-5](#), George Abbott-Smith, New York, 1922.

to hear. For nearly two thousand years, Christians have been subjected to the Babylonian teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and have difficulty breaking free from that Babylonian way of thinking.

There is therefore nothing in the Bible to support the eating of unclean animals. The law of Moses tells us which animals are clean and which are not clean and is just as valid today as it has ever been. If we think about it, where is the logic in giving a set of food laws for only one group of people for only a set period of time?

Remember that the LORD our God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He does not change. If anything in the Bible seems to be saying something which goes against the law of Moses, then we need to re-examine the passage in conjunction with the rest of the Scriptures because otherwise it is clearly being misinterpreted.

Shavuoth (Pentecost) - The Feast of Weeks

Shavuoth (i.e. Pentecost) occurs 50 days after Passover. The only instruction given in the Bible to help us identify when this feast occurs, is to count 50 days from the day immediately after the sabbath at Passover. This commandment in itself has, over time, been interpreted a number of different ways by Christians and Jews alike. A number of Torah-observant Christians today are challenging the rabbinical tradition which says that the counting always begins on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We therefore need to be wary and study the various arguments for and against the accepted method of counting being used by Jews even today.

Since the discovery of the Qumran texts, there has been much scholarly debate over when the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits took place. This waving of the firstfruit sheaf, which in Hebrew is called the Omer (עֹמֶר) or waving of the Omer (עֲמִידָה הַתְּנוּפָה), marks the start of the countdown to Shavuoth/Pentecost. This period between the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits and Shavuoth is referred to as the 'Counting of the Omer'.¹⁹⁰ According to Rabbinical tradition, the waving of the firstfruits (of Barley) always starts on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread irrespective of which day of the week it falls, though Shavuoth itself falls 50 days later on "6th of Siwan and, according to the Jewish Encyclopedia, never occurs on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday".¹⁹¹

Note that the waving of the Omer is **not** the Feast of the Firstfruits. Shavuoth is the Feast of Firstfruits and occurs **fifty days** after the Passover. I am repeatedly hearing Torah observant Christians claim that the waving of the Omer occurs on the day immediately after the first weekly sabbath which occurs during the Passover week, this day being promoted to support the idea that Yehoshua represents the firstfruits of the dead. Whilst Yehoshua was certainly the firstfruits of the dead, this has nothing to do with the waving of the Omer.

¹⁹⁰ <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidayb.htm>.

¹⁹¹ Entry under *Pentecost* in *Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 9, p.593, Isidore Singer et al, Ktav Publishing House, New York and London 1906.

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This teaching is based on Mark 16:19, which is a late addition to the gospel, where we are told:

“So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.”

It has already been pointed out, however, that Yehoshua actually ascended up to heaven **forty days later**. (Acts 1:3-9.) Whilst Yehoshua was taken up to heaven “after he had spoken” to his disciples, it did not take place that same evening. This passage is only summarising what had happened. The teaching that the waving of the Omer must have occurred on a Sunday because Yehoshua is the ‘first fruits’ of the dead is therefore false.

The waving of the Omer (i.e. sheaf of barley) is **not** the Feast of Firstfruits **nor** is it even a feast! In the year of Yehoshua’s death, the first day of the waving of the Omer in the temple in Jerusalem occurred on the Friday! Of course, the actual day of the waving of the Omer depends on when the first day of Passover falls and is not restricted to any specific day of the week.

First of all, let us resolve this issue of when the Feast of Firstfruits occurs. The suggestion, by some Torah observant Christians, that this feast should fall **inside** another feast is completely illogical. We are told that we are to come before the LORD three times a year. Let us count them:

“**Three times** in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in **[1]** the feast of unleavened bread [Passover], and in **[2]** the **feast of weeks** [Shavuoth], and in **[3]** the feast of tabernacles [Succoth]: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.” (Deut. 16:16.)

“**Three times** thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep **[1]** the feast of unleavened bread [Passover]: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) And **[2]** the feast of harvest, **the firstfruits of thy labours** [Shavuoth], which thou hast sown in the field: and **[3]** the feast of ingathering [Succoth], which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.” (Exod. 23:14-16.)

“**[1]** The feast of unleavened bread [Passover] shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt. ... And thou shalt observe **[2]** the feast of weeks [Shavuoth], **of the firstfruits of wheat harvest** [Shavuoth], and **[3]** the feast of ingathering at the year’s end [Succoth]. **Three times** in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel.” (Exod. 34:18-23.)

“Also in the day of the firstfruits, when ye bring a new meat offering unto the LORD, **after your weeks be out** [i.e. at the end of the 50 days], ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work:” (Num. 28:26.)

Notice that Shavuoth is also referred to as the Feast of Firstfruits or “firstfruits of thy labours”. It is also referred to as the ‘firstfruits of wheat harvest’. Remember the parable concerning the wheat and the tares? (Matt. 13:25-30.) In the end days, the LORD is going to gather in his people (the harvest) and redeem them to himself.

The Feast of Firstfruits is an allegorical reference to the firstfruits of the spirit. It is no coincidence that the Holy Spirit fell on the apostles at Shavuoth/Pentecost (i.e. Feast of Firstfruits – Acts 2:1).

We should not confuse the barley with the wheat. The Feast of Shavuoth is specifically referred to above as the feast of “firstfruits of wheat harvest”. Note that the fourth plague in Egypt destroyed the barley and the flax but did not destroy the wheat:

“And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled. But the **wheat** and the rye **were not smitten**: for **they were not grown up**.” (Exod. 9:31-2.)

I would point out that the English word ‘bolled’ means ‘swollen’ or ‘podded for seed’. The Hebrew word גִּבּוֹל *givol*, which is translated as ‘bolled’, more correctly means ‘a bell of flowers’¹⁹² and is translated by the Mechon Mamre Organisation as “was in bloom”.¹⁹³ According to Gesenius, the word means ‘corolla of flowers’:

“It is also used in the Mishnah in speaking of the *corollas of flowers* on the top of the stalks of hyssop, which almost look like ears (of corn)”.¹⁹⁴

The Feast of Firstfruits **cannot** therefore have taken place during the Feast of Unleavened Bread as this earlier festival occurs **before** the wheat appears.

Torah observant Christians have latched on to the following passage and are using this as evidence that the Feast of Firstfruits occurred during the Passover week:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, **and shall reap the harvest thereof**, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. **And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf** an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD. And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. **And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God**: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; **they** [i.e. the offerings **on Shavuoth**] are the firstfruits unto the LORD.” (Lev. 23:10-17.)

Now there is a big problem with interpreting this first wave offering as a feast if it occurred during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There are two things which need to be stressed. Firstly, note that nowhere in this passage does it say that this offering, which includes the waving of the sheaf, is a feast! Secondly, note that the priests shall not eat bread **until** that self-same day that they present this offering unto God. But **this is purportedly in the middle of the feast of unleavened bread!** The suggestion that the priests can eat bread (לֶחֶם *lechem*) in the middle of the Feast of Unleavened Bread simply does not make sense.

¹⁹² Langenscheidt's Pocket Hebrew Dictionary to the Old Testament p.53, Dr. Karl Feyerabend, Hodder and Stoughton, Germany, 1992.

¹⁹³ <https://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0209.htm#31>.

¹⁹⁴ Entry under גִּבּוֹל in Gesenius's Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, p.CLVI, Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, London, 1857.

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Whichever way we look at it, this waving of the sheaf, which according to Jewish tradition is a sheaf of barley, is **not** the Feast of Firstfruits as a growing number of Torah observant Christians are claiming. If anything, this passage seems to be saying that the wave offering occurs after the **last day** of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, this being the first day the priests would be allowed to eat leavened bread.

If we consider the Qumran texts, the following has been noted:

“All that is needed to clarify the text is the list of twenty four priestly courses from 1 Chronicles 24 and the pattern for the 364-day calendar. Once this information is found it is obvious that the writer is using the 364-day calendar, and, as a bonus, the dates for the waving of the omer sheaf and the Festival of Weeks are divulged. Me'ozayah (=Maaziah) is the twenty fourth and thus the last priestly division in 1 Chronicles 24, and for the year under consideration the Passover occurs in the third day of its week (=sabbath) of service in the temple. That is, in this year Me'ozayah's week must begin on the twelfth of the month, as Passover, according to biblical legislation (e.g. Exod. 12:6) and many other sources, falls on the fourteenth of the first month. 1 Chronicles 24 names as the first and second priestly courses Yeoyarib (=Jehoiarib) and Yeda'yah (=Jedaiah). Therefore, after Me'ozayah's week of service at the temple would end on the eighteenth of the first month, Yeoyarib would next come on duty for seven days, after which Yeda'yah would relieve him. That is, Yeoyarib would be on duty from the nineteenth until the twenty fifth of the first month, with Yeda'yah's stint of duty beginning on the twenty sixth. The text says that the waving of the sheaf (the omer) occurs on this date (the first day in his week).”¹⁹⁵

The Dead Sea Scrolls therefore seem to be demonstrating that the Rabbinical interpretation is wrong. The writer goes on to say that the Counting of the Omer mentioned in the above passage began on the 26th Nisan, which is five days after the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This means that the sect in question started counting from the day after the first weekly sabbath which occurred immediately after the Feast of Unleavened Bread had finished, which does not accord with what the Torah (law of Moses) says. To accommodate this interpretation, you would have to extend the seven days of unleavened bread to account for the extra days involved. If, for example, the Feast of Unleavened Bread ended on a Wednesday (as it would have done in 28 CE when Yehoshua was crucified), then Jews would have had to continue eating unleavened bread for another three days (i.e. Thursday to Saturday) before they could eat any leaven. This does not make sense either.

According to the above interpretation of these Qumran texts, the priests changed courses at the end of the sabbath after serving seven days, which means that the priest who replaced him always started his course on the first day of the week (i.e. Sunday). Josephus, however, tells us otherwise. He records:

“He [i.e. King David] divided them also into courses: and when he had separated the priests from them, he found of these priests twenty-four courses, sixteen of the house of Eleazar, and eight of that of Ithamar; and he ordained that one course should minister to God **eight days, from sabbath to sabbath**. And thus were the courses distributed by lot, in the presence of David, and Zadok and Abiathar the high priests, and of all the rulers; and that course which came up first was written down as the first, and accordingly the second, and so on to the twenty-fourth; and **this partition hath**

¹⁹⁵ Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time [p.58](#), James C. Venderkam, Routledge, London 1998 (ISBN: 0-415-16513-X & ISBN: 0-415-16514-8 (pbk.).)

remained to this day."¹⁹⁶

Presumably, the replacement priest started ministering at the start of the Sabbath, which would mean that their ministrations overlapped to effectively double the number of priests on the Sabbath.

Wherever the waving of the sheaf is mentioned in the Qumran texts (i.e. when the counting of the Omer begins), it invariably falls two priestly courses after Passover is mentioned. Hence in Fragment 2, column 2, we read "In Seorim is the Passover. In [Mi]jamin is the Lifting of the Omer." Seorim ministered in the fourth week and Mijamin in the sixth. (1 Chron. 24:8-9.) A little later in this same column, we read "In Abijah is the Passover. In Shecan[ia]h is the Lifting of the Omer." Again, Abijah is eighth on the priestly rota and Shecaniah the tenth. (1 Chron. 24:10-11.) In column 3, we have "In Jakim [twelfth] is the Passover. In Jeshebeab [fourteenth] is the Waving of the Omer."¹⁹⁷ In each of these examples, it does not say on which day of the priest's week of service the waving of the Omer actually occurred. If it fell at the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it could fall on any day of that particular priest's week of ministry.

There are two things here which need to be mentioned. First of all, note that the priestly house of Abijah is said to have performed their period of service during Passover. This does not accord with any information we have concerning the priestly courses, as the house of Abijah should not have been on duty that early in the year, even when there was an additional Adar month added during an intercalary year. This would mean that those who try to calculate Yehoshua's birth from the information, given in the Book of Luke, concerning Elisabeth's husband Zacharias, who was of the priestly course of Abia¹⁹⁸ (Luke 1:5), are wasting their time. Unless we have a list for the period 7-6 BCE showing which priests performed their duties in which weeks, we will be none the wiser as to which week Zacharias would have ministered.

Secondly, the Qumran texts show that the waving of the Omer took place **after** the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This, however, does not accord with what Josephus or other Rabbinical authorities say, as they all clearly state that the waving of the Omer **always** occurred on the second day of the feast irrespectively. (We shall look at these other sources in a moment.)

The Jewish Encyclopedia has the following to say on the subject:

"Regarding the Biblical commandment to offer the omer 'on the morrow after the Sabbath' = מחרת השבת (Lev. 23 verse 11), the Rabbis maintained that 'Sabbath' here means simply a day of rest and refers to Passover. The Sadducees (Boethusians) disputed this interpretation, contending that 'Sabbath' meant 'Saturday.' Accordingly they would transfer the count of 'seven weeks' from the morrow of the first Saturday in Passover, so that Pentecost would always fall on Sunday. The Boethusians advanced the argument 'because Moses, as a friend of the Israelites, wished to give them an extended holy day by annexing Pentecost to the Sabbath.' Johanan then turned to his disciples and pointed out that the Law purposely fixed the interval of fifty days in order

¹⁹⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 7.363 (emphases mine).

¹⁹⁷ For all these entries, see http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/scrolls_deadsea/uncovered/uncovered04.htm#22_Priestly_Courses_I.

¹⁹⁸ Abia is the Greek form of the name Abijah or Abijah.

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to explain that the seven weeks, nominally, do not necessarily begin from Sunday (Men. 65a, b).”¹⁹⁹

The Jewish Encyclopedia also records:

“In the Old Testament the exact day of the celebration of Pentecost is not given. It is seen from Ex. xxiii. 10-17, xxxiv. 18 that it was celebrated sometime in the late spring or the early summer. In Deut. xvi. 9 (R. V.) the date is given ‘seven weeks from the time thou beginnest to put the sickle to the standing corn.’ In Lev. xxiii. 15, 16 the date is more definitely given: ‘And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete. Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days.’ The meaning of the word ‘Sabbath’ in the phrase ‘after the Sabbath’ (‘mimohorat ha-Shabbat’) and, consequently, the question as to the day upon which the Pentecost was to fall have constituted a chief point of difference between Jewish sects (comp. Charles, ‘The Book of Jubilees,’ vi. 22, 32; xvi. 3). Sabbath may mean either a ‘festival’ (Lev. xxv. 2, 46) or the weekly Sabbath. In the general sense of ‘festival’ the day of bringing the sheaf of the wave-offering (‘yom hanef’), i.e., ‘the day after the Sabbath,’ would mean the day after either the first or the last day of Passover. (a) That the ‘Sabbath’ in this case means the first day of Passover is the view of the Septuagint, Targ[um - i.e. translation]. pseudo-Jonathan, Targ[um] Onkelos, Josephus (‘Ant[iquities].’ iii. 10, § 5), Philo (‘De Septenario,’ § 20; comp. Hag. ii. 4, Men. vi. 1-3), and of the later rabbinic literature. Since, according to this view, the sheaf-offering was waved on the 16th of Nisan, Pentecost, fifty days later, was celebrated on the 6th of Siwan without regard to the day of the week on which that fell. (b) That the “Sabbath,” according to the general meaning ‘festival,’ signifies the seventh day of Passover, i.e., 21st of Nisan, without regard to the day of the week, is the view of the Falashas of Abyssinia, the Syriac version of Lev. xxiii. 11, 15, and the Book of Jubilees (c. 135 B.C.).”²⁰⁰

Looking at the final comment concerning the day promoted by the Falashas, the Syriac version of Leviticus and the Ethiopian *Book of Jubilees*, if we were to read Leviticus 23 literally, then this likewise would indicate that the waving of the sheaf of barley occurred the day after the **last** day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If we can recall, the priests were not to eat bread until that very day!

In Targum Yonatan, which is the official eastern translation of the Hebrew Bible used in Babylonia said to have been written by Jonathan Ben Uzziel and written in Aramaic, we are told:

“And the LORD spake with Mosheh, saying: Speak with the sons of Israel, and say to them: When you have entered into the land which I give you, and you reap the harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall uplift the sheaf before the LORD to be accepted for you. **After the first festal day of Pascha (or, the day after the feast-day of Pascha)** on the day on which you elevate the sheaf, you shall make (the sacrifice of) a lamb of the year, unblemished a burnt offering unto the Name of the LORD: and its mincha, two tenths of flour, mingled with olive oil, for an oblation to the Name of the LORD, to be received with acceptance; and its libation, wine of grapes, the fourth of a hin. But neither bread nor parched corn (of the ripe harvest) nor new ears may you eat until this day, until the time of your bringing the

¹⁹⁹ Entry under *Pentecost* in *Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 9, [p.593](#), Isidore Singer et al, Ktav Publishing House, New York and London 1906.

²⁰⁰ *Jewish Encyclopedia* op.cit. [p.594](#).

oblation of your God: an everlasting statute unto your generations in all your dwellings.”²⁰¹

Targum Onkelos likewise says that the waving of the Omer (he called it Omera) occurs “after the day of festivity”,²⁰² meaning directly after the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Josephus, who was a priest who officiated in the temple, clearly states that the Counting of the Omer **always** occurred on the **second** day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

“But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them. And while they suppose it proper to honor God, from whom they obtain this plentiful provision, in the first place, they offer the first-fruits **of their barley**, and that in the manner following: They take a handful of the ears, and dry them, then beat them small, and purge the barley from the bran; they then bring one tenth deal to the altar, to God; and, casting one handful of it upon the fire, they leave the rest for the use of the priest. And after this it is that they may publicly or privately reap their harvest. They also at this participation of the first-fruits of the earth, sacrifice a lamb, as a burnt-offering to God.”²⁰³

It should be stressed that the community of Qumran were a breakaway sect. Because they have recorded that the waving of the Omer occurred on a different day does not mean that it actually should occur on that date. It merely means that they believed this to be the correct day. For my part, I would prefer to take the word of Josephus, who was himself a priest and a Pharisee.²⁰⁴ It is very unlikely that Josephus would have made such an elemental mistake as to identify the wrong day. Also, Yehoshua himself is on record as saying that, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do...” (Matt. 23:2-3) Note that it does not here mention the Sadducees, who believed that it always occurred on the first day of the week (i.e. Sunday). In fact, the apostle Paul informs us that he was:

“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; **as touching the law**, a Pharisee.” (Philippians 3:8.)

In other words, Paul followed the Pharisaic commandments!

The Qumran sect appear to have been Essenes. Pliny describes them as follows:

“On the west side of the Dead Sea, but out of range of the noxious exhalations of the coast, is the solitary tribe of the Essenes, which is remarkable beyond all the other tribes in the whole world, as it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire, has no money, and has only palm-trees for company.”²⁰⁵

Josephus describes the Essenes as follows:

“The doctrine of the Essenes is wont to leave everything in the hands of God. They regard the soul as immortal and believe that they ought to strive especially to draw near to righteousness. They send votive offerings to the temple, but perform their sacrifices employing a different ritual of purification. For this reason they are barred

²⁰¹ Targum Yonatan, [Leviticus 23](#). (Emphasis mine.)

²⁰² Targum Onkelos, [Leviticus 23](#).

²⁰³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [iii.x.5 \[248\]](#).

²⁰⁴ *The Life of Flavius Josephus* [§.2](#) (also known as his *Autobiography*).

²⁰⁵ Pliny, *Natural History* [v.15 \(73\)](#).

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from those precincts of the temple that are frequented by all the people **and perform their rites by themselves**.²⁰⁶

Josephus also comments that “They elect by show of hands good men to receive their revenues and the produce of the earth **and priests** to prepare bread and other food”.²⁰⁷ They therefore had their own priests and their own rules and regulations. We cannot therefore compare what the Qumran community were doing with the ceremonial practices taking place in Jerusalem.

As Josephus confirms that the priests in the temple at Jerusalem were counting the Omer from the second day of Passover, it would be expected that the Jews in Jerusalem would have calculated the day that the Feast of Firstfruits/Shavuoth/Pentecost falls using this second day of Passover as the start day. Jews even today start counting from this second day of Passover, or (more correctly) Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is therefore highly likely that Yehoshua and his apostles would all have used the same day, thereby following the Pharisaic teachings.

There is also a lot of talk about how the Jews **changed** the dates of the festivals in the fourth century CE. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, for example, records:

“According to Hai ben Sherira (died 1038)—the head of a leading Talmudic academy in Babylonia—Hillel II, a Palestinian patriarch, introduced a fixed and continuous calendar in 359 CE. A summary of the regulations governing the present calendar is provided by Maimonides, the great medieval philosopher and legist, in his *Code: Sanctification of the New Moon*, chapters 6–10.

“Fragments of writings discovered in a geniza (depository for sacred writings withdrawn from circulation) have brought to light a calendrical dispute between Aaron ben Meir, a 10th-century Palestinian descendant of the patriarchal (Hillel) family, and the Babylonian Jewish authorities, including Sa’adia ben Joseph—an eminent 10th-century philosopher and *gaon* (head of a talmudic academy). Ben Meir’s calculations provided that Passover in 922 be celebrated two days earlier than the date fixed by the normative calendar. After a bitter exchange of letters, the controversy subsided in favour of the Babylonian authorities, whose hegemony in calendrical matters was never again challenged.”²⁰⁸

The Jerusalem Post has this to say on the subject:

“When confirming the calendar by sighting of the moon became impractical, tradition has it that a fixed calendar was set down by the Patriarch Hillel II in 358 or 359 CE. It is not certain that this was so as, for instance, Maimonides does not mention it, though he says that monthly sightings did cease some time before the end of the Babylonian Talmud. Although some flexibility may have continued, it is clear that by the time of the Geonim in the ninth century a fixed calendar was being adhered to.”²⁰⁹

As to why Ben Meir should argue for Passover to be celebrated two days early is difficult to explain as the fixing of Passover is dependent on the sighting of the new moon, which sighting cannot possibly be out by as much as two days.

²⁰⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* [xviii.18-19](#) (emphasis mine).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* [xviii.22](#).

²⁰⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/jewish-religious-year>.

²⁰⁹ <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/The-Jewish-calendar-is-out-of-sync-Fix-it>.

There is no evidence that Hillel II changed the actual calendar. He only did away with the need for observations of the new moon to fix the date of the start of a month. By that time, it was possible to calculate precisely when the new moon would occur:

“One of the important figures in the history of the calendar was Samuel (born about 165, died about 250), surnamed ‘Yarḥinai’ because of his familiarity with the moon. He was an astronomer, and it was said that he knew the courses of the heavens as well as the streets of his city (Ber. 58b).²¹⁰ He was director of a school in Nehardea (Babylonia), and while there arranged a calendar of the feasts in order that his fellow-countrymen might be independent of Judea. He also calculated the calendar for sixty years. His calculations greatly influenced the subsequent calendar of Hillel. According to Bartolocci his tables are preserved in the Vatican. A contemporary of his, R. Adda (born 183), also left a work on the calendar.

“Mar Samuel reckoned the solar year at 365 days and 6 hours, and Rab Adda at 365 days, 5 hours, 55 minutes, and 25 25/57 seconds...

“...Under the patriarchate of Rabbi Judah III. (300-330) the testimony of the witnesses with regard to the appearance of the new moon was received as a mere formality, the settlement of the day depending entirely on calculation. This innovation seems to have been viewed with disfavor by some members of the Sanhedrin, particularly Rabbi Jose, who wrote to both the Babylonian and the Alexandrian communities, advising them to follow the customs of their fathers and continue to celebrate two days, an advice which was followed, and is still followed, by the majority of Jews living outside of Palestine.”²¹¹

Hillel II did not therefore change the calendar! With this in mind, and bearing in mind the fact that Josephus records that the waving of the barley sheaf occurred on the second day of Passover, this being the day which is still kept today, then the arguments presented above in the Encyclopaedia Britannica about the calendar being changed need to be challenged.

The Qumran texts appear to have been compiled by a renegade sect who disagreed with the Rabbinical teachings. We should not therefore place too much store by what they tell us. The same must be said for the somewhat dubious *Book of Jubilees* which includes further feasts which are neither Rabbinical nor Biblical, such as the feast of new wine and feast of new oil.²¹² They also worked to a 364 day calendar, which meant that, as the year exactly comprised 52 weeks, Passover would *always* fall on a sabbath. If, however, we interpret Leviticus 23 literally, we have to accept that the counting of the Omer must have started on the day immediately after the final sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is when the priests were allowed to eat bread, which would then mean that everyone, other than the Falashas of Abyssinia or those who follow the Syriac version of Leviticus (and possibly even those who followed the *Book of Jubilees*), is keeping the wrong date.

²¹⁰ Berakhot 58b. Samuel is here called Shmuel.

²¹¹ *The Jewish Encyclopedia* Vol. 3, entry under “Calendar, History of”, in the Section “Talmudic Period” on p.500, Isidore Singer et al, New York, 1901.

²¹² See for example the comments on p.112 of *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian: Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies*, Roger T. Beckwith, E.J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands 1996. (ISBN: 0-391-04123-1.).

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Redemption

As any rabbi will tell you, a **male** lamb was never used for a sacrifice for sin. It was always a female lamb which was used:

“And if he bring a lamb [כֶּסֶד *kesev*] as his offering for a sin-offering, he shall bring it a **female** without blemish.” (Lev. 4:32.)

A male lamb was only ever used for a burnt offering, also known as a ‘peace offering’:

“And if his offering be of the flocks, namely, of the sheep [כֶּבֶשִׂים *kevasim*], or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a **male** without blemish.” (Lev. 1:10.)

“Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs [כֶּבֶשִׂים *kevasim*] of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.” (Lev. 23:19.)

So how can this be reconciled with the teachings of the apostles?

This is a difficult question to answer. I can only suggest that the answer lies in the realisation that Yehoshua is the Pesach (Passover lamb). The Pesach was the **only** male lamb ever to be killed as a sacrifice for redemption:

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were **redeemed from among men**, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” (Rev. 14:4.)

This redemption is also referred to in the book of Acts where we are told that the blotting out of sins occurs in the end days:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that **your sins** may be blotted out, **when the times of refreshing shall come** from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive **until the times of restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:19.)

This blotting out of sins therefore occurs when Yehoshua returns. Our redemption is spoken of as a future event:

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting for the adoption**, to wit, **the redemption of our body**.” (Rom. 8:23.)

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed **unto the day of redemption**.” (Eph. 4:30.)

“For then must he [i.e. Yehoshua] often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him **shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation**.” (Heb. 9:26-28.)

This designated period of redemption involves the forgiveness of sins:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Eph. 1:7.)

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. 1:14.)

In English, the word ‘redeemed’ means ‘to buy back or repurchase’, ‘to free from

captivity', 'to extricate from or help to overcome something detrimental', 'to release from blame or debt' or 'to free from the consequences of sin'.²¹³ The Hebrew word פָּדָה *pada* in its various forms likewise means 'to redeem, to ransom, to free, to dismiss or to rescue'.²¹⁴

The Exodus which occurred during the time of Moses is referred to as a Festival of Redemption.²¹⁵ The blood on the doorposts of the house was to secure redemption for the people within.

"For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will 'hold back' at the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." (Exod. 12:23.)

The blood of the Pesach (Passover lamb) protected them.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for **it is the blood** that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. 17:11.)

In the time of Moses, the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts and lintels of the house served as a replacement for the blood on the altar. As Paul states:

"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. **And almost all things are by the law purged [i.e. cleansed or purified] with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission [for sin].**" (Heb. 9:19-22.)

In the same way, Yehoshua's blood **will** (at the appointed time) redeem us and atone for our sins. Like the Passover lamb, Yehoshua has been 'withheld' until the time appointed, even until the end of days.

Baptism

There are a number of references by the New Testament writers to the forgiveness of sin which take effect immediately when we turn to Yehoshua, but this appears to be a separate matter. Peter, for example, said:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38.)

The word remission means 'cancellation of a debt, charge or penalty', but Peter seems here to be referring to something which we can receive straight away – not something we have to wait for.

So, what exactly is baptism? It should be noted that John the Baptist was baptising

²¹³ Entries from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary for [Redeem](#).

²¹⁴ Entry under פָּדָה on [p.265](#) in Langenscheidt's *Hebrew-English Pocket-Dictionary to the Old Testament*, Dr. Karl Feyerband, Hodder and Stoughton, Kent, UK 1959.

²¹⁵ See for example https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/91621/jewish/Passover-The-First-and-Final-Redemption.htm.

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people before Yehoshua started his ministry and long before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Shavuoth (i.e. Pentecost). This act of baptism is no different from when the people had to bathe to purify themselves when they became unclean. These instructions can be found in Leviticus chapter 15.

Aaron and his sons likewise had to bathe before they could enter the tabernacle to perform their priestly duties:

“And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest’s office...” (Exod. 29:1.)

“And Aaron and his sons thou [i.e. Moses] shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water”. (Exod. 29:4.)

“And that son that is priest in his stead shall put them [i.e. the priestly garments] on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy place.” (Exod. 29:30.)

In the Septuagint, the word ‘wash’ in the above passage is translated into Greek as λούσεις *louseis*, a word which is used in the various verses of Leviticus 15 in the Septuagint where it clearly means ‘to bathe’.²¹⁶ Those verses talk about bathing in running water. The Hebrew word רָחַץ *rachatz*, which is used throughout, means either ‘to wash’ or ‘to bathe’. This is a peculiarity of Biblical Hebrew which a lot of people are unfamiliar with.²¹⁷ In English we have different words with different meanings. In Biblical Hebrew, the one word can have more than the one meaning. The understanding often has to be drawn from the context of the passage.

We are informed in the book of Exodus that a laver was placed before the tabernacle where Aaron and his sons could wash their hands and feet,²¹⁸ but this refers to something different. The Greek word used in the Septuagint to refer to this washing of the hands and the feet (which ritual was performed in the laver) is νίπεται *nipsetai* which is derived from the root word νίζω *nizo*²¹⁹ meaning specifically to wash one’s hands and feet:

“The word [i.e. νίζω] is commonly said of persons washing part of the person, while λούομαι is used of *bathing*...”²²⁰

The same Greek word νίπεται *nipsetai* (or at least ἐνίψεν *enipsen* which is a variant form of the verb) is used in John 13:12-14 when Yehoshua washed his disciples’ feet. Moses, however, **bathed** (λούσεις *louseis*) Aaron and his sons in a ritual of purification by water.

Christians, who have adopted the baptismal service, seem to think that baptism is peculiar to Christianity and that this event only takes place once in their lifetime. This,

²¹⁶ See entry under λούσις on p.903 in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, New York, 1883. The Greek means ‘to wash or bathe’.

²¹⁷ The Hebrew word עָבַד *eved*, for example, can be translated as ‘servant’ or as ‘slave’. In English, we have two separate words with different meanings. In Hebrew, such distinction has to be inferred from the context of passage. The same goes for the word שָׁמַיִם *shamaim* which can be translated either as ‘sky’ or ‘heaven’, or the word סֵדֶה *sadé* which can mean ‘field’ or ‘country’ (as in Gen. 14:7).

²¹⁸ See for example Exod. 30:19-20.

²¹⁹ Entry under νίπτω on p.264 in *Langenscheidt’s Pocket Greek Dictionary*, Dr Karl Feyerabend, Hodder and Stoughton, 1988. See also entry for Νίπτω and on p.407 of *A Greek and English Dictionary*, Rev. John Groves, Philadelphia, 1855.

²²⁰ Entry under νίζω on p.1005 of Liddell’s *Greek-English Lexicon* op. cit.

however, is their interpretation. If, to use Christian terminology, we are being “baptised into Christ” then how is it that John the Baptist was baptising before Yehoshua started his ministry?

When Paul arrived at Ephesus, he met with twelve disciples who had already been baptised by John. When they heard Paul’s message, they were baptised again. (Acts 19:1-7.)

Note the following passage:

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” (1 Corinth. 10:1-2.)

The Israelites who came from Egypt were therefore ‘baptised’ when going through the Red Sea even though they did not actually become immersed in water. Despite this ‘baptism’, Aaron still had to be ‘baptised’ (i.e. bathed) before entering into the holy sanctuary.

Consider also the following passages:

“For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash [νίψονται *nipsontai* – a variant form of νίπεται *nipseai*] their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing [βαπτισμούς *baptismous* literally “baptising”] of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.” (Mark 7:3-4.)

“And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him [i.e. Yehoshua] to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed [ἐβαπτίσθη *ebaptisthe* literally “baptised himself”] before dinner.” (Luke 11:37-38.)

Incidentally, this teaching that you have to wash your hands before eating is not in the law of Moses, but is nevertheless a sensible practice. If we consider that the Greek word baptise means simply to ‘dip’ or ‘immerse’, then this is what is being referred to in these passages. In English, we would not talk about ‘baptising’ cups and pots or ‘baptising’ before eating. When a person goes through a purification ritual, they are performing a baptism.

Note also that, when Yehoshua dipped his sop, John uses the word βάψω *bapso* (John 13:26) whilst Matthew uses the word ἐμβάψας *embapsas* (Matt. 26:23) both of which are variant forms of this verb ‘baptise’. Yehoshua therefore “baptised” his bread in the dish (AV “dipped the sop”). As I have hopefully demonstrated here in this paper, the New Testament writings have to be viewed through the eyes of a Jew – not through the eyes of someone who has been subjected to nearly two thousand years of Babylonian doctrines and traditions.

Baptism is a cleansing ceremony which we go through to purify ourselves before coming before God. Notice that the apostle Paul went through a similar purification ceremony after he had returned from one of his missions:

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“Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.” (Acts 21:26.)

Why would Paul do this if such practices were abolished in Christ or if baptism was a one-off event? As already stated, Paul was a follower of the Pharisaic teachings: “as touching the law, a Pharisee”. (Philip. 3:8.) Part of this purification process involved immersing oneself. This ritual bath is known as a mikvah (Hebrew מִקְוָה).²²¹ This is an example of baptism, showing that it is not a one-off ritual. This is not to undermine the significance of being baptised to Christ, but rather to demonstrate that baptism is not something new which was only introduced during the time of Christ.

When the apostles talk about the forgiveness of sins, they are sometimes talking about everyday sins and sometimes they are referring to the redemption which takes place in the end days, when Yehoshua, the “lamb of God”, comes and gathers his elect from the four corners of the earth. The former is referred to by Paul when he commands us to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”. (2 Corinth. 7:1.) The latter will be a repetition of the Exodus which occurred during the time of Moses, which will be in the form of another Passover event – Yehoshua being our Pesach sacrifice.

A Second Exodus

In the final few chapters of the book of Deuteronomy, the LORD tells us what will befall Israel in the end days. If, in those days, we return to the LORD, and obey His voice according to all that He commanded us, then the LORD will gather us from the four corners of the Earth. (Deut. 30:1-20.) If we do not keep His commandments, then the plagues of Egypt will be poured out upon us. (Deut. 28:60.)

The Bible talks about a second Exodus which, it is prophesied, will take place in the end days. This second Exodus is alluded to in the book of Revelation:

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying ‘Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads**’.” (Rev. 7:2-3.)

With what then are the servants of God sealed if not with the blood of Yehoshua (Jesus) the Christ, our Pesach?

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Rev. 7:14.)

The Lamb referred to is, of course, once again the Pesach.

The prophet Ezekiel talks of this Great Final Exodus in the following words:

“As I live, saith the LORD God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people,

²²¹ See https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/1541/jewish/The-Mikvah.htm and https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3997062/jewish/Why-Men-Immerse-in-the-Mikvah-Every-Day.htm.

and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. **Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you**, saith the LORD God.

“And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And **I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me**: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they **shall not** enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

“As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the LORD God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the LORD God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, **when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered**; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when **I shall bring you into the land of Israel**, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers.” (Ezek. 20:33-42)

This is that time spoken of by the prophet Isaiah:

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again **the second time** to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah **from the four corners of the earth**.” (Isa. 11:11-12.)

The first time was when He brought our forefathers up out of the land of Egypt. The second time will be when He gathers us from the four corners of the earth. **This has not yet happened!**

The prophet Hosea likewise mentions this event:

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her [i.e. Israel], and **bring her into the wilderness**, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and **as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt**. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi [i.e. “my husband”]; and shalt call me no more Baali [i.e. “my lord”]. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And **in that day will I make a covenant for them** with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

“And it shall come to pass **in that day**, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” (Hos. 2:14-23.)

We shall even once more be caused to dwell in tents (i.e. tabernacles):

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“And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt **will yet** make thee to dwell in tabernacles [אֹהֶלִים = tents], as in the days of the solemn feast.” (Hos. 12:9 or 12:10 in the Hebrew.)

Again, this has **not yet** happened! The Hebrew word translated as tabernacles in the Authorised Version is אֹהֶלִים *ohelim*, meaning tents.

David mentions this second Exodus in the Psalms:

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the LORD is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place...”

“...The LORD said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring **my people again** from the depths of the sea.” (Psa. 68:17 & 22 or 68:18 & 23 in the Hebrew)

The words translated as “the LORD is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” are actually “סִינַי בְּקֶדְשׁ, אֲדֹנָי בָּם”, which translates literally as “the LORD is with them, [at] Sinai in the holy place”. Note that the word ‘as’ is absent in the Hebrew. This suggests that the LORD is going to take his people back to Mount Sinai.

“O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.” (Psa. 107:1-3)

The Book of Revelation describes this second Exodus as follows:

“And when the dragon [i.e. the Roman Empire²²²] saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [i.e. God’s people] which brought forth the man child [i.e. Christ]. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, **that she might fly into the wilderness**, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev. 12:13-17.)

The expression “time, times and half a time” means three and a half years. The LORD is therefore going to take his elect into the wilderness where He will teach them His ways and will write His law on their inward parts. Notice that those followers of Christ who do not keep this Great Final Passover will be left behind. This is what is meant when it says that the dragon “went to make war with the remnant of her seed”, meaning those who had been left behind. Even on them will the apostate Roman church exercise its wrath. Those waiting for a ‘Rapture’ are misguided. This word is derived from the Latin *rapare*, meaning ‘seize’, ‘snatch’ or ‘take away’, and only appears in the Latin Vulgate as a translation of the following passage:

“For this we say unto you by the word of the LORD, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the LORD shall not prevent²²³ them which are asleep. For the LORD himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump [i.e. the **seventh and final** trumpet] of God: and the dead in Christ shall

²²² See the Section *Edom in Rome in Legacy of Edom* for the identification of Rome with Duke Lotan and the dragon whose name is given as Leviathan.

²²³ Old English for “precede” or “come before”, i.e. pre-event.

rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD [who is on his way to Jerusalem] in the air: and so shall we ever be [in Jerusalem] with the LORD.” (1 Thess. 4:15-17.)

This moment, when the dead shall rise and when they who are still alive are all taken into the clouds to meet Yehoshua as he descends to claim his throne in Jerusalem, is also commented on by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we **shall all be changed** [from flesh and blood to spirit beings – i.e. ‘born again’], In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last [i.e. seventh] trumpet**; for the trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed** [i.e. ‘born again’]. For this corruptible [person] must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible [person] shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinth. 15:50-54.)

The previous passage from 1 Thessalonians, where we are told that we shall meet the LORD in the clouds as He descends to take his throne in Jerusalem, follows on from the Great Final Passover and the temporary sojourn in the wilderness, but precedes that moment described in the Book of Zechariah when the LORD sets his feet on the Mount of Olives:

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, **and all the saints [holy ones] with thee.**” (Zech. 14:4-5.)

Note that the Kingdom *of* Heaven spoken of throughout the *New Testament* is **not** the Kingdom *in* Heaven that is preached by most Christian ministers. Nowhere is there mention made in the Bible of any Kingdom *in* Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is that Kingdom *from* Heaven formed without hands spoken of by the prophet Daniel:

“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and **the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.**” (Dan. 2:34-35.)

As it is recorded in the Book of Revelation:

“And the seventh angel sounded [i.e. **the seventh trumpet**]; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, **The kingdoms of this world** are become the kingdoms of our LORD, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” (Rev. 11:15.)

This sounding of the **seventh trumpet** is the event spoken of above by the Apostle Paul, when we shall be changed ‘in a twinkling of an eye’ from flesh and blood to spirit.

Before that day arrives, there will be a great tribulation. It is referred to by the prophet Jeremiah as the day of Jacob’s trouble:

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“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” (Jer. 30:7.)

The prophet Nahum likewise warns us of this fateful time:

“For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots [i.e. motorised vehicles] shall be with flaming torches [i.e. headlamps] in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees [i.e. his mighty men] shall be terribly shaken. The chariots [vehicles] shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways [i.e. motorways, or, to use the American expression, freeways]: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.” (Nah. 2:2-4.)

The Hebrew word יִשְׁתַּקְּשְׁכֻן *yishtakshkun*, which is translated as ‘they shall jostle one against another’, actually means ‘they shall make a noise’ or ‘they shall roar’. Words such as ‘motor car’, ‘motor vehicle’, ‘juggernaut’ or similar did not exist in the prophet’s day. He had to use the vocabulary of his time. For a method of transportation, he had two possibilities – a wagon, which was slow and cumbersome, or a chariot, which was built for speed. It is obvious what word he had to use.

This description of motorised vehicles that the prophet Nahum saw in his vision was written around two and a half thousand years before they were invented. By comparison to the horse drawn chariots which the people of that time were familiar with, and whose top speed would have been around 35 miles per hour (which speed they would not have been able to sustain for long), the vehicles of today, which he saw in his vision, must have seemed to him phenomenally fast – hence “they shall run like the lightnings”, or, more aptly, “move extremely fast”. Even today, we refer to things being ‘lightning fast’ or ‘like greased lightning’. It’s the same thing.

Even the words מְרֵאִיָּהוּן כְּלִפְיָדִים *mareihen kalapidim*, translated as “they shall seem like torches”, can be more correctly translated as: “their appearance is like torches”. Even today, a torch is something which can project a beam of light. In olden times, however, a torch was a bright flame on the end of a stick. (Think in terms of those you see in films such as Indiana Jones.) The word here used by Nahum is the closest he could get to describing the headlights of road vehicles. Bear in mind that chariots of old did not have torches, were not driven at night (which is the only time you would need a torch) and would most definitely not be racing around at speed on dark unlit paths!

Nahum is therefore describing the means of transportation we are seeing today. When we think about it, it is only in the last century that these words of the prophet have made any sense. Even the King James translators could not make sense of the prophecy. These words are given specifically for this end generation so that we may consider and understand the words of the prophecy, so that we may know that the time of our redemption is near. We need to turn back to God and keep the commandments He gave to us through His servant Moses.

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the LORD thy God will

turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee. And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers: If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.” (Deut. 30:1-10.)

This gathering from the four corners of the earth has not yet been fulfilled. In fact, this Second Exodus will be so great that it will overshadow the first Exodus:

“Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.” (Jer. 16:14-15.)

This event has not yet happened. There are those who would claim that this was fulfilled when the Jews returned to the land of Israel at the beginning of the last century, but it cannot be said that this more recent event has overshadowed the first Exodus which occurred during the time of Moses. This Final Passover will be more spectacular than the first and will be with mighty signs and wonders. The LORD himself is going to lead His people home!

Are we ready for that Exodus?

For Now is Our Salvation Nearer than When We Believed

Christians falsely believe that, when they come to the knowledge of Christ, they are ‘saved’ and ‘born again’, hence they do not think that the Passover is relevant to them. This is despite the fact that in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 the apostle Paul actually tells us we should be **keeping** this feast. It is an important event in God’s calendar, as indeed are all of His feasts. As for being ‘saved’, we should note the Apostle Paul’s own words:

“And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation **nearer** than when we believed.” (Romans 13:11.)

So, if our salvation is **nearer** than when we first believed, then it clearly has not yet arrived. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul tells us to put on the helmet of the **hope** of salvation. Being then a hope, it is clearly something which has not yet been received. Paul was still **waiting** for his salvation to arrive. Anyone who claims to already be saved is therefore fooling themselves. Even Peter tells us that salvation is “ready to be received in the end days”. (1 Peter 1:5.) Even Matthew, quoting the words of Yehoshua, informs us that “he who **endures to the end shall be saved**.” (Matt 10:22 & 24:13.)

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“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24.)

In other words, if salvation has already arrived, then it is no longer hoped for. Yet we are still waiting for and hoping for our salvation.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way [ὁδός], that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way [ὁδός], which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt. 7:13-14.)

Note that the Greek word ὁδός, which is translated above as ‘way’, means ‘way, street, road, path, journey, voyage, expedition...etc.’²²⁴ When we come to Christ we therefore set out on a **road** to salvation, and we have to make sure that we do not stray from that road. We therefore need to remain steadfast in our faith and to overcome all obstacles which may be put in our way. We cannot afford to be complacent.

The AV has the following for Eph. 2:8:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

The point being made in this verse is that salvation, when it arrives, is by the grace of God. It is not saying that we have already received our salvation. By contrast, the translators of the New International (NIV), New American Standard (NAS), New King James (NKJV) and Revised Standard (RSV) Bibles have all amended this passage to read:

“For by grace **you have been saved** through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.”

Notice how the translators have translated according to their belief system. They have been taught that salvation has already arrived, so they are going to translate the passage according to that understanding. In this instance, the King James (Authorised Version) provides the more accurate translation of the Greek.

Consider also the following passage, quoting first from the AV:

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Peter 1:23.)

The same passage has been translated in the RSV as:

“You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”

Notice how once again the translators have translated the Greek according to their understanding, so that this passage now reads as though we have already been reborn. The Greek word ἀναγεννημένοι *anagennemenoi* which simply means ‘reborn’ or ‘rejuvenated’ certainly does not lend itself to this translation. The words “You have been” have been added by the translators. If we read the passage carefully and compare it with what Peter says in Chapter 2 we see that Peter is referring to the end times. As already stated, we are not ‘born again’ until we are changed “in a twinkling of an eye”

²²⁴ Entry under ὁδός on p.267 of the Langenscheidt Pocket Greek Dictionary, Dr Karl Feyerabend, Hodder and Stoughton, 1988.

at the seventh and final blast of the trumpet (1 Corinth. 15:50-54) this being when the LORD comes to set his throne in Jerusalem. οδός

In 2 Corinthians Chapter 6, Paul starts by quoting from Isaiah Chapter 49 which talks about the end times, when the LORD will set his throne in Jerusalem:

“For he [i.e. Isaiah] saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation I have succoured thee: [Compare Isa. 49:8.] Behold now an acceptable time; Behold now a day of salvation.” (verses 2-3.)

The latter part of the above quotation may come as a surprise to a lot of people, simply because every translator has wrongly translated this verse as “Behold **now is the** accepted time, behold **now is the** day of salvation”, but this is not supported by the Greek text. (To my knowledge, the Wycliffe Bible is the only one to have translated the passage correctly.) Provided, however, that the ‘now’ spoken of by Paul is understood to relate to the time referred to by the prophet Isaiah, rather than the time in which Paul was writing, there is no problem with this incorrect translation, though most Christians seemingly want to believe the latter – that salvation has **already** arrived.

Paul continues a few verses later by saying:

“Having therefore these **promises** [of salvation and of an acceptable time] dearly beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves** from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit.” (2 Cor. 7:1.)

The only promises mentioned prior to this verse are those of salvation and of an acceptable time. Being therefore **promises**, they are yet to be obtained. How then do we cleanse ourselves? Is it not written?:

“You know the commandments; Do not commit adultery, Do not kill ... etc.” (Mark 10:19.)

“For he who sins transgresseth the law, for sin **is** the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4.)

“For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3.)

Even the apostle Paul wrote:

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (Romans 7:7.)

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” (Romans 7:12.)

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.” (Romans 7:14.)

This is expounded on by the following passage:

“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:5.)

In other words, they who walk carnally seek the pleasures of this world, whilst they who walk in accordance with God’s laws seek righteousness and righteous judgement. Being of the world, we are subjected to the carnal temptations of the world, which temptations we should resist. Remember that Yehoshua in John 8:11 forgave the

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adulteress saying, “go sin no more”. (Note that the law states in Lev. 20:10 that both the adulterer **and** the adulteress are to be stoned. The people only presented the woman.) We must likewise continue to avoid sin and without the law of Moses we would not even know what sin is.

But man will always interpret things the way he wants it to be interpreted. The Bible, however, is “precept upon precept ... line upon line ... here a little, and there a little; that they [i.e. the people] might go, **and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.**” (Isa. 29:13.)

Quoting Peter:

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”
(2 Pet. 1:20.)

The same warning goes for any interpretation of the New Testament, which Christians are determined to interpret according to their Babylonian mindset, which we have all been subjected to since the time of Aurelian, Constantine and others who came after them. Isaiah warns:

“Wherefore the LORD said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me **is taught by the precept of men**: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” (Isa. 29:13-4.)

It is not always the translator who is at fault either. For example, the oft misquoted passage “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10) is usually corrupted to “Money is the root of all evil”. Time and again I have heard this passage misquoted, often by people who are not even religious. It is not the money which is evil, but rather our desire for wealth and how we use that wealth which are the important factors. This demonstrates how simple passages such as this are often misquoted and misused.

Another often misquoted passage is the following:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, **an holy nation**, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Pet. 2:9.)

What then is a nation? The Oxford Dictionary defines a nation as:

“a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, **inhabiting a particular country or territory.**” (emphasis mine.)

The above-quoted passage from Peter is talking about the future when the LORD sets his throne in Jerusalem:

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (Rev. 1:6)

Bear in mind that John is reporting a future event with people looking back on Christ’s arrival in Jerusalem.

“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and **we shall reign** on the earth.”
(Rev. 5:10.)

The following passage makes it perfectly clear what the above passages are actually telling us:

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:6.)

This is referring to Christ’s 1,000 year reign at the end of which Gog and Magog will come up against an undefended Israel (Rev. 20:7-8), an event spoken of in Ezek. 38, which a lot of Christians are wrongly claiming will happen **before** Christ’s arrival in Jerusalem. Again, just as Christians are wrongly claiming that their salvation has already arrived, so they are also wrongly claiming to have already received their appointed priesthood.

Notice that even though many will make it into the wilderness, not all will make it to the Kingdom which God is going to establish here on earth:

“And **I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me:** I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they **shall not** enter into the land of Israel.” (Ezek. 20:38.)

Look how many were saved from Egypt and look how few actually made it to the Promised Land. Just like our forefathers who came out of Egypt, many of the people who will be part of this Second Exodus will fall by the wayside. Do not therefore let anyone fool you into believing that you are saved simply by declaring “Jesus is Christ”!

Having cleared away the deception, we can begin to see just how much the Babylonian system has obscured the truth of the Word of God. The Bible teaches that we are but flesh and blood into which God has breathed his holy spirit (Gen. 2:7), hence the comment by Paul that our body is a temple in which the Spirit of God resides, and that we are to keep that temple clean. (1 Corinth. 3:16-17.) When we die, we return to the dust from whence we have come. (Gen. 3:19.) Remember the words quoted at nearly every Christian funeral: “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust”! Our salvation is yet to come.

The teaching that we go to heaven when we die is of Babylonian origin, and is one which most religions have adopted. Think about it for a moment. If believers go to heaven when they die, how does the resurrection from the dead and the Day of Judgment fit in with this teaching? Why do we have to be resurrected from the grave if our spirits have already ascended to heaven when we die?

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28-29.)

“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:15.)

The idea that our spirit ascends to heaven when we die is **not** a Biblical teaching. It is a false teaching. The following passage could not be clearer:

“For **no man** has ascended up to heaven except he who came down from heaven, even he who is at the right hand of God until he makes his enemies his footstool.” (John 3:13.)

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If we are clearly told that no man apart from Christ has ascended to heaven, then why is it that we still hold on to this false teaching that we ascend to heaven when we die? The Bible teaches that we sleep. When we are resurrected, it will be just like waking from a deep sleep.

Note that there will be two resurrections. The first occurs when Christ arrives, and those of the first resurrection will rule with Yehoshua for one thousand years. The second resurrection occurs at the end of Christ's one thousand year reign:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:4-6.)

Note that those who form part of the first resurrection will not experience a “second death”. We should therefore aspire to be a part of the first resurrection.

It is ironic that Jews and Christians alike accept the erroneous teaching that Elijah was taken up to heaven by fiery horses and chariot. This also is **not** a Biblical teaching. Read it for yourself. Nowhere in the second chapter of the second book of Kings does it say that Elijah was taken up to heaven by fiery horses and chariot. To the contrary:

“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven [Heb. שָׁמַיִם *Shamaim* means ‘skies’] **by a whirlwind**, that Elijah went with Elisha to Gilgal.” (verse 1.)

A whirlwind **cannot** in any shape or form be mistaken for fiery horses or chariot. We are here talking about a tornado, or twister as the Americans would call it.

“...behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up **by a whirlwind** into heaven [Heb. שָׁמַיִם *Shamaim* = skies].” (verse 11.)

Notice that the fiery horse and chariot only **separated** Elijah from Elisha. They did not carry the prophet up to heaven. Afterwards, the sons of the prophets who had witnessed this event rushed up to Elisha and sought permission to search for Elijah in the mountains and the valleys in case he needed assistance (verse 16), so they clearly had not seen him being taken up to heaven!

“And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master [i.e. Elijah]: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.” (2 Kings 2:16.)

This episode in Elijah's life occurred during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. (See 1 Kings chapter 19, especially verse 16 when he was told to anoint Elisha.) Ahab continued to reign up to the 18th year of Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Kings 3:1). Jehoshaphat was king of Judah for 25 years (1 Kings 22:42), which means that Elijah was taken away sometime before that date.

Judah	Israel
Yehoshaphat ruled 25yrs	Yehoshaphat started ruling in the 4 th year of Ahab king of Israel
<i>Elijah taken away by whirlwind – exact year not known.</i>	
17 th yr of Yehoshaphat	Ahaziah son of Ahab began ruling for 2yrs
18 th yr - battle at Ramath Gilead	Ahab purportedly died in this battle.*
18 th yr of Yehoshaphat	In this year Yehoram son of Ahab began ruling for 12yrs
Yehoram son of Yehoshaphat started ruling after his father's death.	
2 nd yr of Yehoram – <i>Letter arrived from Elijah the prophet.</i>	
Sequence of events leading up to writing of the letter by Elijah the prophet to Yehoram son of Yehoshaphat approximately 10 years after he was supposedly taken up to heaven by fiery horses and chariots.	
*See my main work <i>Ancient History Reconsidered</i> for the dating of this period of history. Ahab actually lived in exile for another 20+ years after this battle.	

Jehoshaphat is that self-same king who sought counsel from Elisha shortly after Elijah was taken from their midst. (2 Kings 3:11.) This was after Elisha received double portion of the spirit after Elijah was taken away. (2 Kings 2:9.) When Jehoshaphat died (2 Chron. 21:1), his son Jehoram took the throne and did evil in the sight of the LORD by putting all of his brethren, anyone who might have laid claim to the throne, to the sword (verse 4). This prompted a letter of condemnation from Elijah the prophet (verse 12). This letter from Elijah was therefore written ***more than seven years – maybe as much as ten years – after*** he was supposedly taken up to heaven by a fiery chariot and horses! In some copies of Josephus, it is recorded that Elijah “was still upon earth”,²²⁵ but because everyone has been indoctrinated with this idea that Elijah was taken up to the throne of God, this statement by Josephus is rejected.

Josephus was a Jewish priest. He was a Pharisee who officiated in the temple in Jerusalem. In his book, *Antiquities of the Jews*, he likewise points out the above sequence of events. *He* also did not believe that Elijah was taken up to heaven.

“Now at this time it was that Elijah disappeared from among men and no one knows of his death to this very day ... And as to Elijah and as to Enoch, who was before the Deluge, it is written in the sacred books that they disappeared; but so ***nobody knew that they died.***”²²⁶

²²⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 9.5.2 Whiston’s translation – see comment 1 on the bottom of page 250 or 9.99 Thackeray’s translation – see comment c on the bottom of page 53.

²²⁶ Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* ix.ii.2. See also ix.v.2 for his letter to Jehoram.

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In other words, the teaching that Elijah was taken up to heaven by a fiery chariot and horses is post-Biblical. Yet another Babylonian concept bites the dust!

The following passage should now be perfectly clear to all but the stubborn:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the **firstfruits** of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man **in his own order**; Christ the **firstfruits** [of the dead]; afterward they who are Christ’s **at his coming**.” (1 Corinth. 15:20-23.)

Describing by what means this resurrection takes place, the Book of Acts records Peter as saying:

“let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, **and his sepulchre is with us unto this day**”. (Acts 2:29.)

“...For David **is not ascended into the heavens**: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand...” (Acts 2:34.)

Even in those days, there were those who were erring in doctrine saying that the resurrection had already taken place. (2 Tim. 2:18.) Even today, by the teaching that we go to heaven when we die, Christians are perpetuating that false doctrine.

The future arrival of Yehoshua in Jerusalem will mark the day of our salvation. At that time the promise given to Abraham, that **he** and his sons shall inherit the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, shall be fulfilled, for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were only sojourners in the land. They have not yet seen the fulfilment of that promise. (Heb. 11:13.) It is that self-same promise that we, as followers of Christ, become partakers of! (Gal. 3:14.) “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise [that was given to Abraham].” (Gal. 3:29.) Immediately prior to that time, the LORD is going to gather us from the four corners of the earth in what will be a spectacular display of the LORD’s power and authority. This will be a repeat of the Exodus which took place from Egypt but on a much larger scale.

Those who keep God’s laws, statutes, testimonies and commandments will be taken to a place of safety in the wilderness. Many, however, will refuse to accept God’s laws and will likewise reject the words of the prophet Elijah who will call God’s people to return to Him and to return to the law which he committed to us at the hands of His servant Moses.

Most Christians believe that the law is no longer relevant to them, that the law was “nailed to the cross”:

“Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances...” (Eph. 2:15.)

The problem with this translation is that the Greek does not say “contained in ordinances”. The words “contained in” have been added by the translators. A literal translation of the Greek would be:

“...the law of the commandments in ordinances.”

In other words, it is not the **law** which was nailed to the cross. It was the **ordinances** which were nailed to the cross, this being confirmed by the following passage where Paul makes no mention whatsoever of the law:

“Blotting out the handwriting of **ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” (Col. 2:14.)

The ordinances were the rituals which surrounded the law. The ordinances in question appear to be the sacrifices. This was to fulfil the words of the prophet Daniel that:

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and **in the midst of the week** [i.e. on a Wednesday] he shall cause **the sacrifice and the oblation to cease**, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” (Dan. 9:26-7.)

The word translated as ‘oblation’ is מִנְחָה *mincha*, referring to an offering of “fine flour” on which was poured oil and then sprinkled with frankincense. (e.g. Lev. 2:1 and various verses in Num. Chap. 28.) Cain likewise offered up a *mincha* “of the fruit of the ground”, referring again to flour. Whilst offered up with sacrifices, a *mincha* was never the sacrifice itself. It was always made from flour. Note that Yehoshua was not only crucified on a Wednesday (the middle of the week) but his ministry lasted for 3½ years, which is equivalent to 3½ days in prophecy where a day is equal to a year in fulfilment.

Quoting the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

“For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” (Jer. 7:22-23.)

This seems to be saying that obedience to God’s commandments is more important than any burnt offerings or sacrifices, nevertheless, Jeremiah quite clearly states that the LORD did not command Moses concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices, though He did show Moses and Aaron how and when, if at all, they were to be offered.

At the moment, Yehoshua is our mediator between man and God:

“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” (Heb. 7:26-7.)

When he sets his throne in Jerusalem, we are told that the sacrifices will be reinstated:

“Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein.” (Zech. 14:21.)

“Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them.” (Ezek. 44:11.)

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At that time, his elect will be ruling over the people as “priests and kings”. (Rev. 20:6.) From this it could be inferred that Yehoshua’s sacrifice will by that time have been ‘spent’ on his elect few and that the sacrifices will be reinstated for those who were not part of the first resurrection.

The law is still as important to our salvation today as it ever was, but it has always been within man’s nature to rebel against God’s laws.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Gal. 3:24.)

As already stated, the Law of Moses is our ‘Highway Code’ and Yehoshua (Jesus Christ) is our driving licence. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

“For Christ is the end result (τέλος) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” (Romans 10:4.)

The Greek word *telos* (τέλος), which is translated as ‘end’ in the AV and RSV, is never used in the sense of cessation of anything:

“τέλος – the fulfilment or completion of anything, Latin effectus, i.e. its consummation, issue, result, **not its cessation** (v. sub fin.), and therefore not properly used (like) of an end or termination...”²²⁷

From this Greek word *τέλος telos*, we get such words as *telephone*, *telescope*, *television* etc. Would we say that television means the end of our vision? *Telos* means: That which is far off which is to be attained or achieved. It means “aim, purpose, target, goal, end result or end product”. In other words, “Christ is the **aim/purpose/end result** of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth”, which is somewhat different to the interpretation most Christians put on this particular passage.

The majority of Christians have rejected God’s laws, statutes, testimonies and commandments, arguing that they are no longer relevant to them. They believe that they are ‘above’ the law, and because of this, they fail to see the relevance of Passover or of any of God’s other feasts. Many Christians have been led to believe that anyone who keeps these feasts is a heretic and a Judaizer.

Because of his undying faith, the Jew has suffered humiliation, persecution and even death – often at the hands of so-called Christians. It is worth reiterating that the Apostle Paul warned the church against any antagonism towards the Jews:

“Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed that he also does not spare you”. (Romans 11:18-21.)

The Jews have held firm to their beliefs. Anyone who converts a Jew to what has been accepted as “Christianity”, no matter how good their intentions might be, is actually guilty of depriving that Jew of his birthright. Accepting Yehoshua as the Moshiah

²²⁷ A Greek-English Lexicon p.1539, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, New York 1883. (Emphasis mine.)

(Messiah) is one thing, but abandoning the laws of God in favour of the Babylonian teachings, which have become accepted as Christian teachings, is another.

God's feast days and His sabbaths are a sign between God and His people. The LORD is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Heb. 13:8 and Malachi 3:6.) He does not change. Anyone who says otherwise does not know Him. The book of Zechariah clearly states that the feast of Tabernacles will be kept when the LORD sets his throne in Jerusalem. (Zech. 14:16-19.) How many Christians even acknowledge this fact? Yehoshua desired greatly to keep the Passover with his disciples, "For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Luke 22:16.) This tells us that the Passover will also still be kept and celebrated when God's kingdom is established here on earth. At that time Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will also partake of the Passover. Let us therefore keep the Passover "not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth". (1 Corinth. 5:8.)