

Herod the Great and Jesus

Chronological, Historical and Archaeological Evidence



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Jacket photograph

(top left): First coin minted by Herod the Great after his victory over Jerusalem in July 37 BCE dated Year 3 (L Γ). Given that Jewish reigns began on 1st Nisan (April), Year 3 was from April 36 BCE to March 35 BCE. Consequently his Year 37 was from April 2 BCE to March 1 BCE.

(top right): Full lunar eclipse dated 9/10 January 1 BCE. According to Josephus, Herod the Great reigned 37 years and died (on 2 Shebat according to Megillat Taanit 23a) after a day the Jews observed as a fast (on 10 Tebeth according to 2Ki 25:1, Zc 8:19) and just before an eclipse of the moon (Jewish Antiquities XVII:166-167,213). In 1 BCE, 10 Tebeth was 5 January and 2 Shebat was 26 January.

(bottom left): First coin minted by Herod Philip after his father's death on 26 January 1 BCE dated year 3 (L Γ). Consequently his Year 3 was from April 1 BCE to March 1 CE.

(bottom right): Partial lunar eclipse seen at Jerusalem when Jesus died on 14 Nisan carrying out "the moon will be turned into blood" (Acts 2:20) dated Saturday 3 April 33 CE.

Titulus Venetus (CIL III 6687; ILS 2683)

<p>Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F PAL · SECVNDVS CASTRIS · DIVI · AVGV · SVB P · SVLPICIO · QVIRINIO · LEGATO 5 CAESARIS · SYRIAE · HONORI BV · DECORATVS · PRAEFECT COHORT · AVGV · I · PRAEFECT COHORT · II · CLASSICAE · IDEM IVSSV · QVIRINI · CENSVM · EGI 10 APAMENAE · CIVITATIS · MIL LIVM · HOMIN · CIVIVM · CXXVII IDEM · MISSV · QVIRINI · ADVERSVS ITVRAEOS · IN · LIBANO · MONTE · CASTELLVM · EORVM · CEPI · ET · ANTE 15 MILITIEM · PRAEFECT · FABRV · DELATVS · A · DVOBVS · COS · AD · AE RARIVM · ET · IN · COLONIA · QVAESTOR · AEDIL · II · DVVMVIR · II PONTIFEXS 20 IBI · POSITI · SVNT · Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F · PAL SECVNDVS · F · ET · AEMILIA · CHIA · LIB H · M · AMPLIVS · H · N · S ·</p>	<p><i>Q[uintus] Aemilius Secundus s[on] of Q[uintus], of the tribe Palatina, who served in the camps of the divine Aug[ustus] under P. Sulpicius Quirinius, legate of Caesar in Syria, decorated with honorary distinctions, prefect of the 1st cohort Aug[usta], prefect of the cohort II Classica. Besides, by order of Quirinius I made the census in Apamea of citizens male 117 thousand. Besides, sent on mission by Quirinius, against the Itureans, on Mount Lebanon I took their citadel. And prior military service, (I was) Prefect of the workers, detached by two co[nsul]s at the 'aerarium [The State Treasury]'. And in the colony, quaestor, aedile twice, duumvir twice, pontiff. Here were deposited Q[uintus] Aemilius Secundus s[on] of Q[uintus], of the tribe Pal[atina], (my) s[on] and Aemilia Chia (my) freed. This m[onument] is excluded from the inh[eritance].</i></p>
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In the decree *brevarium totius imperii* published in Rome on Monday 12 May 2 BCE, Caesar Augustus announced his registration called the "inventory of the world": *This census —the first— took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria [3-2 BCE] and everyone [in Judea] went to his own town to be registered* (Lk 2:1-2), birth of Jesus in Bethlehem on Monday 29 September 2 BCE. Judas the Galilean rebelled during the (second) registration of Herod Archelaus' kingdom (Ac 5:37) of Quirinius in 7 CE (Jewish War II:117-118,433).

Dating the Herod's death and Jesus' birth

Abstract. The traditional date of 4 BCE for the death of Herod the Great, as set forth by E. Schürer (1896), has been accepted by historians for many years without notable controversy. However, according to the texts of Luke and Matthew, Herod died shortly after the birth of Jesus (Lk 1:5, 30-31; Mt 2:1-23), which can be fixed in 2 BCE (Lk 2:1-2; 3:1). Consequently, there is apparently a major chronological contradiction but in fact Josephus gives a dozen synchronisms that enable us to date the 37 years of Herod's reign from 39 to 2 BCE and his death on 26 January 1 BCE just after a total lunar eclipse (9 January 1 BCE) prior to the Passover (Jewish Antiquities XVII:166-167, 191, 213). Two important events confirm the dating of Herod's death: the 'census of Quirinius' in Syria (Titulus Venetus) which was a part of the 'Inventory of the world' ordered by Augustus when he became 'Father of the Country' in 2 BCE and the 'war of Varus' (Against Apion I:34) after Herod's death conducted under the auspices of Caius Caesar (Jewish War II:68-70), the imperial legate of the East, and dated during the year of his consulship in 1 CE (Cassius Dio LV:10:17-18; LV:10a:4).

Dating the census of P. Sulpicius Quirinius. According to Luke 2:1: Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census — the first — took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. The historian Paul Orosius precisely dated the census of Augustus in the year 752 of Rome (Histories against the pagans VI:22:1; VII:3:4) or in 2 BCE. According to Josephus: Quirinius had then liquidated the estate of Archelaus; and by this time the registrations of property that took place in the 37th year after Caesar's defeat of Antony [in 6 CE] at Actium were complete (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:1-4, 26). The first registration under Herod the Great, as the census of Apamea, was made to know the number of citizens and it is not to be confused with the one implemented in Judea by Quirinius when he came to ensure the liquidation of property of Herod Archelaus after his disgrace, and of which Josephus says it was followed by an evaluation of property. This two-step operation did not have the same nature, nor the same goal, or the same geographical scope as the previous one. It was conducted according to the principles of the Roman capitation and not according to Hebrew customs, and only covered the sole Judea, not Galilee. General censuses were performed every 5 years (= 1 lustre) as can be deduced from those reported by Cassius Dio. The census prior to the one of 4 CE, confined to Italy (Cassius Dio LV:13), was performed in 2 BCE.

Dating the war of P. Quinctilius Varus. The intervention of Varus, after Herod's death, was described as a war by Flavius Josephus and also by the Seder Olam, yet the only war mentioned in the Roman archives in this region and at that time was the one conducted by Caius Caesar in 1 CE. The career of Caius Caesar, the grand-son of Augustus, was very brief, an inscription in a cenotaph of Pisa provides his cursus honorum and mentions as the only honorary remarkable action: after the consulship which he held with good fortune, waging a war beyond the farthest borders of the Roman people.

Dating the birth of Jesus. Clement of Alexandria (The Stromata I:21:145) placed the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (31 December 192 CE) and Tertullian (Against the Jews VIII:11:75) placed it in the 41st year of the reign of Augustus [which began from the second triumvirate of October 43 BCE] and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (29 August 30 BCE). By combining these data, the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE in a period between 1 September and 30 October.

Dating the death of Jesus. This dating is easy to determine since Jesus was baptized in 29 CE (Lk 3:1-23), celebrated 4 Passovers (John 1:28-32; 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 12:1) and was killed on Friday 14 Nisan (Jn 16:31). In addition, when he died there was a (partial) lunar eclipse, described as "blood into moon" (Ac 2:20), dated on Friday 3, April 33 CE, which was viewed in Jerusalem from 5:50 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. according to astronomy. In addition, chronological examination of the famous Messianic prophecy in Daniel 9:25 involves the death of the Messiah on April 3, 33 CE. Paradoxically, despite many studies for knowing with accuracy the date of the Last Supper: 13, 14 or even 12 Nisan, there is still no consensus because absolute dates are not used and chronological data are generally replaced by some crafty guesses.

The dating of Herod's death is a fascinating topic because from 1600 CE it became the centre of a controversy among mainstream historians supporting a date in March/April 4 BCE¹, which is obviously miscalculated², and scientific scholars supporting another date, January 26, 1 BCE³, based on synchronisms dated by astronomy (absolute date). This controversy is not insignificant because, as in the case of Galileo Galilei, it is between two conceptions of truth: one based on the interpretation of mainstream authorities and another based on scientific analysis made by scientific authorities⁴. If we assume, as do historians, that chronology is the backbone of history, only the scientific authority holds the truth in history. Mainstream authorities do not like it that scientists try to check some biblical data (like chronological data). For example, although he was a great scientist, Newton was unable to publish his biblical chronology⁵ under penalty of being excommunicated. I have personally been able to verify that chronology was a very sensitive issue because when I included my Master2 inside my doctoral thesis, the defence was cancelled twice because of the date of Herod's death (though validated in my Master2)! Data to calculate the date of death of Herod the Great come mainly from two historical sources carrying weight: the Gospels and the writings of Flavius Josephus. According to the texts of Luke and Matthew, *Herod died shortly after the birth of Jesus* (Lk 1:5, 30-31; Mt 2:1-23), which can be fixed in 2 BCE (Lk 2:1-2; 3:1). According to the texts of Flavius Josephus: *Herod died after a day that the Jews observe as a fast which happened just before an eclipse of the moon (...); after he had reigned for 34 years from the time when he had put Antigonus to death, and for 37 years from the time when he had been appointed king by the Romans (...); before the Passover* (Jewish Antiquities XVII:166-167, 191, 213). Josephus gives even a dozen other synchronisms that enable us to date the reign of Herod from 39 to 2 BCE concordantly, and his death on January 1 BCE. It seems that the first who proposed to date Herod's death around March 13, 4 BCE was Academician H. Wallon⁶. Based on the coincidence of the partial eclipse of the moon of March 13, 4 BCE with the fast of Esther dated 13 Adar (March 12), he concluded that the reign of 37 years began in 40 BCE and ended in 4 BCE, and, therefore, that the birth of Jesus was to be set for December 25, 7 BCE. This calculation is wrong for three reasons:

1. The fast of Esther in the 1st century did not exist simply because it did not appear until the 12th century, according to the works of Maimonides. Josephus also states that on 13 Adar was the Feast of Nicanor (Jewish Antiquities XII:412).
2. According to current astronomical calculations, the eclipse of March 13, 4 BCE had a magnitude of 36% only and would have draw attention of very few people in the early morning when it occurred.
3. When we want to reconstruct Herod's life, if he died on March 4 BCE, we are confronted with a cascade of inconsistencies, if not insurmountable contradictions. It is impossible to

¹ E. SCHÜRER – The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ
Edinburgh 1987 Ed. T & T Clark Ltd pp 326-327.

J.P. MEIER – A Marginal Jew
New York 1991 Ed. Doubleday pp. 414-415.

R.E. BROWN – The Birth of the Messiah
New York 1993 Ed. Doubleday pp. 166-167.

² B. MAHIEU – Between Rome and Jerusalem. Herod the Great and his Sons in their Struggle for Recognition
in: *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 208 (Brill 2012) pp. 235-243.

³ W.E. FILMER - The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great
in: *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. XVII. Oxford 1966 pp. 283-298.

A.E. STEINMANN – When Did Herod the Great Reign?
in: *Novum Testamentum* Vol. 51 (2009) pp. 1-29.

⁴ J. OPPERT – La chronologie biblique fixée par les éclipses des inscriptions cunéiformes
in: *Revue archéologique* 18 (1868) pp.1-32.

⁵ The Chronology of the Ancient Kingdoms Amended (London 1728).

⁶ H. WALLON – Mémoire sur les années de Jésus-Christ
Paris 1858 Ed. Comptes Rendus Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.

make a reconstitution respecting all the synchronisms mentioned by Flavius Josephus. It is easy to verify that the following synchronisms (highlighted) are perfectly consistent and contradict (highlighted in red), without exception, the date of Herod's death in March 4 BCE (column A). The date of Herod's death in January 1 BCE is in column B:

BCE	A	B	C	D	Event in the life of Herod	A.J.
72			0		Herod's birth (between April and July).	
47			25		Caesar arrives in Syria in July 47 BCE and appoints Herod, who was 25 years old, Governor (strategist) of Galilee.	XIV:158
40	[1]		32		Herod is named king at Rome in December 40 BCE by the Roman Senate.	XIV:389
39	[2]	[0]	33		March on Jerusalem during in the summer of 39 BCE.	XIV:389
38	3	[1]	34		Herod purges Galilee of its brigands.	XIV:413
37	4	[2]	35		Capture of Jerusalem in July 37 BCE. In order to reign, Herod makes Antigonus beheaded by the Romans (March 36 BCE).	XIV:487-491
36	5	3	36	0	Actual start of his reign (April 36 BCE), Herod mints his first coin dated year 3.	XX:250
32	9	7	40	4	Beginning of the war of Actium (March 31 BCE) at the end of his 7 th year.	XV:121
27	14	12	45	9	In honor of his title Augustus gave to Octavius by the Roman Senate in January -27, Samaria is renamed Sebaste (12 th year)	XV:297-299
26	15	13	46	10	There are 2 years (26-25 BCE) famine in Judea from his 13 th year.	XV:299-307
25	16	14	47	11	During the 2 nd year of famine (14 th year), two prefects of Egypt C. Petronius and Aelius Gallus (in 25 BCE) are mentioned.	
21	20	18	51	15	At the end of his 18 th year (February 20 BCE), Caesar arrives in Syria, Herod starts restoration of the Temple.	XV:354-380
11	30	28	61	25	End of the 192 nd Olympiad (June 11 BCE) in his 28 th year of reign.	XVI:136
4	37	35	68	32	A testament establishing the kingship of Herod's sons is approved by Augustus at the end of the legation of Varus (6-4).	XVII:202-210
2	[39]	37	70	34	Beginning of his year 37 in April 2 BCE.	XVII:191
1 BCE	[40]	[38]	[71]	[35]	Death on January 26, 1 BCE at the age of 70 in his 37 th year of reign and 34 years after the death of Antigonus. Year 38 would have started in April 1 BCE.	XVII:148
1 CE	[41]	[39]			Caius Caesar leads troops in Galilee and Varus in Samaria.	B.J. II:68-69

A: regnal year according to a death in 4 BCE

(A.J. Jewish Antiquities, B.J. Jewish War)

B: regnal year according to a death in 1 BCE

C: age of Herod

D: year after the death of Antigonus

Several of these synchronisms are easy to check. For instance, if Herod was 25 years⁷ old in July 47 BCE he had to be 70 in July 2 BCE (and 71 in July 1 BCE), if his 28th year of reign coincided with the end of the 192nd Olympiad (in June 11 BCE) his 37th year of reign began in April 2 BCE, if Antigonus was murdered in March 36 BCE, a period of 34 years later still brings us to 2 BCE. Thus, the duration of 34 years corresponds to the effective reign of Herod (The Assumption of Moses §6).

The first years of Herod's reign are described by Josephus in great chronological details, which explains the discrepancy between his legal kingship received from the Roman Senate in 40 BCE and the beginning of his effective reign in 36 BCE, dated year 3 on his first minting. According to Josephus, Herod came to Rome in winter (Jewish War I:279) at the end of the year -40 (Jewish Antiquities XIV:487), since he conquered Jerusalem in July 37 BCE, just 3 years after his enthronement by the Romans in December 40 BCE (Jewish

⁷ The text of *Antiquities* originally had κϵ (25) as numerals which was mistakenly copied as ιϵ (15).

War I:343; Jewish Antiquities XIV:389). The Roman Senate named him king and celebrated his first day of reign (Jewish War I:285) on January 1, 39 BCE, because the posts of governors were awarded on that date⁸. After the capture of Jerusalem in July 37 BCE, Sossius, the governor of Syria, handed over King Antigonus to Marc Antony. Herod, fearing a possible restoration of Antigonus by the Roman Senate, greased Mark Antony's palm to kill his rival (Jewish Antiquities XIV:473, 487-491). Mark Antony who left Italy for Greece in the autumn 37 BCE, then went to Antioch which he reached in winter. Antigonus was executed just before Herod took power⁹ (March 36 BCE). Cassius Dio confirms the chronological data of Josephus, he writes: *These people Antony entrusted to a certain Herod to govern; but Antigonus he bound to a cross and flogged, — a punishment no other king had suffered at the hands of the Romans, — and afterwards slew him (...) Antony spent the entire year [37 BCE] in reaching Italy and returning again to the province* (Roman History XLIX:22-23). All these synchronisms involve Herod dying between April 2 BCE and March 1 BCE¹⁰. Although Josephus dates Herod's victory in July 37 BCE, he fixes the beginning of his effective reign in 36 BCE, as he states that Herod ended a Hasmonean era started 126 years earlier (Jewish Antiquities XIV:490). However, as he dates the beginning of the period in 162 BCE the reign of Herod started therefore in -36 (= -162 + 126). This figure is confirmed by two other indications of Josephus: the beginning of his reign is fixed 27 years after the victory of Pompey (Jewish Antiquities XIV:487) dated July 63 BCE, that is -36 (= -63 + 27) and 107 years before the destruction of the Temple (Jewish Antiquities XX:250) dated August 70 CE, that is -36 (= 70 CE -107 + 1, no year 0).

Two important events used for dating the death of Herod will be studied at the end: 1) the 'census of Quirinius' and 2) the 'war of Varus'. The census of Quirinius was a part of the 'Inventory of the world' ordered by Augustus when he became *Pater Patriae* "Father of the Country"¹¹ on February 5, 2 BCE. The registration of Quirinius in Syria (Apamea) is well attested (*Titulus Venetus*). It was made to know the number of citizens and it is not to be confused with the one implemented in Judea by Quirinius when he came to ensure the liquidation of property of Archelaus after his disgrace, and of which Josephus says it was followed by an evaluation of property. This two-step operation did not have the same nature, nor the same goal, or the same geographical scope as the previous one. It was conducted according to the principles of the Roman capitation (and not according to Hebrew customs in Galilee) and only covered the sole Judea, not Galilee. General censuses were performed every 5 years (= 1 lustre), as the last one under Augustus is dated 14 CE, the 'Inventory of the world' has to be dated 2 BCE (= 14 CE -3x5 -1). Since Augustus was discharging many of his soldiers during the period 7-2 BCE (see *Res Gestae* §16), the war of Varus likely occurred after 2 BCE: Augustus would hardly have been demobilising the army if a serious war was raging in a strategic area of the Roman Empire.

A chronological reconstitution of the early years of Herod's reign follows:

⁸ C. SAULNIER - Histoire d'Israël
Paris 1985 Éd. Cerf p. 207.

⁹ R. MARCUS – Josephus. Jewish Antiquities, Books XIV-XV
Cambridge 2004 Ed. Harvard University Press page 255 note e, page 479 note b.

¹⁰ J. FINEGAN - Handbook of Biblical Chronology
Massachusetts 1999 Ed. Hendrickson pp. 299-301.

¹¹ The honour of being called *pater patriae* was conferred by the Roman Senate. It was first awarded to Roman general Marcus Furius Camillus in 386 BCE, who for his role in the aftermath of the Gallic siege of Rome was considered a second founder of the city, in succession to Romulus. Three centuries later, it was awarded to the orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero for his part in the suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy during his consulate in 63 BCE. It was next awarded to Julius Caesar in 45 BCE, who as dictator became the de facto ruler of the Roman republic and its imperium, for having ended the civil wars. The Senate voted the title to Caesar Augustus in 2 BCE, but being neither important for the ruler's legitimacy nor for his legal powers, it did not become a regular part of the imperial honours, contrary to Imperator, Caesar, Augustus, *princeps senatus*, *pontifex maximus*. According to the historian Suetonius, Augustus' successor, Tiberius, was offered this title, but refused it.

year		[A]	[B]		
-40	4	I		[A] Herod Tetrarch of Judea since December -42	
	5	II			
	6	III	0*	[B] Antigonus is appointed King of Judea by the Parthians (B.J. I:269) and reigned 3 years from 0* to 3*.	
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
11	VIII				
12	IX	Herod arrives in Rome. He is appointed king of Judea by the Roman Senate.			
-39	1	X	1*	January 1 st , official beginning of the reign. Ventidius expelled Antigonus from Syria.	
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI		[0]	Herod marches to Jerusalem, but must stop because of the Roman army which takes up winter quarters. This act sets accession to the throne.
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
-38	1	X	[1]	2*	
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			Herod purges Galilee of its brigands.
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
-37	1	X	[2]	3*	
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			Herod purges Galilee of its brigands.
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
-36	1	X	3	0	
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			Sossius hands over Antigonus to Marc Antony who is bribed by Herod to have him killed. King Antigonus is beheaded when Herod takes power.
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			

The first coins minted by Herod after his victory over Jerusalem (in July 37 BCE) are dated year 3, written **ΛΓ** in Greek¹² (opposite picture)¹³. Since Jewish reigns began on Nisan 1 (April), this coin is therefore appeared in April of 36 BCE. This method of reckoning reign, from Nisan 1 after an accession, was usual for kings of Judea (Talmud Rosh Hashanah 1:1). If Herod died in 4 BCE, year 3 of his reign would have been in 38 BCE, two years before his victory, which is unlikely, moreover, as at that date Antigonus still ruled Judea. The other synchronisms of the reign of Herod confirm this chronology.



¹² J. MALTIEL-GERSTENFELD - 260 Years of Ancient Jewish Coins
1982 Tel Aviv Ed. Kol Printing Service Ltd pp. 125-131.

¹³ The staurogram (on the right) could be an abbreviation of the Greek word *τρίτος* "third" (a "tripod" is on the other side).

Because Herod was 70 years old when he died (Jewish Antiquities XVII:148) and as he was 25 years when he was made governor of Galilee (Jewish Antiquities XIV:158), in July -47 (47 BCE), he died in a period from April -2 to March -1. The arrival of Caesar in Syria is narrated by Caesar himself (War of Alexandria LXV-LXVI). After the murder of Pompey (September 28, 48 BCE) he went to Egypt and then arrived in Syria in July -47, according to Cicero (Ad Atticum XI:20). During this stay of just one month, according to Suetonius (Lives of the Twelve Caesar - Caesar XXXV:3), he established a close, Sextus Julius Caesar, as governor of Syria and put Herod in charge of Galilee¹⁴.

year			age	
-47	1	X	24	Caesar is in Syria and appoints Herod, who is 25, as "governor (strategist)" of Galilee (Herod is 70 on July 2 BCE).
	2	XI		
	3	XII		
	4	I		
	5	II		
	6	III		
	7	IV	25	
	8	V		
	9	VI		
	10	VII		
	11	VIII		
	12	IX		
-46	1	X		
	2	XI		
	3	XII		
	4	I		
	5	II		
	6	III		

Josephus mentions the age of Herod [25 years] in connection with his appointment as "governor" of Galilee, which fixes his birth in 72 BCE in June/July.

Josephus relates that the battle of Actium took place in the 7th year of Herod's reign¹⁵ (Jewish Antiquities XV:121). As the war began in March 31 BCE¹⁶ and it ended with the victory of Caesar (and Agrippa) against Cleopatra (and Antony) on September 2, 31 BCE, the beginning has to be set in the 7th year which went from April 32 BCE to March 31 BCE. If we fix the end of the war in the 7th year, not the beginning, the death of Herod would be located in his 37th year between April 1 BCE and March 1 CE. Both possibilities (died on January 1 BCE or 1 CE) clearly contradict a death dated in 4 BCE.

year			[A]	[B]				
-32	4	I	7	4	[A] year of reign			
	5	II			[B] year after the death of Antigonus			
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
	-31	1			X			
		2			XI			
		3			XII			Beginning of the war of Actium.
4		I	8	5				
5		II						
6		III						
7		IV						
8		V						
9		VI						
10		VII						
						End of the war of Actium.		
						Era of Actium (year 1)		

¹⁴ E. SCHÜRER - The History of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ Edinburg 1987 Ed. T & T Clark Ltd pp. 248,270-276.

¹⁵ This sentence is ambiguous because Josephus does not say if this is the beginning or the end of the battle.

¹⁶ J.M. RODDAZ - Marcus Agrippa - Les arcanes de la puissance Farnèse 1984 Éd. École Française de Rome pp. 159-166.

Herod rebuilt the city of Samaria and renamed it Sebaste in honour of the emperor (Jewish Antiquities XV:297-299), because Octavian had been awarded the title of Augustus by the Roman Senate on January 16, 27 BCE. The rebuilding of Samaria was completed by the end of the year 27 BCE¹⁷. Then, in 26 BCE, during the 13th year of his reign there was a terrible famine in Judea which lasted 2 years and required the intervention of the prefect of Egypt Petronius during the 14th year of his reign, in 25 BCE (Jewish Antiquities XV:299-307). In addition, Herod gave assistance to Aelius Gallus (Jewish Antiquities XV:317). The careers of Gaius Cornelius Gallus, Gaius Aelius Gallus and Gaius Publius Petronius, the three first prefects of Egypt (Geography XVII:1:53), are well known¹⁸. According to Suetonius (The Life of Augustus 66), Cornelius Gallus espoused the cause of Octavian and as a reward for his services was made prefect of Egypt in 30 BCE. Gallus' conduct brought him into disgrace with the emperor, and a new prefect, Aelius Gallus, was appointed. After his recall, Cornelius Gallus put an end to his life, around February 26 BCE¹⁹, according to Cassius Dio (Roman History LIII:23:1-7).

Aelius Gallus was also known to be an intimate friend of the Greek geographer Strabo. The expedition to Arabia Felix and Yemen, of which an account is given by his friend Strabo, as well as by Cassius Dio and Pliny the Elder (Natural History VI:32:17; 35:4) turned out to be a complete failure. Aelius Gallus undertook the expedition from Egypt on the command of Augustus, partly with a view to explore the country and its inhabitants, and partly to conclude treaties of friendship with the people, or to subdue them if they should oppose the Romans, for it was believed at the time that Arabia was full of all kinds of treasures. When Aelius Gallus set out with his army (2 Roman legions, 500 Jews and 1000 Nabatean soldiers), he trusted to the guidance of a Nabataean called Syllaeus, who deceived and misled him. A long account of this interesting expedition through the desert is given by Strabo (Geography XVI:4:22-24) —who derived most of his information about Arabia from his friend Aelius Gallus. The burning heat of the sun, the bad water, and the want of every thing necessary to support life, produced a disease among the soldiers which was altogether unknown to the Romans, and destroyed the greater part of the army; so that the Arabs were not only not subdued, but succeeded in driving the Romans even from those parts of the country which they had possessed before. Aelius Gallus spent 6 months on his march into the country, on account of his treacherous guide, while he effected his retreat in 2 months, obliged to return to Alexandria, having lost the greater part of his force. The end of this campaign is dated around March 24 BCE according to Cassius Dio (Roman History LIII:28:1; 29:3-7). Aelius Gallus was recalled by Augustus for failure to pacify Arabia Felix and Yemen and was succeeded as prefect by Gaius Publius Petronius, a military genius and close friend of Augustus. Prefects and governors were appointed to their office thanks to an *imperium*. This *imperium* was not linked with a geographical area but with a mission fixed by the emperor, as Tacitus recalls (Annals I:80:1-3). The Roman army was organized in Egypt from 29 BCE. It consisted of 3 legions at Nicopolis near Alexandria (III *Cyrenaica*, XII *Fulminata*, XXII *Deiotariana*) and one fleet (*classis alexandrina*)²⁰. Augustus in his memoirs (*Res gestae* §26) related that he sent two 'victorious' armies at the same time (25 BCE) one in Arabia led by Aelius Gallus and another one in Ethiopia led by Petronius.

¹⁷ G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'Empire romain
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 10.

¹⁸ S. JAMESON – Chronology of Aelius Gallus and C. Petronius
in: *The Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1978) pp. 71-84.

¹⁹ G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'Empire romain
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 11.

²⁰ Y. LE BOHEC – L'armée romaine
Paris 2002 Éd. Picard pp. 188-189.

The sequence Aelius Gallus — Petronius raises a problem for Josephus's account because Herod apparently bought grain from the Egyptian prefect Petronius (Jewish Antiquities XV:307), because of the famine during Petronius's prefecture (Strabo XVII:1:3), before sending assistance to Aelius Gallus (A.J. XV:317). Given that Aelius Gallus undertook his campaign as prefect of Egypt (Cassius Dio LIII:29:3), it could be problematic that Josephus situates Petronius's prefecture before Gallus's, but it is not the case. Egyptian corn was normally reserved for official use and export licences were rarely granted to private persons. But on this occasion Petronius's aid to Herod was likely a consequence of the prior assistance given to Gallus (500 Jewish soldiers) at the beginning of his campaign to Arabia. When the campaign in Arabia turned to failure, Augustus appointed Petronius as the new prefect of Egypt, around September 25 BCE. For Josephus the main point about Herod's affairs was Petronius's aid (A.J. XV:307-316) because he says: *It was at that time also [during the 14th year of Herod] that he sent to Caesar 500 picked men from his bodyguards as an auxiliary force, and these men were very useful to Aelius Gallus, who led them to the Red Sea* (A.J. XV:317).

year			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	
-28	11	VIII	11	8	[3]		
	12	IX					
-27	1	X	12	9			Octavian is called Augustus on January 16, 27 BCE. [C] Gaius Cornelius Gallus 1 st Prefect of Egypt
	2	XI					
	3	XII					
	4	I					
	5	II					
	6	III					
	7	IV					
	8	V					
	9	VI					
	10	VII					
	11	VIII					
	12	IX					
-26	1	X	13	10	[1]		[D] Gaius Cornelius Gallus came back to Rome. [A] Samaria is renamed Sebaste by Herod in honour of Augustus (A.J. XV:297-299). [C] Gaius Aelius Gallus 2 nd Prefect of Egypt. [D] Gaius Cornelius Gallus put an end to his life.
	2	XI					
	3	XII					
	4	I					
	5	II					
	6	III					
	7	IV					
	8	V					
	9	VI					
	10	VII					
	11	VIII					
	12	IX					
-25	1	X	14	11	[2]		[D] Herod sent an auxiliary force of 500 soldiers to lead the 2 legions of Gaius Aelius Gallus to the Red Sea (A.J. XV:317, (Geography XVI:4:23-24). [C] Gaius Aelius Gallus built 80 boats, then 130 vessels of burden (in Suez) to travel on the Red Sea rather than inside Arabia (Geography XVI:4:22-23).
	2	XI					
	3	XII					
	4	I					
	5	II					
	6	III					
	7	IV					
	8	V					
	9	VI					
	10	VII					
	11	VIII					
	12	IX					
-24	1	X	15	12	[1]		[D] Gaius Aelius Gallus , after his disastrous campaign in Arabia, came back to Alexandria (Dio LIII:28:1; 29:3-7). [C] The Ethiopians, emboldened by the fact that a part of the Roman force in Egypt had been drawn away with Aelius Gallus when he was carrying on war against the Arabians, attacked the Thebaïis and the garrison of the 3 cohorts at Syene, but Gaius Publius Petronius , setting out with less than 10,000 infantry and 800 cavalry against 30,000 men, first forced them to flee back to Pselchis, an Ethiopian city (Geography XVII:1:54).
	2	XI					
	3	XII					
	4	I					
	5	II					
	6	III					
	7	IV					
	8	V					
	9	VI					
	10	VII					
	11	VIII					
	12	IX					

If Herod died in 4 BCE, early in his 37th year of reign, his 14th year would go back to 27 BCE, date incompatible with the prefecture of Petronius.

According to Josephus, the arrival of Caesar in Syria is located after the 17th year of Herod's reign (Jewish Antiquities XV:354). He added that on this occasion Herod decided to undertake the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem which is dated in the 18th year of his reign (Jewish Antiquities XV:380) or in the 15th year of his reign [after the death of Antigonus] (Jewish War I:401). If the precision "after the death of Antigonus" is refused, one is forced to admit that Josephus, or a scribe, later made a mistake. Cassius Dio situated the trip of Augustus in Syria in the spring when Marcus Apuleius and Publius Silius were consuls (Roman History LIV:7:4-6), in 20 BCE. As the Jewish year begins in April, the months of February and March belong to the end of the previous year.

year			[A]	[B]				
-21	1	X	17	14	[A] year of reign [B] year after the death of Antigonus			
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I	18	15				
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI						
	10	VII						
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
-20	1	X				19	16	Caesar arrives in Syria. Herod undertakes the restoration of the Temple and its complete rebuilding.
	2	XI						
	3	XII						
	4	I						
	5	II						
	6	III						

Josephus specifies (Jewish Antiquities XVI:136) that the 28th year of Herod's reign expired (*sic*) in the 192nd Olympiad [from July -12 to June -11].

year			[A]	[B]	
-11	1	X	27	24	
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I	28	25	End of the 192 nd Olympiad. Beginning of the 193 rd Olympiad
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
-10	1	X	29	26	
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			
	5	II			
	6	III			

This high internal consistency of all this chronological data of Josephus indirectly confirms its accuracy. As noted previously, Josephus gives three chronological indications when Herod died: (1) *after a day that the Jews observe as a fast which happened* (2) *just before an eclipse of the moon* (3); *before the Passover* (Jewish Antiquities XVII:166-167,213). A fourth chronological indication can be deduced from the fact that Herod ate an apple before he died (Jewish Antiquities XVII:183), because this fruit is harvested in late August and its shelf life is maximum of 5 months. Therefore it is possible to eat apples in Judea until the beginning of February of the following year. If Herod died in March 4 BCE he would have

eaten just before dying, a rotten apple (!), unless we postulate a miraculous preservation for 7 months, which is impossible according to agronomists. The Jews fasted 4 times a year²¹ (Zc 8:19): on Tammuz 17, Ab 9, Tishri 3 and Tebeth 10. It is noteworthy that Adar 13 was not fasted at the time because it was the Feast of Nicanor (Jewish Antiquities XII:412). This feast of Nicanor on 13 Adar was formerly known as the feast of Mordecai (2M XV:36). The Mishna (Taanit 2:10, Rosh Hashanah 1:3) also stipulates that there was no fasting at Purim in the month of Adar. The fast of the 7th month (Tishri) commemorated the murder of Gedaliah and the one of the 10th month (Tebeth) commemorated the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2Ki 25:1, Ezk 24:1-2) as recalled by Josephus (Jewish Antiquities X:116). The fast of Tebeth²² 10 (January 5 in 1 BCE) actually preceded by a few days the total lunar eclipse on Tebeth 14/15²³ (9/10 January in 1 BCE)²⁴.

The Jewish religious year begins on Nisan 1. This particular day coincides with the first visible lunar crescent in Jerusalem after the spring equinox. Dates of equinoxes²⁵ and of first lunar crescents²⁶ for years 4 and 1 BCE follow:

[autumn equinox]		[25 September -2]	[25 September -5]
VII	1 st Tishri	29 September -2	2 October -5
VIII	1 st Heshvan	29 October -2	31 October -5
IX	1 st Kislev	27 November -2	30 November -5
X	1 st Tebeth	27 December -2	29 December -5
XI	1 st Shebat	25 January 1 BCE	28 January 4 BCE
XII	1 st Adar	25 February -1	27 February -4
[XIIb]	[1 st Adar2]	-	-
[spring equinox]		[22 March -1]	[22 March -4]
I	1 st Nisan	25 March -1	28 March -4
II	1 st Iyar	23 April -1	26 April -4
III	1 st Siwan	23 May -1	25 May -4
IV	1 st Tammuz	21 June -1	24 June -4
V	1 st Ab	20 July -1	24 July -4
VI	1 st Elul	19 August -1	22 August -4
VII	1 st Tishri	17 September -1	21 September -4
VIII	1 st Heshvan	17 October -1	21 October -4
IX	1 st Kislev	15 November -1	19 November -4

The ancient *Roll of fasts*²⁷ (Megillat Taanit 23a) says: *On Shebat 2 a feast-day, no mourning.* On Shebat 2 is January 26 in 1 BCE²⁸. The Scholion of Megillat Taanit speaks of the death of Herod in three versions, at Kislev 7 (Oxford, hybrid text) or at Shebat 2 (Parma), which agrees with the date of the *Roll of fasts*. Kislev 7 is linked with King Alexander Jannaeus's death, in addition the king died when returning from a military campaign, at the end of autumn (Jewish War I:105). Astronomy enables us to date the events mentioned by Josephus: (1) a memorial fasting followed by (2) an eclipse of the moon and then (3) Herod's death, three events which succeeded in a short time before (4) Passover:

²¹ The Mishnah (Taanit 4:6) only describes the fasts of 17 Tammuz and 9 Ab.

²² According to the Jerusalem Talmud (Taanith 3:1) this fast was observed only in Judea.

²³ Astronomy requires to match the eclipses of the moon with the full moon days.

²⁴ <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEcat5/LE-0099-0000.html>

²⁵ <http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/temps/saisons.php>

²⁶ Day 1 = new moon + 1 http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/phenomenes/phases_lune/index.php

²⁷ W.E. FILMER - The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great

in: *The Journal of Theological Studies* Vol. XVII. Oxford 1966 p. 284.

H. LICHTENSTEIN - Die fastenrolle eine untersuchung zur jüdisch-hellenistischen geschichte
in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* Cincinnati 1931-32 pp. 271-280.

²⁸ J. FINEGAN - Handbook of Biblical Chronology

Massachusetts 1999 Ed. Hendrickson p. 295.

O. EDWARDS - The Time of Christ

Edinburgh 1986 Ed. Floris Books p. 59.

	(1) fast	date		in 1 BCE	#	in 4 BCE	#
		(2) eclipse	(3) death				
VII	3 Tishri			1 st October -2		4 October -5	
VIII	Heshvan						
IX	Kislev		7 Kislev ?	3 December -2		6 December -5	NO#
X	10 Tebeth			5 January -1	YES	8 January -4	
		15 Tebeth		10 January	Total	13 January -4	
XI	Shebat		2 Shebat	26 January -1	YES	29 January -4	NO#
XII	[13] Adar			[9 March -1]		[12 March]	NO#
		14 Adar				13 March	Partial
I	[1 st] Nisan [14] Nisan			[25 March -1]		1 April ??	NO#
			(4) Passover	[7 April -1]		[10 April -4]	
II	Iyar						
III	Siwan						
IV	17 Tammuz			7 July -1		10 July -4	
V	9 Ab			29 July -1		1 st August -4	
VI	Elul						
VII	Tishri						
VIII	Heshvan						
IX	Kislev		7 Kislev ?	21 November -1		25 November -4	

The agreement is excellent in 1 BCE, but in 4 BCE inconsistencies abound. Indeed, just before Herod's death there was no Memorial fasting, worse, Adar 13 is a feast day (Feast of Nicanor) and the traditional date of Herod's death (Shebat 2) does not work anymore since it is located before, not after it (the date of 7 Kislev is worse).

On the death of Herod, his sons sought the endorsement of Caesar Augustus to legitimize their royalty, as did Herod himself. Josephus explains that in the past: *Caesar received the boys [in 20 BCE] with the greatest consideration. He also gave Herod the right to secure in the possession of his kingdom whichever of his offspring he wished* (Jewish Antiquities XV:343). Herod being dead on 2 Shebat (26 January 1 BCE), the first year of effective reign of his sons could start on Nisan 1 (March 24, 1 BCE). Herod Philip did as his father. The coins (below) minted from his first year of reign in 1 BCE are dated year 3, written L Γ in Greek²⁹, which referred to Herod's testament made at the end of the legation of Varus in 4 BCE, a year being considered as an accession year (without there having been co-regency).



This point is crucial to understand the chronology of Herodian reigns. Indeed, fictional accessions, legally back-calculated, were not uncommon at that time³⁰. All of the Herods acknowledged receiving their kingdom from Augustus (Jewish Antiquities XVII:244-246). A testament establishing the kingdom of Herod's sons was written in front of Augustus at the end of the legation of Varus (Jewish Antiquities XVII:202-210). This document served as a reference after the death of Herod to confirm the kingdom of his sons³¹. For that reason, just after Herod's death, Archelaus rushed to Rome to validate by Augustus the testament of his father who had made him king (Jewish War II:1-2). Similarly, Antipas disputed succession to the throne because he was referring to the first testament of Herod, who designated him as king, in his view that testament prevailing over its codicil (Jewish War II:20). Therefore, that testament, not Herod's codicils, had to be used to set the beginning of their statutory royalty because only the decision of Augustus, which validated

²⁹ J. MALTIEL-GERSTENFELD - 260 Years of Ancient Jewish Coins 1982 Tel Aviv Ed. Kol Printing Service Ltd p. 144.

³⁰ E.J. BICKERMAN -Notes on Seleucid and Parthian Chronology in: *Berytus* VIII (1943) pp. 73-83.

³¹ W.E. FILMER - The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great in: *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. XVII. Oxford 1966 pp. 283-298.

it, was considered as a last resort (Jewish War II:20-21, 28). Herod's sons were legally established kings (in Rome) before taking office (in Jerusalem). Josephus relates Antipater's dialogue with his father: *And indeed what was there that could possibly provoke me against thee? Could the hope of being king do it? I was a king already* (Jewish War I:625-631). If it was only about the certitude of reigning, this explanation would have accused Antipater, because he would have been able to accelerate his accession to the throne by committing parricide, while in recalling that he was King already, Herod's death did not change anything for him; this argument had already been used in the past to prove his innocence (Jewish War I:503).

According to Flavius Josephus, Herod Archelaus reigned 10 years. The 9th year of his reign (Jewish War II:111), at the end of which he was deposed, is dated 6 CE according to Dio (Roman History LV:25:1, 27:5) and the beginning of his 10th year (Jewish Antiquities XVII:342), marked by the end of the census of Quirinius, dated 7 CE³² (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:26). A chronological reconstitution of the early years of Archelaus' reign follows:

year			[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	Main event					
-4	4	I	35	32	67	[0]	[A] year of Herod's reign					
	5	II					[B] year after the death of Antigonus					
	6	III					[C] age of Herod					
	7	IV					[D] regnal year of Herod's sons (based on the last Herod's Testament under Varus's governorship).					
	8	V										
	9	VI										
	10	VII										
	11	VIII										
	12	IX										
	-3	1					X	36	33	69	[1]	
		2					XI					
		3					XII					
4		I										
5		II										
6		III										
7		IV										
8		V										
9		VI										
10		VII										
11		VIII										
12		IX										
-2	1	X	37	34	70	[2]	Caesar stated "Father of the Country" (on February 5)					
	2	XI					<i>Brevarium</i> for the "Inventory of the world" (on May 12)					
	3	XII					(Herod was 25 years old on July 47 BCE)					
	4	I					Jesus' birth (on 29 September)					
	5	II					(Massacre of the Innocents on December 25)					
	6	III										
	7	IV										
	8	V										
	9	VI										
	10	VII										
	11	VIII										
	12	IX										
-1	1	X	[38]	[35]	[71]	3	Herod died on January 26, at the age of 70 years, in his 37 th year of reign, 34 years after the death of Antigonus.					
	2	XI										
	3	XII										
	4	I										
	5	II										
	6	III										
	7	IV										
	8	V										
	9	VI										
	10	VII										
	11	VIII										
	12	IX										
1	1	X					Caius Caesar arrived in Syria					
	2	XI										

³² Consular years used by Cassius Dio was reckoned from January 1 to December 31, 6 CE, but the 37th of Actium was reckoned from September 2, 6 CE to September 1, 7 CE. The 9th year of Archelaus was reckoned from April 17, 6 CE to April 6, 7 CE.

Numismatics³³ is a good means of dating. Herod took Jerusalem in July 37 BCE and minted coins to commemorate this event. His 1st year of actual reign [in 36 BCE], the only one which is dated, was year 3 (not year 1) because Herod considered that his kingdom was dating back to the time when the Roman Senate had appointed him king. Josephus says that Herod died 37 years after being inducted legally by the Romans and he reigned 34 years after the death of Antigonus. His coins thus refer to the legal rule (the 37 years mentioned by Josephus). Reigns of kings of Judea are counted according to the Jewish method of accession years. Antigonus being dead around March 36 BCE, year 3 of Herod's reign began on 1 Nisan [April 21 in 36 BCE]. Herod was appointed king by the Roman Senate in December 40 BCE. He considered that his accession as king of Judea began from his march on Jerusalem in September 39 BCE.

year		age	Herod		emperor		period
-48		24					
-47		25	appointed as Governor of Galilee				
-46		26					
-45		27					
-44		28					
-43		29			Octavius		
-42		30	appointed as Tetrarch of Judea		1		
-41		31			2		
-40		32	appointed as King of Judea (in Rome)		3		
-39	[0]	33	march on Jerusalem (accession year in Judea)		4		
-38	[1]	34			5		
-37	[2]	35	Jerusalem taken		6		
-36	3	36	1 st coin minted of year 3		7		
-35	4	37			8		
-34	5	38			9		
-33	6	39			10		
-32	7	40			11		
-31	8	41		Actium	12	0	09/31-08/30
-30	9	42			13	1	09/30-08/29
-29	10	43			14	2	09/29-08/28
-28	11	44			15	3	09/28-08/27
-27	12	45			1 (16) Augustus	4	09/27-08/26
-26	13	46			2 (17)	5	09/26-08/25
-25	14	47			3 (18)	6	09/25-08/24
-24	15	48			4 (19)	7	09/24-08/23
-23	16	49			5 (20)	8	09/23-08/22
-22	17	40			6 (21)	9	09/22-08/21
-21	18	51			7 (22)	10	09/21-08/20
-20	19	52			8 (23)	11	09/20-08/19
-19	20	53			9 (24)	12	09/19-08/18
-18	21	54			10 (25)	13	09/18-08/17
-17	22	55			11 (26)	14	09/17-08/16
-16	23	56			12 (27)	15	09/16-08/15
-15	24	57			13 (28)	16	09/15-08/14
-14	25	58			14 (29)	17	09/14-08/13
-13	26	59			15 (30)	18	09/13-08/12
-12	27	60			16 (31)	19	09/12-08/11
-11	28	61			17 (32)	20	09/11-08/10
-10	29	62			18 (33)	21	09/10-08/9
-9	30	63			19 (34)	22	09/9-08/8
-8	31	64			20 (35)	23	09/8-08/7
-7	32	65			21 (36)	24	09/7-08/6

³³ J. MALTIEL-GERSTENFELD - 260 Years of Ancient Jewish Coins
 1982 Tel Aviv Ed. Kol Printing Service Ltd pp. 125-184.
 A. BURNETT, M. AMANDRY, P.P. RIPOLLÉS - Roman Provincial Coinage I
 London 1992 Ed. British Museum Press pp. 585, 678-685.

-6	33	66				22 (37) <i>Varus</i>	25	09/6-08/5
-5	34	67				23 (38)	26	09/5-08/4
-4	35	68	[0]	[0]	[0]	24 (39)	27	09/4-08/3
-3	36	69	[1]	[1]	[1]	25 (40)	28	09/3-08/2
-2	37	70	[2]	[2]	[2]	26 (41)	29	09/2-08/1
-1			3 Archelaus	3 ^A Philip	3 Antipas	27 (42)	30	09/-1-08/1
1			4	4	4	28 (43)	31	09/1-08/2
2			5	5 ^A	5	29	32	09/2-08/3
3			6	6 ^A	6	30	33	09/3-08/4
4			7	7	7	31	34	09/4-08/5
5			8	8	8	32	35	09/5-08/6
6			9*	9	9	33 ^A <i>Quirinius</i>	36	09/6-08/7
7			10#*	10	10	34	37*	09/7-08/8
8				11	11	35	38	09/8-08/9
9				12 ^A	12	36 ^A	39	09/9-08/10
10				13	13	37	40	09/10-08/11
11				14	14	38	41	09/11-08/12
12				15	15	39 ^A <i>Silanus</i>	42	09/12-08/13
13				16 ^A	16	40 ^A	43	09/13-08/14
14				17	17	41 ^A <i>Tiberius</i>	44	09/14-08/15
15				18	18	1		
16				19 ^{Tib}	19	2 ^{Tib}		
17				20	20	3 ^{Tib}		
18				21	21	4 ^{Tib}		
19				22	22	5 ^{Tib}		
20				23	23	6		
21				24	24 ^{Tib}	7		
22				25	25	8		
23				26	26	9		
24				27	27	10		
25				28	28	11 ^{Tib}		
26				29	29	12		
27				30 ^{Tib}	30	13		
28				31	31 ^{Tib}	14		
29				32	32	15		
30				33 ^{Tib}	33 ^{Tib}	16 ^{Tib}		
31				34 ^{Tib}	34 ^{Tib}	17 ^{Tib}		
32				35	35 ^{Tib}	18 ^{Tib}		
33				36	36 ^{Tib}	19		
34				37 ^{Tib}	37 ^{Tib}	20		
35					38	21		
36				Agrippa I	39	22		
37				1	40	23 <i>Caligula</i>		
38				2*	41	1		
39				3	42	2		
40				4	43 ^{Cal}	3		
41				5 ^{Cal}	44# ^{Cal}	4 <i>Claudius</i>		
42				6*		1		
43				7 ^{Cl}		2		
44				8# ^{Cl}		3		
45						4		
46						5		
47						6		
48						7		

The legend of these coins is as follows: **A** for Augustus, **Tib** for Tiberius, **Cal** for Caligula, **Cl** for Claudius, * for year without Roman effigy, # for *post mortem* year. Coins attesting years of reign of a Caesar have in exponent the name of the Emperor determined through their effigy (dated synchronisms are highlighted in grey). The years in square brackets are theoretical years. The chronology of the two reigns of Herod the Great and Herod Archelaus, according to consular years, Olympiads and era of Actium, is as follows:

year	reign		age	Event	Roman Consuls for consular year
	legal	actual			
-48			24		C. Julius Caesar II P. Servilius Vatia Isauricus
-47			25	Herod is 25 years old	Q. Fufius Calenus Publius Vatinius
-46			26		C. Julius Caesar III M. Aemilius Lepidus
-45			27		C. Julius Caesar IV
-44			28		C. Julius Caesar V Marcus Antonius
-43			29		Aulus Hirtius C. Vibius Pansa Caetronianus
-42			30		M. Aemilius Lepidus II L. Munatius Plancus
-41			31		P. Servilius Vatia Isauricus II L. Antonius Pietas
-40			32	Herod appointed King in Rome	Cn. Domitius Calvinus II C. Asinius Pollio
-39	[0]		33	Herod arrived in Galilee	L. Marcius Censorinus C. Calvisius Sabinus
-38	[1]		34		Ap. Claudius Pulcher. C. Norbanus Flaccus
-37	[2]		35	Jerusalem taken death of Antigonus	M. Vipsanius Agrippa L. Caninius Gallus
-36	3	0	36	1 st coin minted (year 3) beginning of the actual reign of Herod	L. Gellius Publicola M. Cocceius Nerva
-35	4	1	37	1 st year of actual reign	L. Cornificius Sex. Pompeius
-34	5	2	38		M. Antonius L. Scribonius Libo
-33	6	3	39		Imp. Caesar Octavianus II L. Volcatius Tullus
-32	7	4	40	Beginning of the war of Actium	Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus C. Sosius
-31	8	5	41	1 Victory of Actium	Imp. Caesar Octavianus III M. Valerius Messala Corvinus
-30	9	6	42	2	Imp. Caesar Octavianus IV M. Licinius Crassus
-29	10	7	43	3	Imp. Caesar Octavianus V Sex. Appuleius
-28	11	8	44	4	Imp. Caesar Octavianus VI M. Vipsanius Agrippa II
-27	12	9	45	Octavius became Augustus 5 Samaria became Sebaste	Imp. Caesar Octavianus VII M. Vipsanius Agrippa III
-26	13	10	46	Famine in Judea for 2 years 6	Imp. Caesar Augustus VIII T. Statilius Taurus II
-25	14	11	47	Petronius and Aelius Gallus are 7 mentioned as prefects of Egypt	Imp. Caesar Augustus IX M. Iunius Silanus
-24	15	12	48	8	Imp. Caesar Augustus X C. Norbanus Flaccus
-23	16	13	49	9	Imp. Caesar Augustus XI A. Terentius Varro Murena
-22	17	14	50	10	M. C. Marcellus Aeserninus L. Arruntius
-21	18	15	51	11 <i>Herod decided to restore the Temple when</i>	Q. Aemilius Lepidus Barbula M. Lollius
-20	19	16	52	Caesar came in Syria (<i>A.J. XV:380</i>) 12	M. Appuleius P. Silius Nerva
-19	20	17	53	13 <i>Temple restoration began (A.J. XV:421)</i>	C. Sentius Saturninus Q. Lucretius Cinna Vespillo

-18	21	18	54	<i>and lasted 1 year and 6 months</i>	P. C. Lentulus Marcellinus Cn. Cornelius Lentulus
-17	22	19	55	<i>Sanctuary [naos] restoration achieved (Jn 2:20)</i>	C. Furnius C. Iunius Silanus
-16	23	20	56	16	L. Domitius Ahenobarbus P. Cornelius Scipio
-15	24	21	57	17	M. Livius Drusus Libo L. Calpurnius Piso Pontifex
-14	25	22	58	18	M. Licinius Crassus Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Augur
-13	26	23	59	19	Ti. Claudius Nero P. Quinctilius Varus
-12	27	24	60	20	M. V. M. Barbatus Appianus P. Sulpicius Quirinius
-11	28	25	61	21 end of the 192 nd Olympiad	Q. Aelius Tubero Q. Fabius Maximus Paullus
-10	29	26	62	22	C. Iulius Antonius Q. Fabius Maximus Africanus
-9	30	27	63	23	D. C. D. Nero Germanicus T. Q. Crispinus Sulpicianus
-8	31	28	64	24	C. Marcius Censorinus C. Asinius Gallus
-7	32	29	65	25	Ti. Claudius Nero II Cn. Calpurnius Piso
-6	33	30	66	26	Varus governor of Syria D. Laelius Balbus C. Antistius Vetus
-5	34	31	67	27	Varus Imp. Caesar Augustus XII L. Cornelius Sulla
-4	35 [0]	32	68	28 Archelaus appointed King in Rome	C. Calvisius Sabinus L. Passienus Rufus
-3	36 [1]	33	69	29	L. Cornelius Lentulus M. Valerius Messala Corvinus
-2	37 [2]	34	70	inventory of the world (Herod is 70) 30 Birth of Jesus	Imp. Caesar Augustus XIII M. Plautius Silvanus
-1	3	1	/71/	death of Herod 31 Varus commandant of legions	Cn. C. Lentulus Cossus L. Calpurnius Piso Augur
1	4	2		Varus/ Caius Caesar in Syria 32 'war of Varus'	C. Caesar L. Aemilius Paullus
2	5	3		33	P. Vinicius P. Alfenus Varus
3	6	4		34	L. Aelius Lamia M. Servilius Nonianus
4	7	5		35	Sex. Aelius Catus C. Sentius Saturninus
5	8	6		36	L. Valerius Messala Volesus Cn. Cornelius Cinna Magnus
6	9	7		37 Quirinius governor of Syria	M. Aemilius Lepidus L. Arruntius
7	10	8		Archelaus deposed and Quirinius 38 made a census of Judea	Q. C. M. Creticus Silanus A. Licinius Nerva Silianus
8				Quirinius 39	M. Furius Camillus Sex. Nonius Quinctilianus
9				Quirinius 40 Varius governor of Germania died	C. Poppeus Sabinus Q. Sulpicius Camerinus

The careers of Varus and Quirinius played an important role in the reigns of Herod and his sons. The careers of governors of Syria were listed³⁴, making it possible to establish chronological synchronisms with the reigns of Herodian kings.

³⁴ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome I Paris 1972 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 86-91, 234.

R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 220,498-499,522-527.

year	Legate of the East	Governor of Syria	Herodian reign	Rector of Caesar (<i>main event</i>)	Governor of Galatia	Governor of Germania
-10		M. Titius	29			
-9		S. Saturninus	30			Tiberius
-8		S. Saturninus	31			Tiberius
-7		S. Saturninus	32		C. Aquila?	Tiberius
-6	(Tiberius)	Q. Varus	33		C. Aquila	S. Saturninus
-5	(Tiberius)	Q. Varus	34		S. Quirinius	S. Saturninus
-4	(Tiberius)	Q. Varus	35	[0] (<i>Herod's testament</i>)	S. Quirinius	S. Saturninus
-3	(Tiberius)	S. Quirinius	36	[1]		D. Ahenobarbus
-2	(Tiberius)	S. Quirinius	37	[2] (<i>census of the world</i>)		D. Ahenobarbus
-1	C. Caesar	Q. Varus	[38]	3 M. Lollius	M. Servilius?	D. Ahenobarbus
1	C. Caesar	Q. Varus		4 M. Lollius	M. Servilius	M. Vicinius
2	C. Caesar			5 S. Quirinius		M. Vicinius
3	C. Caesar			6 S. Quirinius		M. Vicinius
4		V. Saturninus		7 (<i>death of C. Caius</i>)		Tiberius
5		V. Saturninus		8		Tiberius
6		S. Quirinius		9 (<i>Archelaus deposed,</i>	M. Silvanus	Tiberius
7		S. Quirinius		10 <i>census of his goods</i>)	M. Silvanus	Q. Varus
8		S. Quirinius?			M. Silvanus?	Q. Varus
9		S. Quirinius?		(<i>death of Varus</i>)	M. Silvanus?	Q. Varus
10		S. Quirinius?				Tiberius
11		S. Quirinius?				Tiberius
12		M. Silanus				Tiberius
13		M. Silanus			Libuscidianus	
14		M. Silanus		(<i>death of Augustus</i>)	Libuscidianus	

Despite the perfect consistency of all this chronological data, some relentless defenders of the death of Herod in 4 BCE dispute this, claiming that reconstitution of the Jewish calendar was fixed by a ‘Council of Elders in Israel’³⁵, founded by Ezra after the return of the Babylonian exile, which would set intercalary months according to scientific calculations and thus the years 4 and 1 BCE were embolismic which would shift the 2 Shebat to December of the previous year. However, these assumptions are baseless because the Jewish calendar remained based on the observation of the new moon until at least 358 CE (early cycle of Hillel II). However, calendars used in early centuries could be slightly different from calendars calculated according to astronomy because the observation of the first crescent was difficult (possible delay of 1 day), and intercalary months (in case of delay compared to equinox) could be carried over to the following year, implying a shift of one month during that year. The Talmud remarks³⁶ show that first century calendars depended on observations not calculations: *If the court and all the Israelites saw the [new moon] and the examination of witnesses is not yet finished for an opportunity to say ‘consecrated’ before the night, we add a day to the month. If only the court saw it, two witnesses will be in front of it and we say: ‘consecrated, consecrated’. If three people of the court have seen it, we will establish two as witnesses and will serve two other colleagues with the third, both testify before them and say: ‘consecrated, consecrated’; because one can not be believed if it is alone (...) Three signs that should put an intercalary month: ears, fruit trees and seasons: it must be based on two of these signs (...) The intervening years are for three countries: Judea, Galilee and Transjordan (...) One does not fix the intercalary year based on the rams, ewes and young pigeons that have not yet arrived (...) to our brothers from the captivity of Babel and Medes and all the*

³⁵ This forerunner of the Sanhedrin actually called "the Senate of the Nation" (1M 12:6,35) is mentioned as a governing body (Jewish Antiquities XII: 142) only from the Maccabees (2M 1:10; 4:44; 11:27). This Jewish Senate could be considered as the successor of the "College of elders" of the time of Ezra (Ezr 5:9; 6:7), but nothing indicates that it cared for scheduling problems. The Talmud explains that it was the high priest who had to validate observations to fix the intercalary year.

³⁶ B. WACHOLDER D.B. WEISBERG Visibility of the New Moon in Cuneiform and Rabbinic Sources in: *Hebrew University College Annual* 42 (1971) pp. 227-242.

captivities we let you know that as the pigeons are tender and the sheep by their wool, and the time set ears is not here yet, but on the advice of our colleagues we add to this year 30 days (...) They show that we can throughout any Adar state intercalary year, while others say that one can until Purim. They show that we can conditionally declare intercalary year, and it is said that Rabban Gamaliel went to ask permission from the governor of Syria, and, as he was slow in coming, was declared the intercalary year conditionally to return of Rabban Gamaliel, on his return he gave his consent and the year was intercalary (Rosh hashana 3:1, Eduyyot 7:7; Tosephta Sanhedrin 2:2-13).

Years 4 and 1 BCE were not embolismic (second Adar), since 1 Nisan was after the spring equinox [22 March] for these years (see below). According to the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 13a, 13b), the spring equinox was falling until 16 Nisan, the year was to be embolismic after this date. Chronological reconstitution:

RECONSTITUTION IN 1 BCE

Tebeth														Shebat																	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
January														February																	
Fast														Death																	

Shebat														Adar																	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
February														March																	

Adar														Nisan																	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mars														April																	
Spring equinox														Passover																	

RECONSTITUTION IN 4 BCE

Tebeth														Shebat																	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
January														February																	
Fast														##																	

Shebat														Adar																	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
February														March																	
														Eclipse																	

Adar														Nisan																	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Mars														April																	
Death														Spring equinox																	
														Passover																	

The comparison of these two reconstructions imposes the choice of 1 BCE:

- The eclipse of January 10, 1 BCE, was total, well visible and longer lasting than the one of March 13, 4 BCE, which likely was not noticed. In the 1st century, lunar eclipses were often interpreted as omens of death for a sovereign, as recalled (near 50 CE) by the Roman historian Quintus Curtius: *But, near the day before, the eclipsing moon began for hiding the brightness of its disk and then a kind of veil of blood came staining its light: already worried to such approaches of a terrible chance, the Macedonians were imbued with a deep religious feeling and at the same time with fear. It was against the will of the gods, they said, that they were lead to the ends of the earth (History of Alexander IV: 10).*
- High priest Matthias [son of Theophilus] was deposed by Herod on a day of fasting. The fast of 10 Tebeth corresponds to January 5 in 1 BCE (January 9 in 4 BCE). The gap with

the eclipse, the day Herod burned alive Matthias [son of Margolothos], is 3 days in the first case (good agreement) but 2 months in the second (unlikely). The coincidence of the fast of Esther on 13 Adar with the eclipse on 14 Adar is considered decisive, but this fast did not exist in Herod's days! According to the text of Esther 9:20-22, Mordecai instituted a commemorative feast on 14 and 15 Adar. Some Jews also desired to commemorate the 3 days of fasting observed by Esther after 13 Nisan (Esther 4:16), when she heard the bad news (Est 3:7,12). This fast from 14 to 16 Nisan was not a formal requirement. It is known that toward 160 BCE Jews commemorated the day of Nicanor (2M 15:36) on 13 Adar, just before the 'feast of Mordecai' on 14 and 15 Adar (Est 9:24-32), called later 'feast of Purim'³⁷. The 'Roll of fasting' (Megillah Taanit 18b) states that 'the day of Nicanor' on 13 Adar, as a festival, it was forbidden to fast on this day³⁸. The Mishna (Taanit 2:10; Rosh hashana 1:3) states that there was no fasting at Purim in the month of Adar. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the observance of days of fasting became random. In the 12th century, Maimonides stated that the commemoration of fasting should precede the festival, which instituted the 'Fast of Esther' on 13 Adar, before the feast of Purim on Adar 14 and 15. Thus, the introduction of the Fast of Esther on 13 Adar (which therefore replaced the Feast of Nicanor), before the feast of Purim, appeared during the 12th century AD and could not have existed in the days of Herod.

- The text of Luke places the birth of Jesus³⁹ during the first legation of Quirinius (from 3 to 1 BCE), which is consistent with the reconstitution in 1 BCE. The other scenario, which sets the death of Herod in 4 BCE is inconsistent with the text of Matthew, which places the birth of Jesus shortly before Herod's death. In addition, the registration effected by Quirinius, governor of Syria, is mentioned in the inscription of Venice (CIL III 6687). It is a record of people, not of properties like that performed in 6 CE after the removal of Archelaus, and this particular recording was a part of the 'inventory of the world' instituted by Augustus in his *Breviarium* dated 2 BCE.
- The Jewish tradition places the death of Herod on 2 Shebat, which corresponds to January 26 in 1 BCE. The date in 4 BCE (January 30) is incompatible with the account of Josephus since in this case Herod would have died more than a month before the eclipse and not shortly after as indicated in the text.
- Sabinus having held reorganizing justice in the province of Cyrenaica⁴⁰ during the year 4 BCE after serious complaints of Greek citizens against Roman judges, he could not have been in Syria at that date as financial procurator of Herod's goods.
- Shortly after Herod's death, Varus led a war to suppress revolts and used all the legions of Syria. This 'war of Varus' was conducted under the auspices of Caius Caesar, the imperial legate of the East whose cenotaph reports this unique war during the year of his consulship (starting on January 1, 1 CE). If Herod had died in 4 BCE, the intervention of Varus would have started 3 years later, that would be unlikely.

³⁷ Purim means "lots" (Est 3:7), it comes from the Babylonian word *pûru* "lot". During the Babylonian festival of the New Year (called Akitu), on 8 Nisan, Marduk was set free, the statues of the gods were gathered in the Destinies Hall "Ushu-Ukkina", to deliberate his destiny (or lot), there it was decided to join all the forces of the gods and bestow them upon Marduk.

³⁸ H. LICHTENSTEIN - Die Fastenrolle eine Untersuchung zur Jüdisch-Hellenistischen Geschichte in: *Hebrew Union College Annual Cincinnati* 1931-32 pp. 279,280.

³⁹ Some have held that "the star from the East" mentioned in Matthew 2:9,10 could be Halley's Comet (appeared in October 12 BCE) or an exceptional combination of planets or stars. However, although Pliny (Natural History XXX:6) that Tiridates, King of Armenia, sent in 66 CE a delegation of Magi to pay homage to Nero after the appearance of a comet (Halley's comet in January 66 CE), nothing in the biblical text does involve the displacement of a star, only seen by the Magi and presented as miraculous, to a astronomical phenomenon.

⁴⁰ F. DE VISSCHER - Les édits d'Auguste découverts à Cyrène Louvain, Paris 1940 Ed. Les Belles Lettres, pp. 23-30.

➤ A remark of Josephus allows one to restrict the death of Herod to a period going until the end of January/early February. According to Josephus, Herod ate an apple just before dying (Jewish Antiquities XVII:183). However, as the apples of that time were harvested in late August and as the shelf life of an apple is 5 months it was possible to eat apples only until the end of January of the next year (if Herod died in March he would have eaten, just before dying, a rotten apple, unless one supposes a miraculous preservation for 7 months, which is impossible according to the agronomic engineers of INRA Bordeaux).

The fruit mentioned by Josephus is an apple, as indicated by critical editions of the text of Josephus, not an orange as postulated by some "relentless" defenders of a death in March 4 BCE. Indeed, apples were known in Palestine from Antiquity (Ct 2:3,5; 7:8, Pr 25:11, Jl 1:12) and were fairly common since some cities bore the name 'Apple' (תפוח in Hebrew) or 'Apple's House' (Jos 12:17; 15:34,53; 16:8, 17:8). Lemons (κίτριον) were also known in Palestine and Josephus mentions them (Jewish Antiquities XIII:372). He states that Herod used to peel himself the fruit and cut it into small pieces in order to eat it (a normal way of eating rather than separating quarters by hand for an orange). Herod had stored in his fortress of Massada many foodstuffs (Jewish War VII:295-303). Excavations of this fortress have confirmed reports of Josephus⁴¹. In it was found 13 jars of Italian wines from various vintages bearing in ink inscribed Latin: date of shipping, recipient's name *Regi Herodi Judaico* as well as wine quality and sometimes the name of the vineyard. The jar bearing the Latin inscription *mal(a) cum(ana)* "apples of Cumae" confirms that Herod enjoyed apples⁴² very much. The fruit eaten by Herod could not have been an orange, because bitter orange (also called bigarade) appeared around the Mediterranean only from 2nd century CE. Sophist Athenaeus designated 'orange' under the term 'apple of the Hesperides' to distinguish it from the ordinary apple: *As for me, dear friends, I hold in greatest esteem the apples sold in Rome and called Matian, which are said to come from a village situated in the Alps, near Aquileia. Not much inferior to these are the apples of Gangra, a city of Paphlagonia. That Dionysus is also the discoverer of the apple is attested by Theocritus of Syracuse, in words something like these: Storing the apples of Dionysus in the folds at my bosom, and wearing on my head white poplar, sacred bough of Heracles. And Neoptolemus the Parian, in the Dionysiad, records on his own authority that apples as well as all other fruits were discovered by Dionysus. As for the epimelis, that is a name given to a kind of pear, according to Pamphilus. Apples of the Hesperides is a term recorded by Timachidas in the fourth book of his Banquets. And Pamphilus says that in Lacedaemon these are placed on the tables of the gods; fragrant they are, and also not good to eat, and they are called apples of the Hesperides. Aristocrates, to cite another example, in the fourth book of his Spartan History speaks of "apples, too, and apple-trees called Hesperid (...) Diphilus of Siphnos, in his work on Food for the Invalid and the Healthy, says: The so-called Persian apples (by some also called Persian plums) are fairly good in flavour and more nourishing than apples. Phylotimus, in the third book of his work on Food, says that the Persian apple is rather fatty and mealy, also rather spongy, and when put in a press gives out a very large quantity of oil. Aristophanes the grammarian, in the Laconian Glossary, says that the Lacedaemonians call plums: Persian sour apples, being what others call adrya (Deipnosophistae III:82-83). Bitter oranges were not consumable (unlike sweet oranges) as shown by Athenaeus, it was only used at his time as condiment (as now). Sweet orange appeared only from 15th century CE⁴³ outside China, thus its presence at the time of Herod was not possible.*

⁴¹ M. HADAS-LEBEL – Rome, la Judée et les Juifs
Paris 2009 Éd. Picard p. 54.

⁴² H.M. COTTON, J. GEIGER – The Latin and Greek Documents
in: *Masada* vol.2 (1989) Ed. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem pp. 133-134,163-164.

⁴³ H.J. WEBBER – History and Development of the Citrus Industry
in: *The Citrus Industry* vol. 1 (1967) Ed. University of California pp. 1-14.

Dating the census of P. Sulpicius Quirinius

According to Luke 2:1: *Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census — the first — took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.* Justin located this event 150 years before the time he was writing his book (Apology I:34:2; I:46:1) or at the very beginning of our common era since he wrote about 148-152. The historian Paul Orosius precisely dated the census of Augustus in the year 752 of Rome (Histories against the pagans VI:22:1; VII:3:4) or in 2 BCE. According to Josephus: *Quirinius, a Roman senator who had proceeded through all the magistracies to the consulship and a man who was extremely distinguished in other respect, arrived in Syria, dispatched by Caesar to be governor of the nation 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. Although the Jews were at first shocked to hear the registration of property, they gradually condescended (...) but a certain Judas, a Gaulanite (...) threw himself into the cause of rebellion (...) Quirinius had now liquidated the estate of Archelaus; and by this time the registrations of property that took place in the 37th year after Caesar's defeat of Antony at Actium were complete* (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:1-4,26). Such registration of property (not people) does not correspond to the one performed at the birth of Jesus, for at least two reasons. Luke knew this record associated with a revolt and mentioned it apart (Ac 5:37) specifying, as Josephus, that during this (second) registration "Judas the Galilean" rebelled (Jewish War II:117-118,433)⁴⁴. He also noted that Jesus' birth occurred during the "first record", which implies the existence of a second (recounted in the Acts). In addition, he does not mention any revolt during the first census. The first registration (ἀπογραφή), as the census of Apamea, was made to know the number of citizens and it is not to be confused with the one implemented in Judea by Quirinius when he came to ensure the liquidation of property of Archelaus after his disgrace, and of which Josephus says it was followed by an "evaluation (ἀποτίμησις)" of property. This two-step operation did not have the same nature, nor the same goal, nor the same geographical scope as the previous one. It was conducted according to the principles of the Roman capitation and not according to Hebrew customs, and only covered the sole Judea, not Galilee. General censuses were performed every 5 years (= 1 lustre) as can be deduced from those reported by Cassius Dio. From 18 BCE the census also extended to non-Romans, municipia or colonies of Roman law, as shown in the *lex Irmitana*⁴⁵.

The Roman censuses were quinquennial⁴⁶ (every 5 years) as can be deduced from those reported by Dio Cassius (the part of his history covering the period from 6 BCE to 4 CE has unfortunately been lost). The census of 4 CE was confined to Italy⁴⁷. According to the periodicity of 5 years, we see that the first census of Quirinius (in 2 BCE), the one mentioned by Luke, fits exactly in the list of general censuses, while the second one mentioned in the book of Acts and Flavius Josephus was a local census. The census of Luke is in agreement with Roman history⁴⁸. Since the census of Quirinius in Apamea is about people and was carried out in Syria, while the one described by Josephus was a census

⁴⁴ The magician named Theudas (Jewish Antiquities XX:97-98) who was executed in 44 CE is different from the seditious of the same name mentioned in Acts V:36 because he was killed prior to Judas the Galilean in 7 CE (Jewish War II:117-118,433), and he was not a magician (if he was a magician his function would have been mentioned as in the case of Simon in Acts 8:9).

⁴⁵ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard p. 147.

⁴⁶ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 133-157.

⁴⁷ It started around June 4, when Augustus ask Tiberius to adopt his nephew Germanicus (Cassius Dio LV:13).

⁴⁸ T. CORBISHLEY - Quirinius and the Census : a Re-study of the Evidence in: *Klio* 29 (1936) pp. 90-92.

of goods (to liquidate the possessions of Archelaus) carried out in Judea, they have nothing in common, neither in purpose nor by the area covered. It is noteworthy that the Latin word *census* written טנן was epigraphically attested (CIS II,1 n°198) in the Nabataean kingdom for the first time in 1 BCE⁴⁹. The census of Apamea should be compared with the one of Luke. The registration of the knight Aemilius Secundus, visible on the *Titulus Venetus* (CIL III 6687, ILS 2683), describes a census of Quirinius in Syria. According to this text, knight Q. Aemilius Secundus fulfilled his service in Syria under the authority of Quirinius, legate of Caesar (governor) in Syria, who had himself received the insignia of triumph (*honorary distinctions*) after his campaign against the 'Homonadeis' in Galatia (from 5 to 4 BCE). According to the periodicity of 5 years, we see that the first census, the one mentioned by Luke, fits exactly in the list of censuses of Augustus⁵⁰, while the second one mentioned by Josephus, and in the book of Acts, was only a local census in Judaea:

year	Cens	Characterisc of the census under Augustus	Reference
-28		Census with lustration performed by Augustus and Agrippa (<i>census of Gaul and Spain</i>)	<i>Res Gestae</i> §8 (<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIII:22)
-27			
-26			
-25			
-24			
-23		Census postponed to -22 due to the serious illness of Augustus (<i>performed by Paulus Aemilius Lepidus and L. Munatius Plancus</i>)	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:2
-22			
-21			
-20			
-19			
-18		Census postponed, Augustus having refused to be censor.	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:10 (<i>Lex Iulia</i>)
-17			
-16			
-15			
-14			
-13		The census lasted from -13 to -11. (<i>census of Gaul and Spain</i>)	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:25-30 (<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:32)
-12			
-11			
-10			
-9			
-8		Census with lustration performed by Augustus	<i>Res Gestae</i> §8 (<i>Against Marcion</i> IV:19)
-7			
-6			
-5			
-4			
-3		Inventory of the world performed by Augustus	<i>Titulus Venetus</i> (<i>Res Gestae</i> §15) (<i>Apology</i> I:34; 46)
-2			
-1		Census (registration) mentioned by Luke 2:1	
1			
2			
3			
4		Census limited to Italy (<i>Lex Aelia Sentia</i>)	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LV:13
5			
6			
7		<i>Census of Quirinius in Judaea</i> mentioned in Acts 5:37	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> XVIII:1-4
8			
9		Census planned but suspended because of the disaster of Varus	<i>Lex Papia Poppaea</i> <i>Cassius Dio</i> LVI:18
10			
11			
12			
13			
14		Census with lustration performed by Augustus and Tiberius	<i>Res Gestae</i> §8

Josephus states that Quirinius had been sent to Syria as: [*Supreme*] Judge of people and censor of properties (*Jewish Antiquities* XVIII:1), that is a powerful governor. This office, one of the highest magistracy granted to a consul, was usually entrusted to men chosen among the senatorial elite and close to the emperor⁵¹. Quirinius came to deal with financial affairs

⁴⁹ E. PALTIEL – Vassals and Rebels in the Roman Empire in: *Latomus* vol. 212, Bruxelles 1991, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁰ The census of 3 BCE was delayed in 2 BCE for astrological reasons, according to Tacitus (*Annals* III:22), because Augustus was exactly 60 years old (the age of retirement) on September 23, 3 BCE. Augustus was fond of speculation according to Seneca (*De Brevitate Vitae* IV:2-3).

⁵¹ J.P. MARTIN - Les provinces romaines d'Europe centrale et occidentale Paris 1990 Éd. Sedes p.150.

and civil courts, the military commander of Judea being entrusted to Coponius. The question therefore arises: Is there a trace of this first census? The inscription of knight Aemilius Secundus visible on Titulus Venetus, Greek marble (0.45 m by 0.32 m) probably from Beirut, describes a census of Quirinius in Syria.

Fig. 1: Titulus Venetus (CIL III 6687; ILS 2683)

<p>Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F PAL · SECVNDVS ⁱⁿ CASTRIS · DIVI · AVG · S_{ub} P · SVLPICIO · QVIRINIO · LEGATO 5 CAESARIS · SYRIAE · HONORI BVVS · DECORATVS · PRAEFECT COHORT · AVG · I · PRAEFECT COHORT · II · CLASSICAE · IDEM IVSSV · QVIRINI · CENSVM · EGI 10 A P A M E N A E · CIVITATIS · MIL IIVM · HOMIN · CIVIVM · CXXVII IDEM · MISSV · QVIRINI · ADVERSVS ITVRAEOS · IN · LIBANO · MONTE · CASTELLVM · EORVM · CEPI · ET · ANTE 15 MILITIEM · PRAEFECT · FABRVM · DELATVS · A · DVOBVS · COS · AD · AE RARIVM ET · IN · COLONIA · QVAESTOR · AEDIL · II · DVVMVIR · II PONTIFEXS 20 IBI · POSITI · SVNT · Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F · PAL SECVNDVS · F · ET · AEMILIA · CHIA · LIB H · M · AMPLIVS · H · N · S ·</p>	<p><i>Q[uintus] Aemilius Secundus s[on] of Q[uintus], of the tribe Palatina, who served in the camps of the divine Aug[ustus] under P. Sulpicius Quirinius, legate of Caesar in Syria, decorated with honorary distinctions, prefect of the 1st cohort Aug[usta], prefect of the cohort II Classica. Besides, by order of Quirinius I made the census in Apamea of citizens male 117 thousand. Besides, sent on mission by Quirinius, against the Itureans, on Mount Lebanon I took their citadel. And prior military service, (I was) Prefect of the workers, detached by two co[nsul]s at the 'aerarium [The State Treasury]'. And in the colony, quaestor, aedile twice, duumvir twice, pontiff. Here were deposited Q[uintus] Aemilius Secundus s[on] of Q[uintus], of the tribe Pal[atina], (my) s[on] and Aemilia Chia (my) freed. This m[onument] is excluded from the inh[eritance].</i></p>
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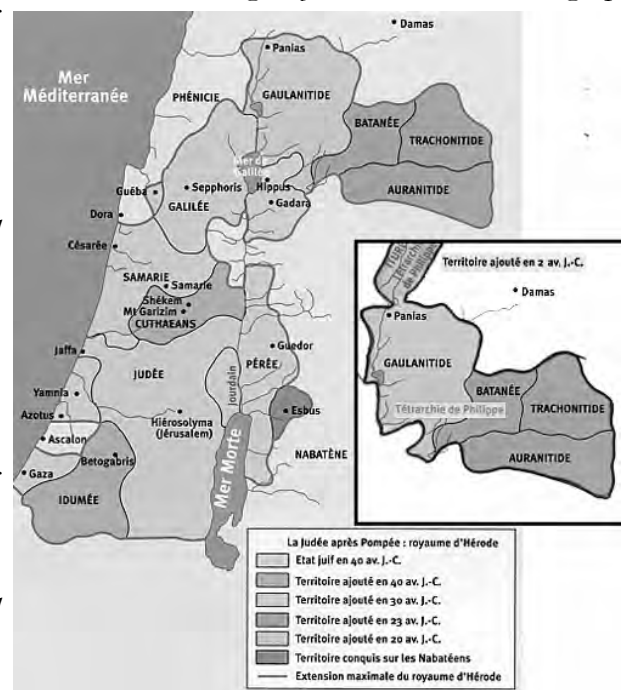
According to Tacitus, Quirinius was: *an indefatigable soldier, he had by his zealous services won the consulship under the Divine Augustus [in 12 BCE], and subsequently the honours of a triumph for having stormed some fortresses of the Homonadeises in Cilicia. He was also appointed adviser to Caius Caesar [from 2 to 4 CE] in the government of Armenia, and had likewise paid court to Tiberius, who was then at Rhodes (Annals III:48).* In his *cursus honorum* the knight Secundus details his career. This type document describes the distinctions obtained in a chronological order. The inventory referred to the inscription, performed under the orders of Quirinius, is not the one made in year 6 CE which was due to the removal of King Archelaus and was confined to Judea, not Syria. Second, the census of the city of Apamea in Syria (which was a registration)⁵² was followed by the mission in Ituraea. Now the citadel of the Itureans was taken before (not after) Herod's death⁵³, as indicated by Strabo and Josephus. Chalcis, the citadel of Itureans, was taken before the death of Herod as can be deduced from the possessions of Herod: *When Herod was engaged in such matters, and when he had already re-edified Sebaste he resolved to send his sons Alexander and Aristobulus to Rome, to enjoy the company of Caesar; who, when they came thither, lodged at the house of Pollio, who was very fond of Herod's friendship; and they had leave to lodge in Caesar's own palace, for he received these sons of Herod with all humanity, and gave Herod leave to give his kingdom to which of his sons he pleased; and besides all this, he bestowed on him Trachon, and Batanea, and Auranitis, which he gave him on the occasion following: One Zenodorus had hired what was called the house of Lysanias⁵⁴, who, as he was not satisfied with its revenues, became a partner with the robbers that inhabited the Trachonites, and so procured himself a larger income; for the inhabitants of those places lived in a mad way, and pillaged the country of the Damascenes, while Zenodorus did not restrain them, but partook of the prey they acquired. Now as the neighbouring people were hereby*

⁵² D. KENNEDY – Demography, The Population of Syria and the Census of Q. Aemilius Secundus in: *Levant* 38 (2006) pp. 109-124.
⁵³ The text of Luke 3:1 confirms that Herod had actually Ituraea since his son Philip had inherited: *Herod [Antipas] was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis.*
⁵⁴ Lysanias was king of Itureans (Cassius Dio XLIX: 32; LIV: 9).

great sufferers, they complained to Varro, who was then governor [of Syria], and entreated him to write to Caesar about this injustice of Zenodorus. When these matters were laid before Caesar, he wrote back to Varro to destroy those nests of robbers, and to give the land to Herod, that so by his care the neighbouring countries might be no longer disturbed with these doings of the Trachonites (...) so Caesar bestowed his country, which was no small one, upon Herod [in 20 BCE]; it lay between Trachon and Galilee, and contained Ullatha, and Paneas, and the country round about. He also made him one of the procurators of Syria, and commanded that they should do every thing with his approbation; and, in short, he arrived at that pitch of felicity, that whereas there were but two men that governed the vast Roman empire, first Caesar, and then Agrippa, who was his principal favourite, Caesar preferred no one to Herod besides Agrippa, and Agrippa made no one his greater friend than Herod besides Caesar (Jewish Antiquities XV:342-364). According to Strabo: some mountainous parts, among which is Chalcis, the acropolis (...) Now all the mountainous parts are held by Ituraeans and Arabians, all of whom are robbers, but the people in the plains are farmers; and when the latter are harassed by the robbers at different times they require different kinds of help (...) But though Beirut was razed to the ground by Tryphon, it has now been restored by the Romans; and it received 2 legions, which were settled there by Agrippa, who also added to it much of the territory of Massyas, as far as the sources of the Orontes River (...) And then, towards the parts inhabited promiscuously by Arabians and Ituraeans, are mountains hard to pass, in which there are deep-mouthed caves, one of which can admit as many as 4,000 people in times of incursions, such as are made against the Damasceni from many places. For the most part, indeed, the barbarians have been robbing the merchants from Arabia Felix, but this is less the case now that the band of robbers under Zenodorus has been broken up through the good government established by the Romans and through the security established by the Roman soldiers that are kept in Syria (Geography XVI:2:18-20).

Fig. 2: Judea under Herod's kingship

In accordance with the instructions of Augustus, governors of Syria regularly gave to Herod⁵⁵ areas controlled by the Itureans, after them having pacified. Shortly before his death, Herod received Ituraea⁵⁶ because his son Herod Philip inherited it. According to Josephus: *Passed under the authority of Antipas: Perea and Galilee, with an income of 200 talents. Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitide and parts of Zenodorus area around Ina [village at the base of Mount Hermon in Ituraea], which provided an income of 100 talents, were placed under the authority of Philip* (Jewish War II:95). The text of Luke 3:1 confirms that Herod had actually Ituraea: *Herod [Antipas] was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the country was Ituraea and Trachonitis*. According to Josephus, the conquests of Iturean countries conducted under the auspices of the governors of Syria took place during the reign of Herod the Great. Thus, the conquest of Chevalier Secundus (taking Chalcis, the capital of Ituraea) is to be placed at the end of his reign (2 BCE). Luke's text, as does the inscription of Apamea, parallels the Government of Quirinius in Syria and a recording of people: *This first recording took place*



⁵⁵ M. STROTHMANN - Auguste Empereur et Père de l'oikouménè in: *Dossiers d'archéologie* N°279 déc.02-janv.03 pp. 98-101.

P.L. GATIER - La principauté d'Abila de Lysanias dans l'Antiliban in: *Dossiers d'archéologie* N°279 déc.02-janv.03 pp. 120-123.

⁵⁶ K. BUTCHER - Roman Syria and the Near East London 2003 Ed. The British Museum Press pp. 94-95.

Quirinius being governor of Syria (Lk 2:2). The participle *being Governor* points out the Governor in title. A census of civilians could be used to assess the contingent of auxiliary troops.

The *Breviarium* of Augustus (in 2 BCE) was used to establish a new type of census to compile statistical data⁵⁷ (*digestiones*) obtained, inter alia, "to show off the wealth of Rome." In his eulogy, the first version was publicly displayed in the temple of Mars Ultor on May 12, 2 BCE, Emperor Augustus announced the *breviarium totius imperii*⁵⁸ that he would leave at his death in 14 CE, which contained according to Tacitus: *a description of the resources of the State, of the number of citizens and allies under arms, of the fleets, subject kingdoms, provinces, taxes, direct and indirect, necessary expenses and customary bounties. All these details Augustus had written with his own hand* (Annals I:11,4). This inventory had no known antecedent. It is this latter aspect of *Breviarium* that has most struck the ancient writers: Tacitus speaks of a "picture of the public power," Cassius Dio (Roman History LVI:33:2) a "general assessment" and Suetonius (Augustus CI:6) a "state of affairs of the Empire".

Such an inventory had to concern "all the inhabited earth" at that time. Client Kings were treated essentially as Roman governors, according to Suetonius (Augustus LX). Thus, Judea, although it was a client kingdom, could hardly oppose the will of the emperor (in addition, Herod was Caesar's friend). In fact, it was placed under the supervision of the governor of Syria (Jewish Antiquities XIX:338-342). Herod had therefore to collaborate with Quirinius as did the city of Apamea. This census was ordered by the emperor (this census being decreed by the Emperor, it legally concerned only imperial provinces and not senatorial provinces, but Senators implicitly agreed to collaborate with the emperor), but its execution could not be done without the help of Herod. The Jewish kingdom listed the men "in the house of their fathers" (Nb 1:18), which explains the movement of Joseph from Nazareth to his hometown of Bethlehem (Lk 2:3-4) to be registered⁵⁹, because the Jewish administration listed men according to their patrimonial place (Lv 25:10).

This new conception of census is well described by Emperor Claudius, who writes: *The census had no other object than the official statement of our resources* (Table Claudienne de Lyon 78-80). We read in the Suda, a famous Byzantine Encyclopaedia dated 10th century: *Caesar Augustus, emperor, who chose twenty citizens distinguished by their morals and integrity, sent them to all parts of the world subject to the empire, to make the identification of people and goods. The corpus of agrimensores even specifies: According to the books of the surveyor Balbus, who at the time of Augustus, brought together in folders plans and measures, identified by him, of all the provinces*⁶⁰. Ancient authors such as Isidore of Seville (Etymologiarum sive originum V:36.4) and Cassiodorus (Varia III:52,6-8) were struck by the statistical aspect of this census aimed at describing all the resources of the empire. This large census must have impressed King Agrippa II who, in a speech (66 CE), enumerates lists of peoples, cities and figures: *What about the 500 cities of Asia? (...) Bithynia, Cappadocia, Pamphylians Nation, Lycians, Cilicians (...) the Gauls (..) and 305 cities (...) why this long list (...) Egypt extends to Ethiopia and Arabia Felix, it borders on India, it has a population of 7,500,000 inhabitants, not counting those of Alexandria, as it is possible to induce contributions from individuals* (Jewish War II:357-387). The census points out both Roman citizens and inhabitants of provinces. The 'census of the world' was led by Augustus

⁵⁷ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde

Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 60-61, 156-157, 190.

⁵⁸ According to Suetonius (Augustus 28:1-29:3) and Cassius Dio (Roman History LIII :30-31), Augustus had already prepared a draft of the *Breviarium* after his serious illness in 23 BCE.

⁵⁹ In the 1st century the "head tax" for the Temple is called *kenos* (census) in Matthew 17:25. Mary, who was the wife of Joseph for recently had to fear a possible accusation of adultery (Matthew 1:19) and for this reason was to accompany her husband on his journey (Luke 2:5), even though she was not directly affected by this census. The census of Apamea made at the same time proves that Quirinius registred people, not properties.

⁶⁰ F. BLUME, K. LACHMANN, A. RUDORFF - Schriften der Römischen Feldmesser Berlin 1848 p. 239 (cf. Suidae lexicon I. Lipsiae 1928 Ed. A. Adler p. 293).

independently of the census of Roman citizens, and especially it was not related to the lustrum, which perhaps explains why Augustus did not speak of it (*Res Gestae* §8). But all these censuses had one thing in common: they were simple statistical statements (generally to fix a tax status) of people and goods⁶¹ recorded on lists.

The first registration of Quirinius was decreed by Caesar Augustus when he was declared 'Father of the Country' on February 5, 2 BCE and then inscribed (*Breviarium*)⁶² on the Forum of Augustus (*Res Gestae* §35). According to Velleius Paterculus: *other countries whose names adorn his Forum* (The Roman History II:39:2). This special registration which took place at the time of Jesus' birth, unique in all the Roman annals (an inventory of the whole world!), had been announced in the biblical text: *In his place will rise a king who will send an exactor [census taker] in the most beautiful part of the world [Palestine]* (Daniel 11:20, Zadoc Kahn). Jesus' birth has been associated with an important event, easy to identify and date. The testimonies of the historians of the first six centuries⁶³ are also unanimous in dating the birth of Jesus around 2 BCE. Clement of Alexandria (The Stromata I:21:145) place the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (December 31, 192 CE) and Tertullian (Against the Jews VIII:11:75) placed it in the 41st year of the reign of Augustus⁶⁴ [which began from the second triumvirate of October 43 BCE, made official a few weeks later, according to Appian (Civil Wars IV:5-7), by the law *lex Titia* on November 27, 43 BCE] and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (August 29, 30 BCE)⁶⁵. By combining these data, the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE in a period between September 1 and October 30⁶⁶. Jesus was born about 4 months before the death of Herod the Great.

The list of Roman consuls⁶⁷ appointed governors of Syria during the period from 23 BCE to 32 CE comes from a compilation of historical accounts and official inscriptions (however many homonyms and evolution of administrative titles have sometimes caused errors in ancient authors⁶⁸). Tiberius retired to Rhodes and Quirinius stayed in Armenia as rector of Gaius Caesar between 2 and 4 of our era. They played no role in the West and it is for this reason that Josephus did not mention them. Taking into account information from the registration of Apamea linked with Luke's account we obtain the following diagram (with a double legation in Syria for Quirinius)⁶⁹:

⁶¹ G. PIERI - L'histoire du cens jusqu'à la fin de la république romaine Paris 1968 Éd. Sirey Publications de l'Institut de droit romain p. 193.

⁶² C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 33, 231.

⁶³ Around 148-152, Justin fixed Jesus' birth 150 years earlier (Apology I:46:1). Around 170-180, Irenaeus of Lyons situated it in the 41st year of the reign of Octavian (Against Heresies III: 21:3). In 204 CE, Hippolytus of Rome dated Jesus' birth on December 25 in the 42nd year of the reign of Augustus (Commentary on Daniel IV:23). In 231 CE, Origen dates it in the 41st year of Augustus' reign 15 years before his death (Homilies on Luke 3:1). In 325 CE, Eusebius fixes it in the 42nd year of Augustus' reign and 28 years after Cleopatra's death in 30 BCE (Ecclesiastical History I:5:2). In 357 CE, Epiphanius dates it in the year when Augustus XIII and Silvanus were consuls (Panarion LI:22:3). In 418 CE, Paul Orosius dates it in the year 752 of the founding of Rome (Histories against the pagans VI:22.1).

⁶⁴ Ancient writers reckoned the reign of Augustus not from January 27 BCE, but from October 43 BCE when Octavian, later Augustus, formed the second triumvirate. The 42nd year of Augustus began (at the end of his 41st year), so in October 2 BCE.

⁶⁵ G. GOYAU - Chronologie de l'Empire romain Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 7.

⁶⁶ According to Luke 1:5-8, John the Baptist was conceived in Abijah's section, 8th out 24 (1Ch 24:7-8). Passover in 3 BCE took place on April 29; the 1st section (Jehoiarib) began on Saturday 11, May, 3 BCE; the 8th section began on Saturday 29, 3 BCE, June; Jesus was conceived 6 months after John the Baptist (Lk 1:36) on Monday 30, December 3 BCE and was born 273 days later on Monday 29, September 2 BCE.

⁶⁷ E. SCHÜRER - The History of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ Edinburg 1987 Ed. T & T Clark Ltd pp. 256-260.

Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft -Quirinius; Varus 1931 pp. 819-843; 1963 pp. 907-975.

⁶⁸ C. SAULNIER - Histoire d'Israël Paris 1985 Éd. Cerf pp. 235-236.

⁶⁹ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne II Paris 1972 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines pp. 220, 529-530.

Imperial legate of the East	Governor of Crete & Cyrenaica	Governor of Syria	Procurator (Prefect) of Judea	Period
M. Vipsanius Agrippa	(M. V. Agrippa)	(M. V. Agrippa)	[Herod]	[-23 -21]
M. Vipsanius Agrippa	P. Sulpicius Quirinius	Potitus Valerius Messala	[Herod]	[-21 -17]
M. Vipsanius Agrippa	(M. V. Agrippa)	(M. V. Agrippa)	[Herod]	[-17 -13]
	Q. Lucanius Proculus	Marcus Titius	[Herod]	[-12 -9]
	Marcus Titius	Caius Sentius Saturninus	[Herod]	[-9 -6]
(Tiberius)		Publius Quinctilius Varus	[Herod]	[-6 -3]
(Tiberius)		Publius Sulpicius Quirinius	[Herod]	[-3 -1]
Caius Caesar	(Caius Caesar)	Publius Quinctilius Varus	[Herod Archelaus]	[-1 2]
Caius Caesar	(Caius Caesar)	(Caius Caesar)	[Herod Archelaus]	[2 4]
		Lucius Volusius Saturninus	[Herod Archelaus]	[4 6]
		Publius Sulpicius Quirinius	Coponius	[6 9]
		Publius Sulpicius Quirinius?	Marcus Ambibulus	[9 12]
		Q. Caecilius Metellus Silanus	Annus Rufus	[12 15]
		Q. Caecilius Metellus Silanus	Valerius Gratus	[15 17]
Germanicus Caesar	(Germanicus Caesar)	Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso	Valerius Gratus	[17 19]
		Cnaeus Sentius Saturninus	Valerius Gratus	[19 21]
		[L. Aelius Lamia]/ Pacuvius	Valerius Gratus	[21 26]
(L. Aelius Sejanus)		[L. Aelius Lamia]/ Pacuvius	Pontius Pilatus	[26 32]
		L. Pomponius Flaccus	Pontius Pilatus	[32 35]

Varus appears before the death of Herod as governor of Syria, from 6 to 4 BCE⁷⁰, and then as commander of legions (under the auspices of Gaius Caesar) from 1 BCE to 2 CE. He held two successive legations. The fact that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice is confirmed⁷¹ by an inscription (Titulus Tiburtinus). Renewed legations of Governors at the head of the same province were not rare under the principate of Augustus and are well documented: 7 cases registered⁷² in addition to Agrippa's.



Fig. 3: Inscription of Tibur CIL XIV 3613 = ILS 918

[PUBLIUS⁷³ SON, P. SULPICIUS QUIRINIUS; CONSUL; PRAETOR; PROCONSUL]
 [OF THE PROVINCE OF CRETE & CYRENEA HE HELD; AS LEGATE]
 [PROPRAE TOR OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS OF GALATIA HE WAGED WAR ON GESSIT]
 [WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE HOMONADEIS WHO HAD KILLED AMYNTAS THE]
 [K]ING, WHICH* HAVING BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE POW[ER OF IMPERATOR CAESAR]
 AUGUSTUS AND THE ROMAN PEOPLE, THE SENAT[E DECREED TO THE IMMORTAL GODS]
 TWO THANKSGIVINGS FOR SUCCESS[FUL ACHIEVEMENTS]
 LIKEWISE BY TRIUMPHAL ORNAMENTS [ANOTHER TIME AWARDED];
 AS PROCONSUL OF THE PROVINCE OF ASIA HE HE[LD; AS LEGATE PROPRAETOR]
 OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS ONCE MORE SYRIA AND PH[OENICIA HE HELD];
 *(aforementioned tribe)

⁷⁰ The exact date is shown by the coins of Antioch, which bear the numbers KE (25), KS (26), KZ (27) of the Actian era, accompanied by the name of Varus. Now the battle of Actium was on 2nd September, 31 BCE. When such an event was taken as an era, the years were not made to begin from the anniversary of the event, thus year 1 is from Sept. 30 BCE to Aug. 29 BCE.

⁷¹ G. FIRPO - Il problema cronologico della nascita di Gesù
 Brescia 1983 Ed. Paideia pp. 238-243.

⁷² R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne I
 Paris 1972 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines pp. 306-311.

⁷³ Not the censor Publius of 42 BCE supposed by T. Mommsen but an anonym because of Tacitus's remark in Annals III:48.

The very name of Quirinius does not appear in the inscription, but it is the only character to match all indications. The first line refers to a kingdom brought back under the imperial authority. Strabo (-65+20) relates the submission of Homonadeis by Quirinius (Geography XII:6:5) and he states that they had killed their king Amyntas, signifying that Quirinius had avenged this king. The third line refers to a double day of thanksgiving dedicated to triumphs (fourth line). According to Tacitus (55-120), Quirinius had actually received it for his victory against the Homonadeis (the double day commemorates first the victory in the Taurus and then against the Itureans in Lebanon). The fifth line quotes a proconsulship of Asia. Quirinius was proconsul of Crete and Cyrenaica in 21/20, then proconsul of Asia around -1/1. He probably got it as a result of his wedding with Claudia, daughter of the consul Claudius Pulcher⁷⁴. In 1 CE, Tiberius no longer in semi-disgrace (Augustus allowed him returning to Rome), Quirinius was able to honor him during his visit to Rhodes thanks to his proconsulship, as mentions Tacitus (Annals III:48).

According to epigraphy the word *iterum* "again" means the renewal of a same term of office in the same place⁷⁵. For example: *duumvir iterum* in Pompeii (*AE* 1898 p. 143), or: *optinuit ... procos. iterum* designating Publius Paquius Scaeva as "again" proconsul of Cyprus. When it means a second term of office at a different location, not a renewal at the same place, inscriptions include "II" or "bis". For example, Q. Varius Geminus, who was legate twice, has stated it under the form: *leg. divi Aug. II* and Q. Caerellius, who was three times legate wrote it as: *legato pro pr. ter.* This detail eliminates Governor Gaius Saturninus Sentius because, assuming a second legation in Syria between 4 and 1 BCE, the double legation would be after his proconsulship of Asia, while the inscription of Tibur explicitly shows that the proconsulship of Asia was framed by the double legation in Syria⁷⁶. In addition, it was not Saturninus who fought king Maroboduus, but Tiberius, according to Tacitus (Annals II:63). The title "Divine Augustus" in the inscription involves a publishing after 14 CE because Augustus was divinized only after his death. The character mentioned in the inscription therefore died after that date, which is not the case of Saturninus and Varus. Despite the good agreement between the inscription and what is known of Quirinius's life, some historians have sought to identify the character of the inscription to another legate such as Lucius Piso Calpurnius Pontifex, but the inscription identifies the unknown man to Quirinius, a conclusion already reached very early by the great scholar Mommsen, a conclusion reinforced by recent researches (# indicates a fault):

Indices	C.S. Saturninus	P.Q. Varus	P.S. Quirinius	L.C. Piso Pontifex
consul in:	19 BCE	13 BCE	12 BCE	15 BCE
<i>ornamenta triumphalia</i>	attested	#	attested	attested
<i>supplicatione 1</i>	inferred	#	inferred	attested
<i>supplicatione 2</i>	supposed	#	supposed	supposed #
king	(Maroboduus) #	(Herod) #	Amyntas	(Rhescuporis) #
tribe subjugated then integrated to Rome	Cherusci and others (simple truce) #	(Jews) #	Homonadeis	Bessi
Legate of Syria 1	attested [9-6]	attested [6-3]	attested [3-1]	supposed [3-1] #
Proconsul of Asia	supposed [?]	supposed [?]	inferred [-1/1]	supposed #
Legate of Syria 2	supposed [3-1]	attested [-1+1]	attested [6-10]	#
Last legation	Governor of Syria	Gov. of Germania #	Governor of Syria	Prefect of Rome #
Death (after 14 CE)	7 CE #	9 CE #	21 CE	32 CE

⁷⁴ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines Tome I pp. 177,314; T. II p. 248.

⁷⁵ J.-M. LASSÈRE – Manuel d'épigraphie romaine Paris 2007 Éd. Picard Tome ** p. 754.

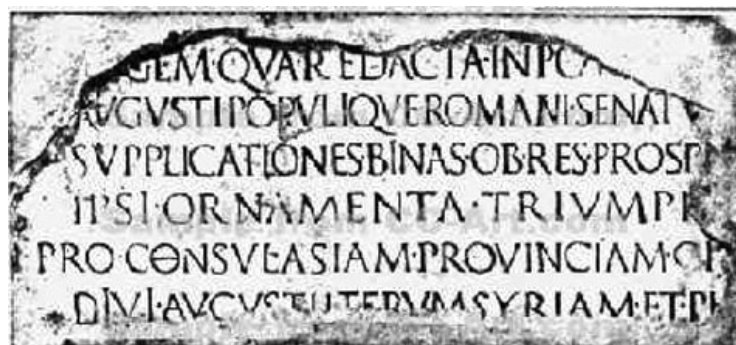
⁷⁶ C. EILERS - C. Sentius Saturninus, Piso Pontifex, and the Titulus Tiburninus: a Reply in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 110 (1996) pp. 207-226.

Four points identify Quirinius as the unknown man of the inscription:

1. The king who was avenged is identifiable (Amyntas).
2. The people reinstated to Rome are identifiable (Homonadeis).
3. Quirinius died after 14 CE (in 21).
4. The last legation of Quirinius (the most prestigious) was his governorate of Syria.

Can Piso Pontifex be the unknown man of the inscription?

- Those who prefer to translate *iterum* by "second" instead of "again" to apply it to Piso Pontifex must assume that this legate could not count correctly. In fact, he was governor of Pamphylia (attached to Galatia) from 14 to 12 BCE, then governor of Moesia from 12 to 10 BCE and, finally, he would have been governor of Syria from 4 to 1 BCE, which would be a total of three legations, not two.
- The inscription of Hierapolis Castabala quoted to prove a first legation⁷⁷, mentions only L. Calpurnius Piso. According to the spelling it could be L. Calpurnius Piso (*Augur*) consul in 1 BCE then proconsul of Asia, rather than L. Calpurnius Piso *Pontifex* usually quoted under the name of L. Calpurnius Piso *Frugi* to distinguish him from his namesake. Even if one associates this inscription to Piso Pontifex the difficulty remains. Indeed, it refers to former Calpurnius Piso as a former antistrategos, with a rank of proprætor legate, which differentiated him from a consular legate. The Greek title identified the rank while the Latin title corresponding to *legatus pro prætore* meant both. Although appointed consul in 15 BCE Piso Pontifex was then assigned 14/13 as legate of the prætorian province of Pamphylia. The inscription of Hierapolis Castabala can only confirm the legation of Piso Pontifex in Galatia (not Syria).
- Rhescuporis was the only legitimate pretender to the throne but nothing indicates that he had time to receive the crown which would eventually return to his uncle Rhoemetalces who, hitherto, had been regent on his behalf, according to Tacitus (*Annals* II:64.2). At his death in 12 CE, Augustus divided the country between his two sons before Tiberius entrusted one part to a procurator. Reunified, Thrace became a Roman province only in 46 CE. Thus Thrace remained an autonomous kingdom still and long after the passage of Piso. Even if Piso put order in Thrace there was not a reinstating to Rome neither a tribe (Bessi) or a territory (Thrace) as indicated explicitly on the inscription of Tibur.
- The *cursus honorum* of the unknown ends with a proconsulship of Asia (the 6th line of the inscription is the last, see photo below). The hypothesis to make Piso Pontifex a proconsul of Asia in 9/8 faces still another difficulty. Indeed, Piso Pontifex was attached to the post of prefect of the city of Rome from 13 CE until his death at 32 CE. The inscription would have forgotten to mention it, which would be absolutely inconceivable for a title so prestigious, because according to Tacitus the main claim to fame of Piso was to be Prefect of the City (*Annals* VI:10).



⁷⁷ E. DABROWA - *The Governors of Roman Syria from Augustus to Septimius Severus*
 Bonn 1998 Ed. Rudolf Habelt GMBH pp. 24-26.

➤ Finally, the second legation in Syria on the inscription of Tibur eliminates the choice of Piso Pontifex of whom no historical or archaeological documents mention any legation in Syria. In addition, although he received triumphal decorations for repressing twice an uprising in Thrace, he benefited only of one day of thanksgiving and not two as explicitly mentions the inscription⁷⁸.

The reconstruction of the career of Quirinius implies his presence in Isauria during Homonadeis's war. This event is to be dated between 6 and 1 BCE, but the province of his governorship assignment is not known (Galatia or Syria). Dating Homonadeis's war, prior to or after 3 BCE, allows us to decide. Information given by Tacitus involves a period between 12 BCE and 2 CE and the fact that Cassius Dio does not speak of these operations leads us to limit it between 6 BCE and 2 CE (the period for which the text of Dion Cassius is lost). A study on governors⁷⁹ leads to two possibilities for Quirinius's legation while they were not mutually exclusive. In the case of a legation in Galatia, Homonadeis's war would be dated between 5 and 3 BCE⁸⁰ but between 3 to 1 BCE in the case of a legation in Syria:

Homonadeis's war	year	Legate of Galatia	Legate of Syria
	-7	Cornutus Aquila	Sentius Saturninus
	-6	Cornutus Aquila	Quinctilius Varus
	-5	Sulpicius Quirinius	Quinctilius Varus
	-4	Sulpicius Quirinius	Quinctilius Varus
	-3	?	Sulpicius Quirinius
	-2	?	Sulpicius Quirinius
	-1	M. Servilius?	Quinctilius Varus
	1	M. Servilius	Quinctilius Varus

A legation in Galatia from 5 to 4 BCE is required⁸¹ for the following reasons:

- According to Strabo: *Now Cremna is occupied by Roman colonists and Sagalassus is subject to the same Roman governor to whom the whole kingdom of Amyntas was subject (...) Amyntas captured Cremna, and, passing into the country of the Homonadeis, who were considered too strong to capture, and having now established himself as master of most of the places, having even slain their tyrant, was caught by treachery through the artifice of the tyrant's wife. And he was put to death by those people, but Quirinius overthrew the inhabitants by starving them, and captured alive 4,000 men and settled them in the neighbouring cities, leaving the country destitute of all its men who were in the prime of life* (Geography XII:6:5). To overcome by hunger the Homonadeis, the main tribe of Lycaonia, Quirinius had to rely on an army of several legions. In addition, keeping a siege of 4,000 men entrenched in many forts necessitated probably more than one year. In 2 BCE the census of Syria and the war against the Itureans occupied Quirinius for at least all the year. In 3 BCE, he could have led a war against the Homonadeis only during the beginning of the year, which seems insufficient. A legation of 2 years in Galatia to lead this war is more likely.
- The legate of Galatia⁸², Cornutus Aquila, inaugurated the *Via Sebaste* in 6 BCE⁸³, a road probably built to facilitate the movement of Roman troops from Syria, where three or

⁷⁸ N. KOKKINOS - The Honorand of the Titulus Tiburtinus: C. Sentius Saturninus?

in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 105 (1995) pp. 21-36.

⁷⁹ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines Tome I pp. 90,177,314,234,235; Tome II p. 248.

⁸⁰ K. STROBEL - Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire II in: C.E.R.O.R. Paris 2000 Éd. De Boccard p. 519.

⁸¹ A.S. HALL - The Gorgoromeis in: *Anatolian Studies* XXI (1971) pp. 156-158.

⁸² R.K. SHERK - Roman Galatia. The Governors from 25 BC to AD 114 in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen part II vol 7.2* (1980) p. 966.

⁸³ CIL III, 6974, 14401; ILS 5828; all dated: Imp. Caesar cos. desig. XI, trib.pot. XIIX (= from July 1 to December 31, 6 BCE).

four legions were stationed. Logic would dictate that this war to suppress banditry began shortly after this preparatory stage, therefore in 5 BCE. The creation of the *Via Sebaste* was therefore the penultimate step in a plan developed by Augustus to pacify the region after the death of King Amyntas⁸⁴.

- The plan of Augustus to control these strategic areas⁸⁵ began with: 1) the establishment of several Roman colonies in Pisidia (*Gestae Res* 28), along with 2) the arrival of many veterans of legion and 3) a recruitment in Asia Minor of a large number of auxiliaries for Roman troops, then finally 4) the construction of the *Via Sebaste*, the last step before 5) the war against the Homonadeis⁸⁶.
- The unexpected retirement of Tiberius to Rhodes in 5 BCE had to slow down significantly military operations undertaken in the East, at least until 1 BCE (end of his proconsular *imperium* and tribunitian power which would be renewed to Caius Caesar), as well as those planned for Armenia by Augustus⁸⁷. The decision to attack the Homonadeis had probably to be taken before 5 BCE (perhaps in 6 BCE).

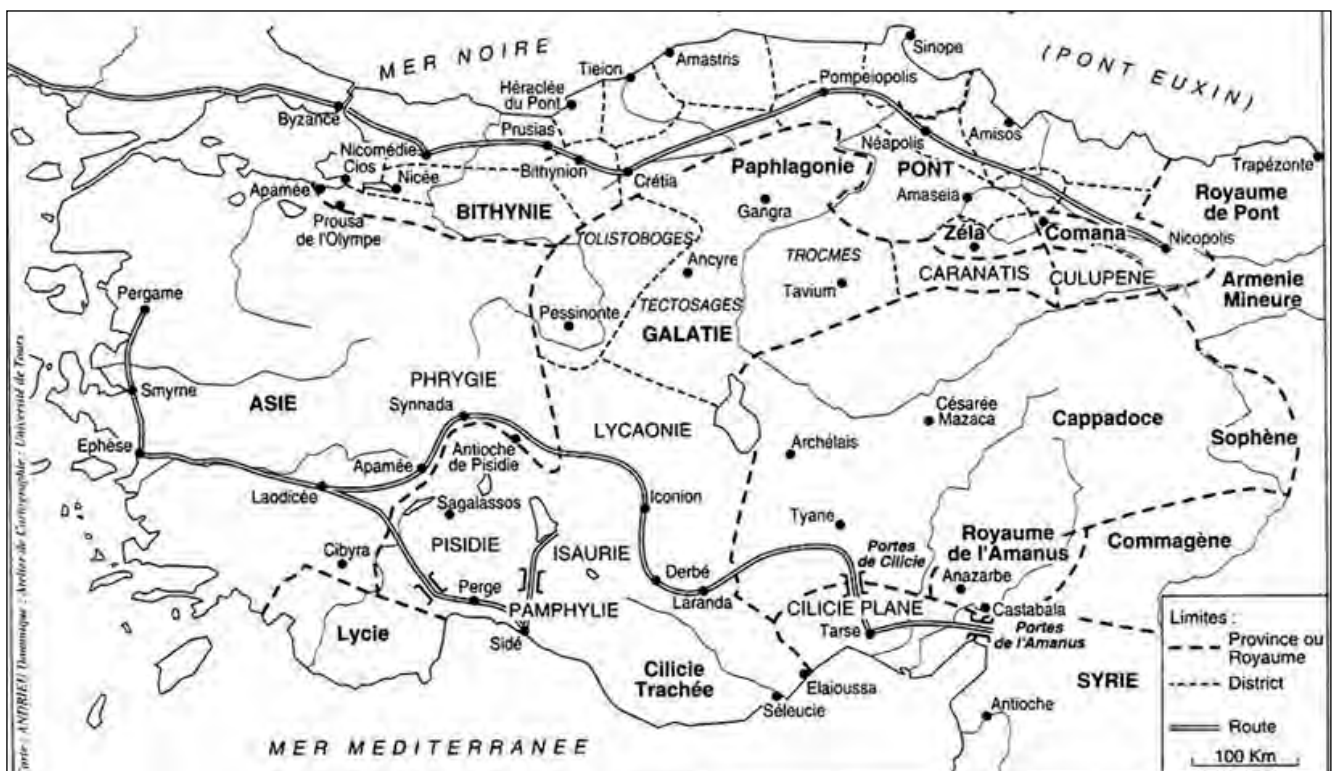


Fig. 4: Provinces and client States in Anatolia towards the beginning of our era

This new path also favoured trade between Syria and Pisidia, which is confirmed by the ease of movement of the first Christian missionaries between Antioch in Syria and Antioch in Pisidia via Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (Ac 14:1-26, 16:1-6). Despite repeated Roman repression, the road remained dangerous because of the continued presence of brigands (2Co 11:26). Province allocation of the legate is more complex to define, but Galatia still seems preferable to Syria. The tribe of Homonadeis lived in Isauria but because of the historical context of the fight against the brigands of Cilicia the region depended

⁸⁴ B. RÉMY - Les carrières sénatoriales dans les provinces romaines d'Anatolie au Haut-empire Istanbul 1989 Éd. Divit pp. 127-136.

⁸⁵ A.D. RIZAKIS - La littérature grammatique et la colonisation romaine en Orient in: Colonie romane nel mondo greco. Roma 2004 Ed. L'Erma di Bretschneider pp. 85-87.

⁸⁶ S. MITCHELL, D. FRENCH - Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia in: *BAR International Series* 156 Ankara 1983 pp. 14-20.

S. MITCHELL, D. FRENCH - Studies in the History and Topography of Lycia and Pisidia. Ankara 1994 The British Institute of Archaeology pp. 104, 105.

⁸⁷ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome p. 105-113.

militarily on the legate of Syria, who had at least three legions. There is no certain evidence of the presence of legions in Galatia (epigraphic documentation, however, suggests the presence of the VIIth legion in this area)⁸⁸ and it is likely that some legions of Quirinius came from Syria⁸⁹. The construction of the *Via Sebaste* in 6 BCE mobilized likely more auxiliary troops than legions.

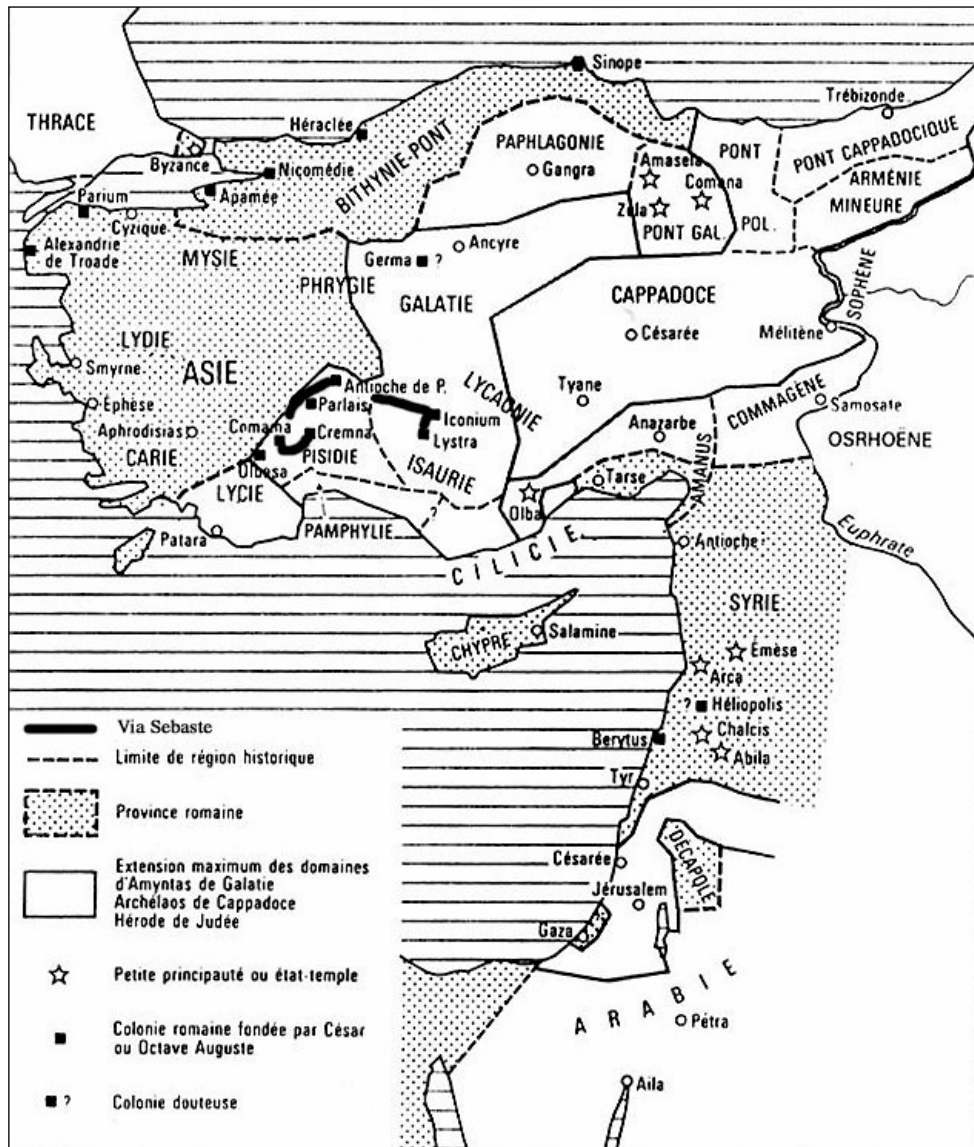


Fig. 5: The East (Syria, Anatolia) at the beginning of the empire (with the *Via Sebaste*)

After 25 BCE the armed forces of king Amyntas were set up in a Roman legion called *legio XXII Deiotariana*⁹⁰, which then moved to Egypt⁹¹. According to Strabo: *The Romans thought that it was better for the region to be ruled by kings than to be under the Roman prefects sent to administer justice, who were not likely always to be present or to have armed forces with them. Thus Archelaüs received, in addition to Cappadocia, Cilicia Trachea; and the boundary of the latter* (Geography XIV:5:6) and according to Dio Cassius (Roman History LIV:9:2), attribution to Archelaus of Cappadocia was decided by Augustus to 21/20. Tacitus mentions in his

⁸⁸ C. BRÉLAZ - Les colonies romaines et la sécurité publique en Asie Mineure in: *Colonie romane nel mondo greco*. Roma 2004 Ed. L'Erma di Bretschneider pp. 196-199.

⁸⁹ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire 44 av. J.C.-260 ap. J.C. Tome 1 Paris 1990 Éd. Presses Universitaires de France p. 151.

Y. PERRIN, T. BAUZOU - De la Cité à l'Empire histoire de Rome in: *Universités Histoire Paris 2000 Éd. Ellipses p. 297.*

⁹⁰ R.K. SHERK - The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen part II vol 7.2 (1980) p. 958.*

⁹¹ S.A. COOK, F.E. ADCOCK, M.P. CHARLESWORTH -The Augustan Empire X in: *The Cambridge Ancient History 1971 Ed. University. Press p. 244.*

inventory of the Roman legions, the presence of four of them in Syria (but none appeared in Galatia), while noting that several of these legions were traveling in the region (Annals IV:5:1-4). Excavations⁹² have confirmed the very special status of the region. For example, residents of Ninica made careers in the Roman legions stationed in Antioch of Pisidia, proving that Ninica, a colony founded by Augustus with veterans⁹³ of the Vth *Gallica* and VIIth Legion, depended on the Roman province of Galatia and not the vassal kingdom of Archelaus⁹⁴ since this city was located in Cilicia Trachea (western Cilicia). Geographically Isauria depended on the province of Galatia (although the contours of these regions were fluctuating)⁹⁵ and not that of Syria. Isauria was very close to the eastern part of Cilicia which was attached to Syria. The definition of a Roman administrative province did not correspond to our modern definition with its geographical overlap: *There was not at that time [under the Republic], in the Roman public law, a territorial distribution for skills of magistrates: no "prefect of the eastern regions" (...) In contrast, magistrates are or may be responsible for a jurisdiction — traditional or tailored, no matter: this is called their provincia (...) The notion of territory may or may not be them affected: sometimes it is a military command against such an enemy in that sector, or, if it is a court, it will run in a certain jurisdiction. In other cases, the land is so inordinately extended and expanded it extends the limits of the world (as we have seen for Pompey in 66 and 57 BCE). But in the cases considered, the notion of territory is never the first: it is a corollary, a consequence of the mission entrusted (...) It is only gradually that the word took a territorial meaning more precise, without any overlaps or privileges cease to make this word always a little rough. Because although most often it is a geographical entity which came to designate the sphere and the area of competence is meant to give a man (eg a planned war against an external enemy is implicitly included in the grant as the province of a particular area, Asia for a war against Mithridates, Syria for Parthian war), these geographical entities are, in fact, territorially discontinuous in which free and allied cities are enclaves where sometimes the promagistrat, on the contrary, must take care of those who are geographically outside his "territory"*⁹⁶. In general the governor could operate only in his province⁹⁷. In case of war, the army of a province could send, into the field of operations, an entire legion or a detachment of each of its legions and place it under the command of the sector⁹⁸. To answer the difficult question of knowing on which Governor depended the legions in Isauria, history of Roman choices in this region provides conclusive evidence. To fight against the Isaurian robbers, who took refuge in the Taurus Mountains, the governor of Asia as well as the legate of Syria were regularly asked⁹⁹:

- In 96 BCE, the command of a province of Cilicia (*provincia Cilicia*), without territorial basis, was attributed to Sulla to fight against pirates.
- In 77 BCE, P. Servilius Vatia campaigned to reduce Cilicia and clean Lycia, Pamphylia and Isauria.
- In 74 BCE, the Senate granted to M. Antonius Creticus an *imperium infinitum* to fight against pirates in the East.

⁹² N. RAUH, L. WANDSNIDER - Juliosebaste: Discovery of a Lost Roman City 2000 Ed. Purdue University and University of Nebraska.

⁹³ M. SARTRE - L'Asie Mineure et l'Anatolie d'Alexandre à Dioclétien Paris 1995 Éd. Armand Colin pp. 210, 211.

⁹⁴ R. SYME - The Augustan Colonies in Anatolica: Studies in Strabo Oxford 1995 Ed. A. Birley p. 240.

⁹⁵ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire 44 av. J.C.-260 ap. J.C. Tome 1 Paris 1990 Éd. Presses Universitaires de France pp. 174, 201.

⁹⁶ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 202-205.

⁹⁷ H.M. JONES - Studies in Roman Government and Law Oxford 1960 Ed. Basil Blackwell p. 9.

⁹⁸ Y. LE BOHEC - L'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire Grenoble 1989 Éd. Picard pp. 30,31,40.

⁹⁹ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique Paris 2001 Éd. Arthème Fayard pp. 436,462.

- In 67 BCE, Metellus Nepos, Pompey's legate in Syria, commanded a region from Lycia to Phoenicia and was responsible for the fight against the bandits.
 - In 63 BCE, Pompey received an *imperium infinitum* to destroy piracy. He successfully completed his mission, but it was in Cilicia Trachea that resistance remained the greatest.
 - In 51 BCE, M. Calpurnius Bibulus, proconsul of Syria, fought against the brigands of Cilicia.
- In 25 BCE, Amyntas, Client king of Galatia, was killed fighting against the Homonadeis in Isauria. After the death of Amyntas, the Roman province of Galatia was created.
 - Between 6 and 1 BCE, Quirinius' expedition led to defeat the tribe of Homonadeis, thus avenging the king Amyntas.
- In 6 CE, an Isaurian revolt was put down by M. Plautius Silvanus, legate of Galatia. Roman historians date this event indicating that Silvanus was legate of an eastern province (Cassius Dio LV:25:1, LV:28:2; Velleius Paterculus II:112). As Quirinius was legate of Syria in 6 CE, according to Josephus, Silvanus should have been legate of Galatia.
 - In 17 CE, Archelaus' kingdom of Cappadocia (Cilicia Trachea) was annexed and would be attached to Cilicia towards 72/73.
 - In 19 CE, according to Tacitus (Annals II:77:1, 80:1), Piso, legate of Syria, attacked one of the places belonging to robbers in Cilicia.
 - In 36 CE, Vitellius, governor of Syria, sent Legate M. Trebellius in the Taurus with 4000 legionaries and some auxiliaries to besiege the rebels that he reduced to surrender by the sword, the rest by drought (Annals VI:41:1).
 - In 51 CE, Ummidius Quadratus, governor of Syria, sent the prefect Curtius Severus in Mount Taurus with cavalymen to quell a tribe who were besieging the city of Anemur in Cilicia (Annals XII:54:3-55: 2).

The case of the legate of Galatia M. Plautius Silvanus who crushed a revolt in Isauria (in 6 CE) is similar to the mission of Quirinius. According to this approximation, the legation of Quirinius took place in Galatia rather than in Syria. Two inscriptions from the Roman colony of Pisidian Antioch also attest the fame of Quirinius (the *duumvir*) in this region and confirm his role as legate of Galatia.

Fig. 6: Quirinius inscriptions in Galatia



ILS 9502 inscription

C. C A R I S T A [NIO]
 C.F.SER.FRONT[ONI]
 CAESIANO IVLI[O]
 PRAEF.FABR.PON[TIF.]
 SACERDOTI PRAE[F.]
 P.SVLPICI.QVIRINI.IIV[IRI]
 PRAEF. M.SERVILI
 HVIC PRIMO OMNIVM
 PVBLICE D.D.STATVA
 POSITA EST

CCARISTANI
 FRONTICAESIANO
 IVLIO PRAEFFABRTRIBMIL
 LEGXII FVLMPRAEF COHBOSE
 PONTIF PRAEFPSVLPICIQVIRINI
 IIVIR PRAEFMSERVILIPRAEF

ILS 9503 inscription

C. Carista[nius]
 s[on of] C[aius] Ser[sius] Fronto
 Caesianus Jul[ius]
 pref. of engi[neers], pontif.
 priest, pref. of
P. Sulpicius Quirinius *duu[mvir]*
 pref. of M. Servilius
 by this man, the first of all [with a]
 public decree of D. council, the statue
 was set up

By Caius Caristianus
 Fronto Caesianus
 Julius pref. of engine. military tribune
 of legion 12 Fulm. pref. of Bos. cohort.
 pontif, pref. of **P. Sulpicius Quirinius**
duumvir, pref. of M. Servilius, pref. of

Cities often sought the protection of the nearest legate and solicited him to assume either the patronage of the city¹⁰⁰ or the duumvirate ("Vice Mayor"). These inscriptions

¹⁰⁰ Y. LE BOHEC - L'armée romaine sous le Haut-empire
 Grenoble 1989 Éd. Picard p. 250.

support a legation of Quirinius in Galatia. One can read that once elected as *duumvir* of the city, Quirinius was represented in this annual responsibility by C. Carista Fronto. The inscription states that the successors of Quirinius, M. Servilius, then another (name unreadable) did the same. As M. Servilius was legate of Galatia around 2 CE¹⁰¹, this involves placing before our common era the previous legation of Quirinius as governor of Galatia.

Numismatics also clarifies this early period of history. A coin depicting the goddess Victory was issued exceptionally in Apamea 3 BCE (year 28 of Actium). Another, found in Cilicia (dated around the same time) is even more surprising, it bears the following inscription (the portrait of Octave is on the reverse):

PRINCEPS FELIX
NE TER COLONIA IULIA IIVIR



Fig. 7: Coin of Apamae

The reading and the interpretation of this inscription are disputed¹⁰². The text refers to the *Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Nicaea*, a Roman colony founded by Augustus in Cilicia Trachea, which existed under that name from 25 BCE to 6 CE, then under the name of Claudiapolis. The first word enigmatic NE might be an abbreviation of the word NEIKH¹⁰³ "Victory". Some coins have been found with the following inscriptions: NEIKH TIBEPIOY "Victory of Tiberius" or NE L BPS "Vic[tory] y[ear] 282" (the year 282 of the Seleucid era in Syria corresponding to 31 BCE, date of the Battle of Actium). Therefore the text could read: *Ne[ike] Ter Colonia Iulia Princeps Felix Du[um]vir* "Victory for the 3rd time, Julian colony of Prince [Augustus] Felix, Duumvir." The information provided by this inscription refers to Quirinius. The 3 victories could refer to:

- 1) When he was proconsul of Crete and Cyrenaica, towards 21/20¹⁰⁴, he won a victory over the Marmarides, in Libya (Works of Florus II:30). This war was led in conjunction with the African proconsul Lucius Cornelius Balbus who received, him, a triumph (March 27, 19 BCE) for having defeated the Garamantes¹⁰⁵. His proconsulship of Crete and Cyrenaica (a senatorial province and thus a Praetorian appointment) must be fixed after 21 BCE (= 51 BCE + 30), because appointment to quaestorship was done usually at the age of 25¹⁰⁶ and appointment to praetorship at the age of 30¹⁰⁷, and prior to 18 BCE as the province was submitted to the proconsular *imperium* of Agrippa from 18 to 13 BCE.
- 2) He fought during this period (between 6 and 1 BCE) and won a victory over the Homonadeis, located precisely in this region of Cilicia.
- 3) The two inscriptions found in Antioch of Pisidia (written after 2 CE) show he received the honorary title of *duumvir* (probably when he was proconsul of Asia around 1 BCE, and after his victory over the Itureans, the 3rd one after his victories over the Marmarides and the Homonadeis).

¹⁰¹ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 522-523.

¹⁰² A. BURNETT, M. AMANDRY, P.P. RIPOLLÉS - Roman Provincial Coinage I London 1992 Ed. British Museum Press pp. 598 n°4082, 531 n°3371, 662 n°4774.

¹⁰³ The archaic spelling NEIKE is usual at this time.

¹⁰⁴ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines Tome I pp. 177,314; T. II p. 248.

¹⁰⁵ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines Tome II pp. 503,529.

¹⁰⁶ The death of Quirinius is fixed just before the end of 21 CE, a year after having had his wife Aemilia Lepida condemned, according to Tacitus (Annals III:22-23) and Suetonius (Tiberius XLIX) and his birth must be in 51 BCE.

¹⁰⁷ Y. PERRIN, T. BAUZOU - De la Cité à l'Empire histoire de Rome in: Universités Histoire Paris 2000 Éd. Ellipses p. 284.

If this victory is that of Quirinius over Homonadeis, it implies that this war occurred before 3 BCE. Thus the scenario of the legation of Quirinius in Galatia is the most likely¹⁰⁸. Quirinius had probably needed 2 years to neutralize successfully this vast tribe scattered in the Taurus mountains, as had been planned by Augustus (*Res Gestae* §28). The fact that Varus was governor of Syria during the period from 6 to 4 BCE, facilitated the cooperation of the latter with Quirinius because they were both close to Augustus. Thus, Varus was able, without difficulty, to make some Syrian legions available to Quirinius (the fact that Quinctilius Varus reappeared after Herod's death has led some scholars to postulate the existence of a hypothetical second Quinctilius Varus¹⁰⁹, son of Quinctilius Varus!). This chronological reconstruction gives the following result:

year (cens)	Legate of the East	Governor of Syria	Herodian reign	Rector of Caesar (<i>main event</i>)	Governor of Galatia	era of Actium
-19	(Agrippa)	P.V. Messala	20		Cusinius Rufus	12/13
-18	(Agrippa)	P.V. Messala	21	(<i>census postponed</i>)	Cusinius Rufus	13/14
-17	(Agrippa)	(Agrippa)	22			14/15
-16	Agrippa	(Agrippa)	23			15/16
-15	Agrippa	(Agrippa)	24			16/17
-14	(Agrippa)	(Agrippa)	25		C. Piso <i>Pontifex</i>	17/18
-13	(Agrippa)	(Agrippa)	26	(<i>census</i>)	C. Piso <i>Pontifex</i>	18/19
-12		M. Titius	27	(<i>death of Agrippa</i>)	C. Piso <i>Pontifex</i>	19/20
-11		M. Titius	28			20/21
-10		M. Titius	29			21/22
-9		S. Saturninus	30			22/23
-8		S. Saturninus	31	(<i>general census</i>)		23/24
-7		S. Saturninus	32		C. Aquila?	24/25
-6	Tiberius	Q. Varus	33		C. Aquila	25/26
-5	(Tiberius)	Q. Varus	34		S. Quirinius	26/27
-4	(Tiberius)	Q. Varus	35	[0] (<i>Herod's testament</i>)	S. Quirinius	27/28
-3	(Tiberius)	S. Quirinius	36	[1]		28/29
-2	(Tiberius)	S. Quirinius	37	[2] (<i>census of the world</i>)		29/30
-1	C. Caesar	Q. Varus	3	M. Lollius	M. Servilius?	30/31
1	C. Caesar	Q. Varus	4	M. Lollius	M. Servilius	31/32
2	C. Caesar	(C. Caesar)	5	S. Quirinius		32/33
3	C. Caesar	(C. Caesar)	6	S. Quirinius		33/34
4		V. Saturninus	7	(<i>death of C. Caesar</i>)		34/35
5		V. Saturninus	8			35/36
6		S. Quirinius	9	(<i>Archelaus deposed,</i>	M. Silvanus	36/37
7		S. Quirinius	10	(Varus <i>governor of</i>	M. Silvanus	37/38
8		S. Quirinius?		<i>Germania</i>)	M. Silvanus?	38/39
9		S. Quirinius?		(<i>death of Varus</i>)	M. Silvanus?	39/40
10		S. Quirinius?				40/41
11		S. Quirinius?				41/42
12		M. Silanus				42/43
13		M. Silanus			Libuscidianus?	43/44
14		M. Silanus		(<i>general census</i>)	Libuscidianus?	44/45
15		M. Silanus		(<i>death of Augustus</i>)	Libuscidianus?	45/46
16		M. Silanus			Libuscidianus?	46/47
17	Germanicus Caes.	C. Calpurnius Piso				47/48
18	Germanicus Caes.	C. Calpurnius Piso			Priscus?	47/48
19	Germanicus Caes.	C. Calpurnius Piso			Priscus?	47/48

¹⁰⁸ B. THOMASSON - *Laterculi praesidum*
Göteborg 1984 col. 253 n° 3.

¹⁰⁹ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - *Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne* Tome II
Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 434-435, 446-447.

This reconstruction raises the following questions:

- *No historical records mention Quirinius's legation in Galatia.* It is possible that this absence is due to a combination of exceptional circumstances: the history of Cassius Dio covering the period from 6 BCE to 4 CE has unfortunately been lost and the writings of Strabo over the period from 2 BCE to 14 CE are themselves also very incomplete thus Galatian governors are difficult to date¹¹⁰. The upper part of the inscription of Tibur is missing but the lower part starts with a reference to a subjected tribe [the Homonadeis], making likely the reference to a legation in Galatia in the previous line [missing]. The inscription of Apamea mentions the census when Quirinius was governor of Syria and some decorations received after Homonadeis's war. It is likely that the recipient did not bother to mention that these honours came from the former legation of Quirinius in Galatia.
- *Quirinius would have accepted a downgrading of his status.* This unusual case is not unprecedented since Piso Pontifex, who was appointed consul in 15 BCE, had accepted a disqualification of his rank when he was appointed legate of Galatia from 14 to 12 BCE, because the province was usually entrusted to a senator of praetorian rank¹¹¹.
- *The testimony of Tacitus was partly wrong.* If Tacitus wrote that *Quirinius removed in Cilicia the fortresses of Homonadeis*, it is possible that, writing a century after the fact, he has committed a little anachronism applying geographical boundaries of his time (different) to this ancient event. Cilicia Trachea was dependent on Syria only after 17 CE and was attached to the province of Cilicia, with the Cilicia Plane only toward 72/73¹¹².
- *Varus would have been legate of Syria twice.* His first legation is well documented and is dated between 6 and 4 BCE. However, the existence of a second legation between 1 BCE and 1 CE is related to the date of Herod's death. In fact, the 'war of Varus' in Syria after the death of Herod was led under the auspices of Caius Caesar, the imperial legate in the East between 1 BCE and 4 CE. According to Cassius Dio (Roman History LV:10a:5-7) when Artagira in Armenia was taken (in 3 CE)¹¹³, after a long siege according to Strabo (Geography XI:14:6), not only Augustus but Caius also assumed the title of *imperator*.

Historians in trying too quickly to reconcile Roman and biblical data created great confusion. If Justin (Apology I:34:2; I:46:1) referred to the Roman archives, about 150 CE, to certify the census of Quirinius, placing it at the very beginning of our era, Tertullian (Against Marcion IV:19:10), 50 years later, would assimilate this census with the census of Roman citizens performed by Sentius Saturninus (in 8 BCE), mixing up the census with the inventory of 2 BCE. Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History I:5:3-4), toward 310 CE, mixed up the census of Quirinius in 2 BCE with the one mentioned by Josephus in 7 CE.

Conclusion: All historical synchronism of the reign of Herod provide, without exception, a date of death toward 2/1 BCE. In addition, the lunar eclipse mentioned (unique in all the work of Josephus) is dated January 9/10, 1 BCE, 5 days after the fast of 10 Tebeth, which is a remarkable confirmation. In 4 BCE, not only was there no fasting, but a feast (Nicanor). Finally, the census of Quirinius is well documented as it coincides with the inventory of the world in 2 BCE and the War of Varus, after Herod's death, under the auspices of Caius Caesar (who was co-regent)¹¹⁴, is dated in 1 CE. According to Maurice

¹¹⁰ A. COŞKUN - Das Edikt des Sex. Sotidius Strabo Libuscidianus und die Fasten der Statthalter Galatiens in augusteischer und tiberischer Zeit in: *Gephyra* Vol. 6 (2009) pp. 159-164.

¹¹¹ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne Paris 1972, 1976 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines Tome I pp. 50,236 Tome II p. 520.

¹¹² M. SARTRE - L'Orient romain Paris 1991 Éd. Seuil p. 45.

¹¹³ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 134-139.

¹¹⁴ From 19 BCE, imperial greetings and triumphs of a general are assigned to the co-regent (or to the emperor when he had not colleague or co-regent). Caius Caesar was co-regent from 1 BCE thanks to his proconsular *imperium* then *imperator* from 3 CE.

Sartre, a leading French academic expert on these issues: *The passage in Luke throws a trouble spot since he places the census directly related to the birth of Jesus: it is to fulfil the obligation to be identified so that Joseph and Mary would have gone to Bethlehem and Jesus would be born. This can only have occurred long after the death of Herod because John the Baptist, older than a few months, was born and was designed at the time of Herod. There was considerable information on the epilogue of Luke, without finding a solution that saves it. Let alone the date, in fact all of the information appears unbearable. Not only there never was a general census of the Empire (except for Roman citizens), but even if the census was confined to the Roman province of Syria, there is no reason why the subjects of client State of Antipas were concerned (...) how Luke could be so wrong by combining the census — if it took place in 6 AD — with the birth of Jesus, which occurred, according to Matthew 2.1, at the end of the reign of Herod, probably in 6 or 5 BC (...) After the departure of P. Quinctilius Varus, governor since 7 BC and still in place at the time of Herod's death (he repressed the revolt in Jerusalem), he was replaced directly by L. Calpurnius Piso Pontifex, who remained in place until 1 BC. Therefore, there is no vacancy for a first term of Quirinius. According to this prestigious and powerful academic¹¹⁵: in fact all of the information [from Luke] appears unbearable (...) how Luke could be so wrong¹¹⁶. Who to believe, Luke or Sartre? In any case, one of them is either an incompetent historian or, worse, a liar. When you know that there is no evidence to prove the presence of L. Calpurnius Piso Pontifex in Syria¹¹⁷, the answer is obvious. Some scholars have tried to identify the anonymous man who was governor of Syria twice in the inscription of Tibur to Calpurnius but it is impossible because he was prefect of Rome from 13 to 32 CE, however this prestigious function (Annals VI:10) would not appear at the end of his *cursus honorum*. The anonymous man can only be Quirinius as demonstrated by Theodor Mommsen¹¹⁸.*

The reader will see that the sole purpose of academic research is not really to identify the prestigious *ignotus* (“unknown”) of the inscription but to prove that he cannot be Quirinius. For example, Nikos Kokkinos explains¹¹⁹: *My article on the titulus Tiburtinus reopened a debate that has now lasted, with intermissions, over two hundred years (...) It will be significant for Augustan prosopography and for the history of Asia, among other provinces, to come closer to solving the problem of the notorious ignotus. C. Eilers' reply is admirable. He spots a few mistakes and he attempts to expose weaknesses in my hypothesis that the ignotus is Saturninus. Though some points will be conceded, I remain unconvinced that my overall conclusion needs to be altered radically. At the same time, his restatement of the case for Piso gives me the opportunity to make clearer the reasons why I believe that this candidate should now be dropped from the list. It must be stressed that Eilers adduced no new evidence, although he offered fresh interpretations. Since his treatment is probably the best defence of Piso in the present state of knowledge, it is hoped that my refutation here will put the case to rest. The method followed by Eilers was first to deconstruct my theory, and then to rebuild Syme's. I shall follow the same in reverse, first deconstructing Syme's theory, and then rebuilding mine. In all fairness, the strongest alternative to Saturninus will also be noted.* We note that this academic never explains “in all fairness” on what grounds Quirinius, the most obvious candidate is eliminated (I guess why). In the same manner the registration of Quirinius in Syria (Apamea) attested in the Titulus Venetus (dated around 2 BCE) is despised “in all fairness”.

¹¹⁵ As a member of the editorial board of major journals of French history he is the guarantor of "orthodoxy" of articles.

¹¹⁶ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique Paris 2001 Éd. Arthème Fayard pp. 540,542.

¹¹⁷ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 383-384.

¹¹⁸ T. MOMMSEN – Res gestae divi Augusti Berlin 1883 Ed. Weidmann pp. 167-168.

¹¹⁹ N. KOKKINOS – The Titulus Tiburtinus, Syme's Piso, Sentius Saturninus and the province of Syria in: *Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia* Vol. 10 (2012), pp. 37-69.

Dating the war of P. Quinctilius Varus

The biography of Quinctilius Varus¹²⁰ is as follows: born in Cremona toward 47 BCE, he was quaestor in Achaia in 22, quaestor of Augustus during his trip to the East in 22-19, legate of a proconsul of Asia in 15, ordinary consul in 13, proconsul of Africa in 7, governor of Syria in 6-4 BCE, governor of Gaul-Germany in 7-9 CE, died in Teutoburg on September 9 CE. Varus played an important role in the life of Herod since he negotiated in 4 BCE an agreement to grant the inheritance to his sons made in the presence of Augustus (Jewish War I:573-628), and it was still him who was instructed to quell the various rebellions after his death. Herod's death should be dated to 1 BCE, because the intervention of Varus, after Herod's death, is described as a war by Flavius Josephus (Against Apion I:34) and also by the Seder Olam¹²¹: *from the war of Varus [written As-uerus] to the war of Vespasian 80 years [in fact 70 years]*, yet the only war mentioned in the Roman archives in this region and at that time is the one conducted by Caius Caesar in 1 CE.

Sequence of events	Reference	date
S. Saturninus , a former governor of Syria (9-6), was convened in Beirut by Augustus about a trial concerning the royalty of Herod's sons.	BJ I:538	Summer 5 BCE
Herod went into Rome in order to modify his testament concerning the kingship of his sons. Varus the governor of Syria was regularly consulted.	BJ I:617-628	Summer 4 BCE
Last testament of Herod (codicil).	BJ I:664	21 January 1 BCE
Herod's death	BJ I:665	26 January 1 BCE
Archelaus went to Rome in order to have confirmed his kingship.	BJ II:1-4	
Departure of Governors for their province.		April/June 1 BCE
Feast of the Passover.	BJ II:10	6 April 1 BCE
Varus arrived early in Syria at the request of Archelaus.	BJ II:16	
Antipas left for Rome to obtain confirmation of his kingship mentioned in Herod's testament rather than in his codicil.	BJ II:20	
Augustus read the reports of Varus and Sabinus and sat with Caius .	BJ II:25	
Varus , the governor of Syria, announced a Jewish revolt, repressed it, left for Antioch, leaving a legion in Jerusalem.	BJ II:40	
Feast of Pentecost.	B. II:42	28 May 1 BCE
Caius left for the East with a pro-consular <i>imperium</i> .		July 1 BCE
Sabinus feared for the legion left in Jerusalem and called Varus for help.	BJ II:45-54	
Revolt fomented by Ahab, and Judas son of Hezekiah.	BJ II:55-56	
Rebellions fomented by Simon, then Athrongaios.	BJ II:57-65	
Varus returned to Syria with two additional legions.	BJ II:66	
Beginning of the war of Varus under the auspices of Caius.	C.A. I:34	September 1 BCE
Caius , a friend of Varus , led troops in Galilee and Varus controlled those in Samaria.	BJ II:68-69	
Varus ended "his war", Festival (of Booths), Sabinus left Jerusalem.	BJ II:72-79	November 1 BCE
Caius was appointed consul at Rome		1 January 1 CE
Herod's sons were officially 'enthroned' by Augustus, according to the testament of July 4 BCE.	BJ II:80-100	
'King' Herod Archelaus sent a delegation to Augustus.	BJ II:111	Summer 6 CE

BJ (Jewish War); C.A. (Against Apion); AJ (Jewish Antiquities)

After Herod's death, Varus quelled several rebellions as Commandant of Syria, not as Governor¹²², including the one of Simon narrated by Tacitus: *On Herod's death, one Simon, without waiting for the approbation of the Emperor, usurped the title of king. He was punished by*

¹²⁰ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 434-435.

W. DE GRUYTER – Prosopographia imperii romani
Wissens 1999 Ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften pp. 20-24.

¹²¹ H.W. GUGGENHEIMER – Seder Olam. The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology
Laham 2005 Ed. Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. pp. 261-263.

¹²² Governor (*egemón*) of Syria from 6 to 4 BCE (Jewish War I:617) then Commandant (*strategou*) of Syria (Jewish Antiquities XVII:250).

Quintilius Varus then governor of Syria (History V:9). Josephus prefers to speak of war because all the legions of Syria were mobilized. Indeed, in this time Syria had seen three major wars: the ones of Pompey (63 BCE), Varus (6-1 BCE) and Titus (66-70 CE). This war of Varus was conducted under the auspices of Caius (Cassius Dio LV:10:18), imperial legate of Caesar in the East from 1 BCE to 4 CE, who was a friend of Varus (Jewish War II:68). It has been granted to him in the inscription on a cenotaph. Denying this identification requires accepting that a major war, led by the designated successor of the emperor himself, has left no trace in history¹²³. Maurice Sartre, in favour of a death of Herod in 4 BCE, offers the following scenario¹²⁴: Caius Caesar would not have led a war in Syria (unlike the inscription!) but a simple campaign in Arabia to enthrone officially Aretas IV (king of Nabatene from 9 BCE to 40 CE). Enthroning in 1 CE a king who had already been king since 9 BCE is absurd, moreover, the aim of this campaign would have been ridiculous for a co-regent. In fact, this self-proclaimed king after the death of Obodas II (30 to 9 BCE) was ratified by Rome in 1 CE as a result of his support for the army of Varus to quell the revolt after Herod's death (Jewish War II:68-70). If Herod was dead in 4 BCE, Aretas IV would have been recognized king by Rome (in 1 CE) only 4 years later, but in that case one has to assume the unlikely solution: after Aretas helped a Roman vassal king, Augustus would have annexed the country of Aretas from 3 to 1 BCE (which would have been a punishment!), then Caius Caesar would have restored (?) his kingdom in 1 CE. Caius Caesar's career, grand-son of Augustus, was very brief. An inscription in a cenotaph of Pisa provides his *cursus honorum* and mentions as the only honorary remarkable action: *after the consulship which he held with good fortune, waging a war beyond the farthest borders of the Roman people, when the state was successful and the greatest and most warlike peoples were conquered and received his protection, had himself been snatched by cruel fate*¹²⁵ (lines 9 to 12 of the inscription below). It is therefore important to identify this war and to date it.

5	QVOE	·SVNT · CVM · IN COLONIA · NOSTRA · PROPTER · CONTENTIONES · CANDIDATO
	RV	AGISTRATVVS · NON · ESSENT · ET · EA · ACTA · ESSENT · QVAE · INFRA · SCRIPTA · SVNT
	CVM · A	II · NONAS · APRILES · ALLATVS · ESSET · NVNTIVS · C · CAESAREM · AVGVSTI · PATRIS · PATRI
	AE	NTIF · MAXSVMI · CVSTODIS · IMPERI · ROMANI · TOTIVSQVE · ORBIS · TERRARVM · PRAE
	SII	· ILIVM · DIVI · NEPOTEM · POST · CONSVLATVM · QVEM · VLTRA · FINIS · EXTREMAS · POPV
10	LI ·	· ANI · BELLVM · GERENS · FELICITER · PEREGERAT · BENE · GESTA · RE · PVBLICA · DEVICTEIS · AVT
	IN	EM · RECEPIS · BELLICOSISSIMIS · AC · MAXSIMIS · GENTIBVS · IPSVM · VOLNERIBVS · PRO · RE
	PV	CA · EXCEPTIS · EX · EO · CASV · CRVDELIBVS · FATIS · EREPTVM · POPVLO · ROMANO · IAM · DESIGNA
	TV	VSTISSVMVM · AC · SIMILLVMVM · PARENTIS · SVI · VIRTVTIBVS · PRINCIPEM · COLONIAEQVE
	NC	RAE · VNIVM · PRAESIDIVM · EAQVE · RES · NONDVM · QUIETO · LVCTV · QVEM · EX · DECES
15	SV ·	· AESARIS · FRATRIS · EIVS · CONSVLIS · DESIGNATI · AVGVRI · PATRONI · NOSTRI · PRINC
	PIE	VENTVTIS · COLONIA · VNIVERSA · SVSCEPERAT · RENOVASSET · MVLTPLICASSETQVE
	MV	· JREM · OMNIVM · SINGVLORVM · VNIVERSORVMQVE · OB · EAS · RES · VNIVERSI · DECVP
	RIV	· S · COLONIQVE · QVANDO · EO · CASV · IN COLONIA · NEQVE · II · VIR · NEQVE · PRAEFECTI
	ER	· NEQVE · QVISQVAM · IVRE · DICVND · PRAERAT · INTER · SESE · CONSENSERVNT · PRO
20	MV	· NITVDINE · TANTAE · AC · TAM · INPROVISAE · CALAMITATIS · OPORTERE · EX · EA · DIE

Fig. 1: Cenotaph of Pisa CIL XI 1421; ILS 140

Velleius Paterculus (Roman History II:99-102), who was an eyewitness to the career of Caius Caesar, said: *Tiberius Nero, who had now held two consulships and celebrated two triumphs;*

¹²³ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère
1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 134-135.

¹²⁴ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique
Paris 2001 Éd. Arthème Fayard pp. 519-520.

M. SARTRE - L'Orient romain
Paris 1991 Éd. Seuil pp. 30-31.

¹²⁵ D. BRAUND - Augustus to Nero: A Sourcebook on Roman History, 31 BC-AD 68
New York 1985 Ed. Taylor & Francis pp. 38-40.

who had been made the equal of Augustus by sharing with him the tribunician power; the most eminent of all Roman citizens save one (and that because he wished it so); the greatest of generals, attended alike by fame and fortune; veritably the second luminary and the second head of the state — this man, moved by some strangely incredible and inexpressible feeling of affection for Augustus, sought leave from him who was both his father-in-law and stepfather to rest from the unbroken succession of his labours. The real reasons for this were soon made plain. Inasmuch as Gaius Caesar had already assumed the toga of manhood, and Lucius was reaching maturity, he concealed his reason in order that his own glory might not stand in the way of the young men at the beginning of their careers. I must reserve for my regular history a description of the attitude of the state at this juncture, of the feelings of the individual citizens, of the tears of all at taking leave of such a man, and how nearly the state came to laying upon him its staying hand. Even in this brief epitome I ought to say that all who departed for the provinces across the sea, whether proconsuls or governors appointed by the emperor, went out of their way to see him at Rhodes, and on meeting him they lowered their fasces to him though he was but a private citizen — if such majesty could ever belong to a private citizen — thereby confessing that his retirement was more worthy of honour than their official position (...) Julia was banished to an island and removed from the eyes of her country and her parents, though her mother Scribonia accompanied her and employed with her as a voluntary companion of her exile. Shortly after this Gaius Caesar, who had previously made a tour of other provinces, but only as a visitor, was dispatched to Syria. On his way he first paid his respects to Tiberius Nero, whom he treated with all honour as his superior. In his province he conducted himself with such versatility as to furnish much material for the panegyrist and actions deserving of praise. On an island in the Euphrates, with an equal retinue on each side, Gaius had a meeting with the king of the Parthians, a young man of distinguished presence. This spectacle of the Roman army arrayed on one side, the Parthian on the other, while these two eminent leaders not only of the empires they represented but also of mankind thus met in conference — truly a notable and a memorable sight — it was my fortunate lot to see early in my career as a soldier, when I held the rank of tribune. I had already entered upon this grade of the service under your father, Marcus Vinicius, and Publius Silius in Thrace and Macedonia; later I visited Achaia and Asia and all the eastern provinces, the outlet of the Black Sea and both its coasts, and it is not without feelings of pleasure that I recall the many events, places, peoples, and cities. As for the meeting, first the Parthian dined with Gaius upon the Roman bank, and later Gaius supped with the king on the soil of the enemy. It was at this time that there were revealed to Caesar, through the Parthian king, the traitorous designs, revealing a crafty and deceitful mind, of Marcus Lollius, whom Augustus had desired to be the adviser of his still youthful son; and gossip spread the report abroad. In regard to his death, which occurred within a few days, I do not know whether it was accidental or voluntary. But the joy which people felt at this death was equalled by the sorrow which the state felt long afterwards at the decease in the same province of Censorinus, a man born to win the affections of men. Then Gaius entered Armenia and at first conducted his campaign with success; but later, in a parley near Artagera, to which he rashly entrusted his person, he was seriously wounded by a man named Adduus, so that, in consequence, his body became less active, and his mind of less service to the state. Nor was there lacking the companionship of persons who encouraged his defects by flattery — for flattery always goes hand in hand with high position — as a result of which he wished to spend his life in a remote and distant corner of the world rather than return to Rome. Then, in the act of returning to Italy, after long resistance and still against his will, he died in a city of Lycia which they call Limyra. Velleius says that the career of Caius in the East began with Syria but he does not specify what were his ‘actions deserving of praise’. Cassius Dio (Roman History LV:10:17-18; LV:10a:4) says that the young Caius learned to control legions on the Danube at the beginning of the year 1 BCE before going to Syria and he resided in Syria in the year of his consulate (beginning on January 1, 1 CE), coinciding with the war mentioned in the inscription on the cenotaph of Pisa. According to Ovid this "future glorious mission of Caius Caesar in the East" was officially announced by Augustus at the dedication of the Temple of Ultor on May 12, 2 BCE (Art of Love I:171-

228). Caius left his position for the East at the expiration of the powers of Tiberius (July 1 BCE)¹²⁶ but because of his age (19 years old when he left Rome), Augustus put in charge Marcus Lollius as rector of Caius, from 1 BCE until his disgrace in 2 CE, and then Quirinius. The usual date of January 29, 1 BCE, marking the departure of Caius Caesar to the East¹²⁷ is conjectural and is not founded. The name of Caius Caesar appears only in a piece of text which is entirely restored:

MAXI[MO C. CAESAR PRINC(EPS) IUVENT(UTIS) AD PROVINCIAS TRANS].

This reconstruction is erroneous because the inscription begins by MAR[-] not by MAXI[-]¹²⁸. In addition, the expression *provincias transmarinas* is unknown at this time. This very particular expression is always written *transmarinas provincias*. Thus, Spannagel¹²⁹ conjectures the following reconstruction (assuming it meant the departure of Tiberius to the East in 22 BCE):

MAR[CELLO ET ARRUNTIO CON(N)S(ULIBUS) AD TRANS].

The new proposal of Spannagel to link that date of January 29 to Tiberius is not satisfactory because it does not appear in the *Fasti Vicomagistri*, written in 2 BCE, neither in the *Fasti Verulani*, written under Tiberius.

Caius Caesar came to the East with a proconsular *imperium*¹³⁰ (previously held by Tiberius) primarily to address issues of Parthia and Armenia, and for this reason his actions in Syria were seen by Latin authors as secondary. The only historian to talk about the campaign in Syria was Pliny (Natural History XII:55), who recounted a glorious campaign of Caius in "Arabia", general term for Syria (Natural History VI:141), which involved Aretas IV, Arab king of the Nabataeans¹³¹ (Jewish War II:68-70). This self-proclaimed king (in 9 BCE) was endorsed by Rome (in 1 CE) thanks to his support for the army of Varus after Herod's death. The role of Caius Caesar beside Varus was more honorary than decisive because Josephus briefly presents him either as the son of Agrippa or as the friend of Varus (Jewish War II:25, 68). According to Tacitus (Annals II:30:4, IV:66:1), Quirinius and Varus were indeed intimate friends of Augustus Caesar and therefore of Caius Caesar.

During the period 6-4 BCE, Varus was governor (*hégemôn*) of Syria. Josephus distinguishes the administrative aspect of his command during the first legation using the title of governor and then the title, more military, of commandant (*strategou*), which is used during the second legation after the death of Herod.

year	Legate in Syria	Exact title of the "governor" of Syria
-12 -9	M. Titius	Governing (ἡγεμόνα) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVI:270</i>
-9 -6	S. Saturninus	Governor (ἡγεμών) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVI:344</i>
-6 -3	Q. Varus	Governor (ἡγεμών) <i>Jewish War I:617</i>
-3 -1	S. Quirinius	Governor (ἡγεμών) <i>Luke 2:2; Inscription of Apamea</i>
-1 1	Sabinus	Procurator (ἐπίτροπος) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVII:252</i>
-1 1	Q. Varus	Commandant (στρατηγοῦ) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVII:250</i>
1 2		Governing of legions (ἡγεμόνα) with Caius Caesar <i>Jewish War II:68</i>
6 10	S. Quirinius	[Supreme] Judge (δικαιοδότης), censor of the people <i>Jewish Antiquities XVIII:1</i>
12 17	M. Silanus	Commandant (στρατηγοῦ) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVIII:52</i>

¹²⁶ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 110-111.

¹²⁷ P. ARNAUD – Transmarinae provinciae : réflexions sur les limites géographiques et sur la nature des pouvoirs en Orient in: *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz* 5 (1994) pp. 221-253.

¹²⁸ A. DEGRASSI – Inscriptiones Italiae vol. XIII fas. II 1963 Roma Ed. Poligrafico della stato pp. 116-117, Tab XXXV.

¹²⁹ M. SPANNAGEL -Exemplaria principis. Untersuchungen zu Entstehung und Ausstattung des Augustusforums in: *Archäologie und Geschichte* 9, Heidelberg, 1999, p. 26.

¹³⁰ This *imperium* was superior to that of governors, according to Tacitus (Annals II:43) and Cassius Dio (Roman history LIV:28).

¹³¹ Toward 36/37, the Etarch of King Aretas IV tried to seize Paul (2Co 11:32). This episode must be located shortly before the period of unrest between Herod Antipas and Aretas IV (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:106-118).

The terms used by Josephus are accurate and consistent. From 12 to 1 BCE the post of governor of Syria was relatively autonomous but from 1 BCE to 2 CE it was subordinated to that of Caius Caesar. The title of Quirinius between 6 and 10 CE was more prestigious than a simple governor. After 6 CE, the governor of Syria would support the procurator of Judea. The question of the imperial legate of Syria during the period 1 to 4 CE is tricky because the title and the mission of Caius Caesar was very special¹³², but the chronology given by Josephus imposes a legation of Varus in Syria under the authority of Caius Caesar, identical to that of governor of Syria Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso who collaborated with the imperial Legate Germanicus Caesar. If Josephus does not mention the mission of Caius Caesar in the East, nor the first legation of Quirinius, it is because these events had little impact on the political life in Judea. This exceptional¹³³ and unusual coexistence of several legates may be explained: Augustus commissioned several of them simultaneously (chosen from his family to avoid potential conflicts of authority) with specific and different objectives¹³⁴: negotiating with Parthia and Armenia, ensuring the succession of the kingdom of Herod and promoting the accession of his grand-son Caius at the head of the Empire. Caius Caesar, Augustus's adopted son, implicitly disposed of an *imperium maius* as legate of the East, he was assisted militarily by Varus, a former legate of Syria, and politically by Lollius a counsellor. Sabinus was designated as financial procurator to identify goods of Herod (during the year -4 he was busy reorganizing the justice in the province of Cyrenaica after serious complaints of Greek citizens against Roman judges)¹³⁵.

Caius Caesar as imperial legate of the East, Lollius as rector of Varus and Caius as chargé de mission could each be considered as governor of Syria. The presence of several 'governors' of Syria occurred several times since Syria was a strategic region in the Roman East and the geographical overlapping of Judea and Syria inside the East produced an exceptional situation of overlapping in imperial missions¹³⁶. As his title suggests, the imperial legate (endowed with an *imperium*) was only accountable to the emperor, however, to ensure peace within his jurisdiction (a major part of his mission), the legate imperial of the East could commandeer the legate of Syria, who himself could commandeer the procurator of Judea for the same reasons¹³⁷. The proconsular *imperium* of Caius allowed him to appoint governors (in theory, but in practice this possibility depended on the emperor) in the same way that the emperor appointed his procurators. If he deemed necessary, the emperor could also appoint an imperial legate in place of the proconsul without removing the latter, he could also add legates to the governor in office. The proconsul could also appoint his own legates¹³⁸.

Hurlet carefully studied this complex issue¹³⁹, he explains: *The prince had, since 27 BCE, the right to submit "instructions" (the mandala) as well to his own legates as to generals acting under their own auspices (...) [concerning Caius] one must admit that the young prince was invested with a proconsular*

¹³² E. DABROWA - The Governors of Roman Syria from Augustus to Septimius Severus Bonn 1998 Ed. Rudolf Habelt GMBH pp. 201-205.

¹³³ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire Tome 1 Paris 1990 Éd. Presses Universitaires de France pp. 15-21, 34, 57-61, 170-174.

¹³⁴ J.M. RODDZ - Marcus Agrippa - Les arcanes de la puissance Farnèse 1984 Éd. École française de Rome pp. 337-381.

¹³⁵ F. DE VISSCHER - Les édits d'Auguste découverts à Cyrène Louvain, Paris 1940 Ed. Les Belles Lettres, pp. 23-30.

¹³⁶ Vitellius, governor of Syria and imperial legate of the East (Annals VI:32:3-4) revoked Pilate, procurator of Judea (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:85-88), in the same manner that Quadratus revoked Cumanus (Annals XII:54).

¹³⁷ P. HOROVITZ - Essai sur les pouvoirs des procurateurs-gouverneurs in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* Tome 17 (1938) pp. 775-792.

¹³⁸ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire Tome 1 Paris 1990 Éd. Presses Universitaires de France pp. 14-15, 170-171.

¹³⁹ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 132-133, 296-303.

imperium, if not superior in any case "equal" to the one of proconsuls (...). If one admit, however, for Agrippa the existence of an imperium maius, the imperium of Caius Caesar would be higher to the one of provincial governors (...) in other words: the "co-regent" acting exclusively in the own area of the prince, it would be superfluous to specify in a senatus consultum and law if the imperium of the "co-regent" was aequum or maius compared to the one of proconsul; it was sufficient in this case to define the nature of his relations with the imperial legates and accordingly with the prince himself, who was only delegating his own powers to his legates (...) such a reality clearly raises the question of the nature of the relationship of the "co-regent" with the governors of imperial provinces (...) such a definition of the nature of relationship between the prince and his "co-regent" worth strictly speaking only for Augustus and Agrippa. The example of Germanicus clearly shows that there was on this issue an important development: the imperium "aequum" of Agrippa ended by becoming, at an unspecified date, higher compared to the governors of public provinces, but at the same time lower than that of the prince. We have the testimony on this issue of the Senatus consultum of Piso, which delivers unambiguously the content of the law of investiture: "provided that in all circumstances, the imperium of Tiberius Caesar was higher than that of Germanicus Caesar" (...) the imperium defined as maius assured the prince an absolute supremacy in all provinces as well as in relation to proconsuls as to his "co-regents" (...) the nature of the relationship of "co-regents" with the legates of the prince is a critical issue (...) by enumerating the number of grievances against the legate of Syria, non-compliance by the latter of mandata of Tiberius, the official document primarily reflects much of the important remote role played by the prince in the definition of the mission of his delegate, in contrast, clearly distinguishing the mandates of the prince from Germanicus letters, the text of senatus consultum shows that contrary to the prince, the "co-regent" had no recourse to coerce an imperial legate to absolute submission to him (...) The episode of conflict of jurisdiction between Germanicus and Piso shows how much the prince played a key role in the definition of the relationship between the "co-regent" and the governors of imperial provinces: it was only by the use of imperial mandates that were indirectly adjusted the concrete relations between the extraordinary envoy of the prince and the delegates of the latter, far from Germanicus not argue that for such a practice should be extended for sure to all the other extraordinary missions in so far as they always had as frame at least one imperial province.

The fact that Varus and Quirinius appeared several times in Syria is not unusual¹⁴⁰ because this region occupied a strategic position and the chronic instability of the eastern kingdoms: Armenia and Parthia, according to Velleius Paterculus (Roman History II:100-102), forced Augustus to use confirmed and trustworthy men, leading him to renew their legations, without being exceptional. According to Tacitus (Annals II:30:4, IV:66:1), Quirinius and Varus were intimates of Augustus and had both a strong military experience.

According to Josephus, the formalization approaches of power (for Herod's sons) took place around the Jewish Pentecost. This period (June/July) was precisely the time when the Romans took office (Jewish Antiquities XVII:254). The meeting shortly before Pentecost (May 28, 1 BCE) took place in May. Caius was able to start from Rome to the East as imperial legate (June 1 BCE) because he had just received his proconsular *imperium* previously held by Tiberius. If the legation of Varus had ended in 4 BCE, he would have had little time to watch the many rebellions that followed the death of Herod; whereas in 1 BCE he was at the beginning of his legation and could have had at least 2 years to pacify Judea, which is much more likely. The fact of Archelaus claiming the arrival of Varus insistently is easily understandable if Varus came from Rome to take office in his new position (Jewish Antiquities XVII:221). According to Cassius Dio (Roman History LVII:14:5; LX:11:6; LX:17:3), governors were appointed on 1st January and had to leave Rome before 1st June to join their assignment (1st April after 42 CE). The presence of Varus was appropriate because, after succeeding Sentius Saturninus, he officiated at the end of his

¹⁴⁰ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne Tome 1 Paris 1972 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines pp. 306-311.

mandate [in 4 BCE] dynastic quarrels between Herod's sons on the succession of their father and had validated the last will of Herod in front of Augustus¹⁴¹ (Jewish Antiquities XVII:89-146), testament serving to legally establish the starting date of their reigns¹⁴². The careers of Varus and Quirinius were overlapping because their roles were clearly complementary in Syria. Herod's death was immediately followed by several major revolts, which Varus crushed thanks to the legions of Syria. This "war of Varus" was led in cooperation with Caius Caesar (Jewish War II:66-74; Against Apion I:34), who arrived in Syria on January 1, 1 CE. This gives the following chronology:

year	Caius Caesar	Quintilius Varus	Sulpicius Quirinius
-7		Proconsul of Africa	
-6		Governor of Syria (1) (Testament of Herod under Augustus for his succession)	
-5	Caius Caesar appointed as senator		Governor of Galatia (extraordinary mission to eliminate the Homonadeis)
-4			
-3			Governor of Syria (1) Victory over the Itureans Census of Syria
-2	Augustus declared Father of the Country. Inventory of the World	Death of Herod	
-1	Imperial legate of the East War in Syria (Palestine). Negotiations with the Parthians	Governor of Syria (2) (extraordinary mission to secure the succession of Herod)	Proconsul of Asia
1			
2	Negotiations in Armenia		Rector of Caius Caesar (extraordinary mission to train the grand-son of Augustus)
3			
4	Death of Caius Caesar		
5			
6			Governor of Syria (2) (extraordinary mission to settle the succession of Archelaus and register his goods)
7		Governor of Germania	
8			
9		Death of Varus	
10			

Josephus collected an enormous amount of information. It was therefore necessary to harmonize them in compilations as do modern historians. Several anomalies appear in his accounts within the period from 4 BCE to 6 CE. Although very prolix in details Josephus goes directly from the 1st legation of Varus [6-4 BCE] to the 2nd of Quirinius [6-10 CE] with a vacuum of 10 years. He ignores other governors during this period such as Volusius Saturninus (4-6 CE evidenced by numismatics), leaving the impression of a connection between the periods of office of these governors. As we have seen the only event commented in great detail is the management of the instability caused by Herod's death. The complexity of such events may have caused unclear narratives from Josephus who, over this period and several times, repeats the same facts several years apart: once at

¹⁴¹ C. SAULNIER - Histoire d'Israël Paris 1985 Éd. Cerf pp. 222-227.

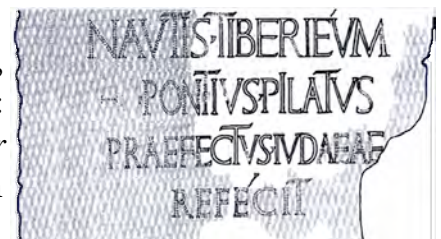
¹⁴² W.E. FILMER - The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great in: *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. XVII. Oxford 1966 pp. 283-298.

Herod's death and once at Archelaus' advent and once again after the deposition of Archelaus. It is possible that the double legations of Quirinius and of Varus (the 1st under Herod and the 2nd under Archelaus promoted some confusion among Josephus' accounts or among his copyists. However the titular used by Josephus for the two governors, depending on the period, indirectly confirms the repetition of these delegations.

Some have doubts regarding the accuracy of titles used by Josephus, because he describes Pilate as "governor (*hégemón*) of Judea" (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:55) or "procurator (*epitropos*) of Judea" (Jewish War II:169) while a Latin inscription discovered in 1961 gave him the official title of "prefect (*praefectus*)", translated into Greek by *eparchos*. This criticism must be tempered as indicates Saulnier¹⁴³: *We should not unduly harden Roman law because epigraphy shows that the official terminology remained fluctuating under Julio-Claudian (...) Thus the territories of Asturias and Galicia, submitted with difficulty, had been annexed to the province of Hither Spain, while remaining governed by a praeses. A similar solution was adopted for the Alps where, in 25 BC, the ancient dynast, Julius Cottius, received the title of praefectus ciuitatum. In Sardinia, the emperor first appointed a legate who then became a prefect because legionary troops were replaced by an auxiliary force. Under these conditions it is understood that ethnarchy of Palestine after the dismemberment of a kingdom already tributary, has been the subject of a measure of this kind, because the primary concern of Augustus imposing direct administration should be to ensure the timely collection of the tribute formerly supported by Herod; such a decision logically impelled the appointment of a procurator. However disorders which Archelaus had been unable to suppress also requested sending a governor likely to lead police operations, that is to say, a prefect or a legate, depending on the status of forces given. Indeed, the title of praefectus linked with military responsibilities applies to an officer commanding auxiliary troops while a legate have to be at the head of a legionary detachment. In this way it can be assumed that the Judean territory poor, reduced and agitated, was administered by a clerk of the emperor who met both functions of procurator and prefect. Thus, in the present state of our documentation, the most simple is to admit that the governors of Judea had the dual function of praefectus-procurator [as it was the case in Sardinia].*

Therefore, one should be careful before criticizing Josephus and Tacitus (Annals XV:44:3), even if the official inscription from Caesarea points out Pilate as prefect because:

- Luke would have committed the same "mistake" since he describes Pilate as "governor (*hégemón*) of Judea (Lk 3:1)". Contrary to popular belief, literary texts are often more reliable than official inscriptions written by local dignitaries whose institutional culture would not be very high¹⁴⁴.
- A prefect could not usually apply the death penalty in civil courts. However, the prefects of Judaea had this right of *jus gladii*, according to Josephus as well as to the Gospels, confirming their specific role as "governors".
- The inscription from Caesarea being greatly damaged, nothing prevents one to assume the existence of a dual title: *procurator praefectus* like the one found in Sardinia: *procurator Augusti and praefectus Sardiniae*. The study of the inscription from Caesarea¹⁴⁵ permits such a conclusion.



The complete reconstruction of this inscription is controversial¹⁴⁶, but the available space before *praefectus* implies the existence of a word from 3 to 5 letters. Latin inscriptions

¹⁴³ C. SAULNIER - Histoire d'Israël
Paris 1985 Éd. Cerf pp. 235-236.

¹⁴⁴ M. TARPIN - L'organisation politique et administratives des cités d'Europe
in: *Pallas. Revue d'études antiques* n°80 (2009) Éd. Presses Universitaires du Mirail pp. 128-129.

¹⁴⁵ L. BOFFO - Les mentions épigraphiques des personnages cités par Luc
in: *Dossiers d'Archéologie* n°279 (janvier 2003) pp. 108-119.

¹⁴⁶ J.P. LÉMONON - Ponce Pilate
Paris 2007 Éd. De l'Atelier pp. 23-33.

being written in a standard way (the name being always connected directly to the title), the missing word can only be the *nomen* of Pontius Pilate (which is already known) or a second title. Double titulatures: *tvtor praefectvs* have been found in the province of Brittany. The inscription from Caesarea could also contain a double titulature like *proc. praefectvs* "proc[urator and] prefect" as in Sardinia. We also know a procurator-governor of Rhaetia¹⁴⁷ qualified (in 41 CE) as: *Procur(ator) Augustor(um) pro leg(ato) provinciae Raitiai et Vindelici(iae)*. Official inscriptions in Greek show that a governor (*hégemón*) was both a prefect (*eparchos*), ensuring peacekeeping, and a procurator (*epitropos*) managing imperial properties. Historians have sometimes privileged one of the titles according to context, in addition, from Claudius (41-54), the title of procurator (administrative and financial responsibility) became more prestigious than the title of prefect (military and police responsibility)¹⁴⁸.

We can therefore check thanks to a chronological reconstruction between 6 BCE and 9 CE, subject to the reservations above, that the events linked with the careers of Quirinius and Varus reported by Josephus, Luke the Evangelist and Roman authors are consistent and complementary. For instance, Tacitus wrote: *On Herod's death, one Simon, without waiting for the approbation of the Emperor, usurped the title of king. He was punished by Quintilius Varus then governor of Syria, and the nation, with its liberties curtailed, was divided into three provinces under the sons of Herod. Under Tiberius all was quiet* (History V:9). Josephus is much more accurate because he wrote that Quintilius Varus was the commandant (*strategou*) of Syria (Jewish Antiquities XVII:250), instead of governor (*hégemón*), however, even if he mentions that Simon usurped the title of king: *In Perea also, Simon, one of the servants to the king, relying upon the handsome appearance and tallness of his body, put a diadem upon his own head also; he also went about with a company of robbers that he had gotten together, and burnt down the royal palace that was at Jericho (...) Gratus cut to pieces Simon himself* (Jewish War II:57-59), he never mentions that Jesus was condemned and put to death by Pilate for having usurped the title of king during his governorship, which occurred under Tiberius (Jewish War II:169-180). Paradoxically these two historians contradict themselves because they could not understand that a religious ruler refuses to support any earthly kingdom, since Tacitus also wrote: *Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil* (Annals XV:44) and Josephus: *Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was a Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day* (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:63-64).

This chronological scheme allows a better understanding of the sequence of events. It appears that the decision to submit the Homonadeis and at the same time to avenge King Amyntas was taken in 6 BCE when the *via Sebaste* was completed. Varus [47 BCE-9 CE] who was 41 years old was appointed by Augustus to the prestigious post of governor of Syria because, although younger than Quirinius [51 BCE-21 CE], he had been consul in 13 BCE, one year before him, and belonged to Roman aristocracy. Quirinius, on the contrary,

¹⁴⁷ F. HURLET – Rome et l'Occident (IIe siècle av. J.-C. – IIe siècle apr. J.-C.) Rennes 2009 Éd. Presses Universitaires de Rennes p. 48.

¹⁴⁸ J.-P. LÉMONON – Ponce Pilate Paris 2007 Éd. Les éditions de l'Atelier pp. 45-59.

was a "new man (*homines novi*)" came from the house which was the most obscure (...) not belonging to the old family of *Sulpicii*, as recalled Tacitus (Annals III:23,48). But he had proved his worth by a victory (in 21/20) in Libya over Marmarides [and Garamantes], according to Latin historians¹⁴⁹, and was appointed as governor of Cilicia to eliminate Isaurian brigands. Varus had to work with Quirinius to make available some of his legions stationed in Syria, a collaboration facilitated by their both belonging to the family of Augustus. Quirinius was then appointed governor of Syria, where he continued his fight against the Itureans brigands. Approximately 3 months after Herod's death (26 January 1 BCE), Sabinus, a financial procurator arrived in Jerusalem to inventory royal properties. However simmering rebellions pushed Herod's sons to ask governor Varus, recently appointed (January 1, 1 BCE), to accelerate taking his office in order to settle the succession and submit the rebels. Quirinius, who had completed his term and his war in Ituraea, therefore played no role in Jewish politics. In addition, Caius Caesar who was the designated successor of Augustus arrived in Syria after receiving full power (from July 1 BCE), which explains his brief foray into Jewish political life. Quirinius was appointed proconsul of Asia (-1/1) and then rector of Caius Caesar when he led operations in Armenia (from 2 to 4 CE), did not play a role anymore in Judea until his appointment in 6 CE as [Supreme] judge and censor of the people to settle the succession of King Herod Archelaus (in 7 CE). Quirinius probably arrived in Judea at the end of year 6 CE because Herod Archelaus who was accused by his brothers of some wrongdoing during his 9th year of reign (from April 6 CE to March 7 CE) according to Josephus (Jewish War II:111) was banished when Aemilius Lepidus and Lucius Arruntius were consuls (from January to December 6 CE) according to Dio Cassius (Roman History LV:27). Given that Quirinius arrived in Judea in the 37th year of Actium (from September 6 CE to August 7 CE), according to Josephus (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:26) and Herod Archelaus left Judea in his 10th year of reign (Jewish Antiquities XVII:342), the period of time had to be around April 7 CE.

year			[A]	[B]				
6	4	I	9	36				
	5	II						
	6	III						
	7	IV						
	8	V						
	9	VI			37	[A] Herod Archelaus sent a delegation to Caesar		
	10	VII				[B] era of Actium (year 37)		
	11	VIII						
	12	IX						
	7	1				X		
		2				XI		
		3			XII			
4		I	10	Quirinius arrived in Judea as [Supreme] judge and censor Judas the Galilean rebelled during the registration (Ac 5:37) by Quirinius of Herod Archelaus' kingdom (Jewish War II:117-118,433).				
5		II		[A] Herod Archelaus banished to Vienna, a city of Gaul (south of Lyons)				
6		III						
7		IV						
8	V							
9	VI							

Logical sequence of events enlightens some choices of former historians. Thus, Josephus preserved facts having implications in the Jewish political life, mainly the manoeuvres of Herodian princes to get power from Roman authorities. Roman historians, on the other hand, retained only military actions from various representatives of the power of Rome and Luke the Evangelist kept the important fact concerning the life of Jesus: the census of Quirinius (ordered by Augustus to show Rome's glory). These three sources of information (political, military and religious) are different in essence which is why they complement each other without crossing.

¹⁴⁹ Works of Florus II:30; PLINE THE ELDER – Natural History V:5:6.

Dating the birth of Jesus

Dionysius the Little (470-544) is known as the inventor of the Anno Domini era, which is used to number the years of both the Gregorian calendar and the Julian calendar. He used it to identify the several Easters in his Easter table, but did not use it to date any historical event. When he devised his table, Julian calendar years were identified by naming the consuls who held office that year — he himself stated that the "present year" was "the consulship of Probus Junior", which he also stated was 525 years "since the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ". Because the anniversary of the Incarnation was 25 March, which was near Easter, a year that was 525 years "since the Incarnation" implied that 525 whole years were completed near that Easter. Consequently one year since the Incarnation would have meant 25 March 1 BC, meaning that Dionysius placed the Incarnation on 25 March 1 BC. Because the birth of Jesus was 9 calendar months later, Dionysius implied (but never stated) that Jesus was born 25 December 1 BC. Using his mathematical equations, Kepler believed he could predict the appearance of the night sky for any day in history, as seen from any place on earth. In December of 1603 he witnessed a Jupiter-Saturn-conjunction, followed by a conjunction of Jupiter-Mars. He then made a rapprochement with the star of the Magi thanks to a Hebrew text of Rabbi Abravanel: *For Jewish astrologers, the Messiah would come from a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces*. Kepler calculated whereas the same conjunction occurred three times in the same year of 7 BC: May 29, October 3 and 4 December. The repetition of this alignment is extremely rare, he concluded that careful observers of the sky such as the Magi were able to notice it, he likened this event with the Star of Bethlehem and thus placed the Nativity in the year 7 BC in his book *De Stella Nova in Pede Serpentarti* (first published in 1605). In his 1605 thesis the Polish historian Laurentius Suslyga was the first to suggest that Christ was born around 4 BC, deriving this from the chronology of Herod the Great. Based on the coincidence of the lunar eclipse of 13 March 4 BC, just after the Fast of Esther of 12 March, Academician Wallon¹⁵⁰ concluded that the 37-year reign of Herod, having started in 40 BC was completed in 4 BC and therefore the birth of Jesus should be set at 25 December 7 BC. This dating without scientific rigor is still (unfortunately) the choice of the French Academy¹⁵¹.

The date of December 25 traditionally associated with the birth of Jesus is without historical (and biblical) foundation, and proposing to set the birth of Jesus in 7 BC is to be ignorant of all the testimonies of historians of the first six centuries who located this birth in 2 BC. The date of December 25 is mentioned for the first time in 204 CE by Hippolytus of Rome (Commentary on Daniel IV:23). This date marked approximately the winter solstice for Romans and the beginning of longer days. It was chosen to symbolize the "birth of the unconquered sun", associated with a "Risen Jesus" by Justin (Apology I:67:8). The clearest evidence that Jesus was not born in December is that the shepherds were in the fields with their flocks on that night (Lk 2:8-12). In Israel the rainy season begins in autumn and at night flocks were sheltered. Kislev the 9th month of the Jewish calendar was cold and rainy (Jr 36:22; Ezr 10:9,13) and Tebeth (December/January) recorded the lowest temperatures of the year, sometimes heights were covered by snow.

The testimonies of the historians of the first six centuries are unanimous in dating the birth of Jesus around 2 BCE:

¹⁵⁰ H. WALLON – Mémoire sur les années de Jésus-Christ

Paris 1858 Ed. Comptes Rendus Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.

¹⁵¹ G. PICARD – La date de naissance de Jésus du point de vue romain

in: *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 139^e année, N. 3, 1995. pp. 799-807.

- Around 148-152, Justin fixed Jesus' birth 150 years earlier (Apology I:46:1).
- Around 170-180, Irenaeus of Lyons situated it in the 41st year of the reign of Octavian (Against Heresies III: 21:3).
- In 204, Hippolytus of Rome dated Jesus' birth on December 25 in the 42nd year of the reign of Augustus (Commentary on Daniel IV:23).
- In 231, Origen dated it in the 41st year of Augustus' reign 15 years before his death (Homilies on Luke 3:1).
- In 325, Eusebius fixed it in the 42nd year of Augustus' reign and 28 years after Cleopatra's death in 30 BCE (Ecclesiastical History I:5:2).
- In 357, Epiphanius dated it in the year when Augustus XIII and Silvanus were consuls (Panarion II:22:3).
- In 418, Paul Orosius dated it in the year 752 of the founding of Rome (Histories against the pagans VI:22.1).

Clement of Alexandria (The Stromata I:21:145) placed the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (December 31, 192 CE) and Tertullian (Against the Jews VIII:11:75) placed it in the 41st year of the reign of Augustus¹⁵² [which began from the second triumvirate of October 43 BCE, made official a few weeks later, according to Appian (Civil Wars IV:5-7), by the law *lex Titia* on November 27, 43 BCE] and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (August 29, 30 BCE)¹⁵³. By combining these data, the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE in a period between September 1 and October 30.

If Christian writers, who were at the center of violent polemics were such poor historians, as some claim, why is it that their opponents did not single out a "mistake" so easy to detect at that time? If this date was false, it could easily have been challenged by historians opponents of Christians (many at that time). Indeed, Christians claimed that Jesus was born during a general registration. At the beginning of our era under Augustus they were carried out every 5 years in the Roman world. It reads: *Now in those days a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited earth to be registered* (Lk 2:1) which therefore places the birth of Jesus during a census decreed by Augustus. Luke refers to a record or an inventory made for determining, among other things: the number of citizens and allies under arms in the words of *Breviarium* and not to an imperial edict for preparing the census tax. In addition, from 18 BCE the census also extended to non-Romans, municipia or colonies of Roman law, as shown in the *lex Irnitana*¹⁵⁴. These censuses are evidenced by the Roman historian Dio Cassius, except the one of 2 BCE, because the part of his history covering the period from 6 BCE to 4 CE has unfortunately been lost. This chronological scheme involves a census in 2 BCE, because the next census is dated on June 4 CE (Cassius Dio LV:13:1-4) and the last one in 14 CE. The general census of Luke in 2 BCE is in agreement with Roman history¹⁵⁵. On the contrary, the local census dated in 7 CE by Josephus does not fit the timeline of general census ordered by Augustus. Since the census of Apamea by Quirinius concerned people and was made in Syria, while the one described by Josephus was a census of goods (to liquidate the possessions of Archelaus) made in Judea, they have no common point, neither in their purpose, or in the area covered. The census of Apamea must be reconciled with that of Luke.

¹⁵² Ancient writers reckoned the reign of Augustus not from January 27 BCE, but from October 43 BCE when Octavian, later Augustus, formed the second triumvirate. The 42nd year of Augustus began (at the end of his 41st year), so in October 2 BCE.

¹⁵³ G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'Empire romain
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard p. 147.

¹⁵⁵ T. CORBISHLEY - Quirinius and the Census : a Re-study of the Evidence
in: Klio 29 (1936) pp. 90-92.

Two elements of *Res Gestae* accredit indirectly an inventory in 2 BCE. If Augustus can boast having given (some *donativa*) 60 deniers to 200,000 persons during his 13th consulate in 2 BCE (*Res Gestae* 15), it is because these persons had been recorded¹⁵⁶, otherwise how could Augustus predict how many? Augustus also boasts of giving 600 million sesterces to the soldiers of Italy and 260 million to the soldiers in the provinces (*Gestae Res* 16). The money given to soldiers in consulates of Lucius Caninius and Quintus Fabricius coincides with the inventory of 2 BCE. Historian Paul Orosius (in 417 CE) also place the census of Augustus quoted by Luke in the year 752 of Rome (Histories against the Pagans VI:22,1; VII:3-4) or 2 BCE, just before Caius Caesar's departure to the East in 1 BCE. The census of 2 BCE was special because it was an 'inventory of the world'. As the program of this inventory (*breviarium totius imperii*) was posted in 2 BCE (*Res Gestae* §35) in the temple of Mars Ultor on May 12, the census would have begun after that date and the birth of Jesus therefore took place after June 2 BCE.

Although Roman emperors were not kings [officially], historians of that time, however, spoke of their years of reign¹⁵⁷, as the Evangelist Luke does. Cassius Dio (Roman History LVIII:27:1-28:5) dated exactly the reign of Tiberius indicating that he ruled the empire 22 years 7 months and 7 days, which places the beginning of his reign from the death of Augustus on August 19, 14 CE, and not from the time of his nomination by the Roman Senate on September 17, 14 CE. Tacitus (*Annals* I:5:1) also confirms that Tiberius became master of the empire at the death of Augustus. Josephus (according to his reckoning, Augustus began to rule after the death of Caesar in 44 BCE) knew this way of dating emperors (*Jewish War* II:168). The first year of Tiberius therefore ran from August 19, 14 CE to August 18, 15 CE. This way of counting the years was usual at that time. Tacitus (*Annals* IV:1:1), for example, parallels the 9th year of Tiberius (from August 19, 22 CE to August 19, 23 CE) with the consulates of C. Asinius and C. Antistius, which are dated from January 1, 23 CE to December 31, 23 CE. Suetonius (*Tiberius* 73:2), after dating the death of Tiberius on March 16, 37 CE, added that he was in the 23rd year of his reign (from August 19, 36 CE to August 18, 37 CE). Suetonius (*Claude* 2:1, 10:1, 45:2) further stated that Claudius was born on August 1, under the consulates of Julius Antonius and Fabius Africanus (in 10 BCE), he became emperor in his 50th year (August 1, 40 CE July 31, 41 CE) and died on October 12, 54 CE in his 64th year (August 1, 54 CE July 31, 55 CE), which was year 14 of his reign (January 24, 54 CE to January 23, 55 CE).

For contemporaries of Luke, the 15th year of Tiberius therefore was running from August 19, 28 CE to August 18, 29 CE. According to this reckoning, the baptism of Jesus, 6 months after the beginning of the preaching of John the Baptist (Lk 1:36), was therefore between February 19, 29 CE and August 18, 29 CE. By inference, if Jesus was 30 years old at this event, his birth must have occurred during the period between February 19 and August 18 in 2 BCE. As Luke says that Jesus was "about 30 years", the word "about", translated from the Greek word *hosei* supposes an approximation. When the classical authors, such as Xenophon (*Anabasis* II:6:20), used this particular expression *hos triakonta* "he was as 30 years," translators render it as "he was around 30." The imprecision of term is usually understood as the nearest whole number, for example: "about 8 days (Luke 9:28)" or "about the 6th hour (Lk 23:44)." For counting years the term "about" means that the number of months can be ignored, there is no exception in the biblical text. Thus "about 30 years" implies a period of "30 years +/- 6 months." This gap of more or less 6 months (12

¹⁵⁶ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 144,278 n.28.

¹⁵⁷ J. FINEGAN - Handbook of Biblical Chronology
Massachusetts 1999 Ed. Hendrickson pp. 340,341.

months at the most) can be explained by two types of counting found in the Bible: after the Exodus appeared a religious reckoning starting the new year from Nisan (Ex 12:2) and a secular reckoning (agricultural) shifted by 6 months, which accounted it from Tishri. In addition, the Seleucid calendar in Syria was shifted by 6 months compared with that of Babylonia. Thus, the expression of "about 100 years" (Rm 4:19) or "100 years +/- 6 months" refers to the "100 years" of Genesis 17:17.

Clement of Alexandria placed the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (December 31, 192 CE) and Tertullian located it in the 41st year of Augustus's reign, which started at his second triumvirate in late October 43 BCE officialised a few weeks later, according to Appian (Civil Wars IV:5-7) by the law *lex Titia* (November 27, 43 BCE), and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (August 29, 30 BCE)¹⁵⁸. By matching all this information the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE within the period between September 1 and October 30. This dating is consistent with the text of Luke 3:1-3, 21-23, which states that John the Baptist began preaching and baptized Jesus (presented as the Messiah) at the age of 30 years, in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

A chronological detail from the book of Luke allows one to fix the exact date of Jesus' birth. Indeed, John the Baptist was born 6 months before Jesus (Lk 1:26) and his conception was announced at the Temple 9 months earlier. This announcement may be dated toward June, because this was the class of Abijah, to which belonged Zechariah father of John the Baptist, who officiated at this time of the year (Lk 1:5-13). The name and the order of classes of priests are very old (1Ch 24:7-18). According to Josephus (Jewish Antiquities VII:365-366), each class officiated a week from the Sabbath to the next Sabbath (1Ch 9:25; 2Ch 23:8), and the Mishna (Sukka 4:7) states that during the great annual festivals the 24 classes served together, which synchronised both cycles of 24 weeks, the first beginning on Nisan and the second on Tishri. A manuscript found at Qumran (4Q321) confirmed the seasonal order of such a calendar¹⁵⁹. The turnover of classes of priests was cyclic in the year; this system worked until the destruction of the Temple in September 70 CE (Tosephta Taanit 2:10 b)¹⁶⁰. The cycle of 24 classes which lasted 24 weeks coincided with the lunar year, as the 1st cycle began after the Passover (Nisan 14 to 21) and lasted 24 weeks and the 2nd cycle began after the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 10 to 21). A period of 6 lunar months lasts exactly 177 days (= 6x29,5), or approximately 25 weeks (25x7 = 175 days). The religious year began on 1 Nisan. As the weeks go from Saturday to Saturday, the 8 days of Passover (Nisan 14 to 21) were overlapping 1 or 2 weeks (depending on the year). Similarly, the calendar year started on 1 Tishri, thus the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 10 to 21) covered 2 or 3 weeks. Therefore, the 24 classes of priests officiated all together on average 2 weeks during the two major festivals (Passover Nisan 14 to 21 and Feast of Tabernacles starting with Yom Kippur from 10 to 21 Tishri), since the solar year of 365 days is 52 weeks (= 24x2 + 2x2).

The conception of John the Baptist occurred after the announcement during the office of the Abijah class and therefore at the beginning of the next class, that of Jeshua. The conception of Jesus is placed 3 months before the end of the gestation of John the Baptist (Lk 1:56). The birth of John the Baptist therefore precedes by exactly 6 months that of Jesus.

Synchronized list of classes of priests:

¹⁵⁸ G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'Empire romain
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 7.

¹⁵⁹ M. WISE, M. ABEGG, E. COOK – Les manuscrits de la mer Morte
Paris 2001 Éd. Plon pp. 388-398.

¹⁶⁰ J. BONSIRVEN – Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siècles
Roma 1955 Ed. Pontificio Istituto Biblico p. 264.

Class of priests	Month	Class of priests	Month
23 Delaiah	[1] Nisan	23 Delaiah	[7] Tishri
24 Maaziah	≈ April	24 Maaziah	≈ October
<i>Feast of Passover</i>		<i>Feast of Tabernacles</i>	
All classes		All classes	
1 Jehoiarib		1 Jehoiarib	
2 Jedaiah	[2] Iyyar	2 Jedaiah	[8] Heshwan
3 Harim	≈ May	3 Harim	≈ November
4 Seorim		4 Seorim	
5 Malchijah		5 Malchijah	
6 Mijamin	[3] Siwan	6 Mijamin	[9] Kislev
7 Haqqoz	≈ June	7 Haqqoz	≈ December
8 Abijah		8 Abijah	
9 Jeshua		9 Jeshua	
10 Shecaniah	[4] Tammuz	10 Shecaniah	[10] Tebeth
11 Eliashib	≈ July	11 Eliashib	≈ January
12 Jakim		12 Jakim	
13 Huppah		13 Huppah	
14 Jeshebab	[5] Ab	14 Jeshebab	[11] Shebat
15 Bilgah	≈ August	15 Bilgah	≈ February
16 Immer		16 Immer	
17 Hezir		17 Hezir	
18 Happizez	[6] Elul	18 Happizez	[12] Adar
19 Pethahiah	≈ September	19 Pethahiah	≈ March
20 Jehezqel		20 Jehezqel	
21 Jachin		21 Jachin	
22 Gamul		22 Gamul	

This previous calendrical information must be combined with the following constraints (which imposes a chronological framework): Sabbaths coincide with Saturdays, Tishri 1 coincides with the 1st visible crescent just after the autumn equinox (September 25 at the time), the duration of human gestation is on average 273 days¹⁶¹ (one can assume that the pregnancies involving John the Baptist and Jesus took place normally) and Jesus was presented in the Temple of Jerusalem 40 days after his birth. Such information requires the following chronological reconstitution:

- Spring equinox in 3 BCE: March 23¹⁶².
- 1st lunar crescent¹⁶³ after spring equinox (= 1st Nisan): Tuesday April 16, 3 BCE.
- Passover on 14 Nisan: Monday April 29, 3 BCE.
- Start of the first cycle of 24 classes on 26 Nisan: Saturday May 11, 3 BCE.
- Class of Abijah (8th week), beginning on 16 Siwan: Saturday June 29, 3 BCE.
- Class of Jeshua (9th week), beginning on 23 Siwan: Saturday July 5, 3 BCE. Beginning of the gestation of John the Baptist (born 273 days later).
- Yom kippur on 10 Tishri: Saturday October 19 (3 BCE).
- Start of the second cycle of 24 classes on 24 Tishri: Saturday November 2, 3 BCE.
- Angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus 6 months after that of John the Baptist on 23 Kislev: Monday December 30, 3 BCE (2 days before the Festival of Dedication). Beginning of the gestation of Jesus (born 273 days later).
- Birth of John the Baptist on 1 Nisan: Saturday April 5, 2 BCE.
- Birth of Jesus on 1 Tishri: Monday September 29, 2 BCE (after 273 days of gestation).

¹⁶¹ C. NAUDIN, N. GRUMBACH – Larousse médical Paris 1995 Éd. Larousse p. 449.

¹⁶² <http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/temps/saisons.php>

¹⁶³ http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/phenomenes/phases_lune/index.php

April -3	16	1	Nisan	Tuesday			1 st lunar crescent after spring equinox
	17	2		Wednesday			
	18	3		Thursday			
	19	4		Friday			
	20	5		Saturday	24		
	21	6		Sunday			
	22	7		Monday			
	23	8		Tuesday			
	24	9		Wednesday			
	25	10		Thursday			
	26	11		Friday			
	27	12		Saturday	T		All classes of priests (Total)
	28	13		Sunday			
	29	14		Monday			Passover
May -3	1	16	Iyyar	Tuesday			
	2	17		Wednesday			
	3	18		Thursday			
	4	19		Friday			
	5	20		Saturday	T		
	6	21		Sunday			
	7	22		Monday			
	8	23		Tuesday			
	9	24		Wednesday			
	10	25		Thursday			
	11	26		Friday			
	12	27		Saturday	1		Class of Jehoiarib (1Chronicles 24:7-18)
	13	28		Sunday			
	14	29		Monday			
	15	30	Sivan	Tuesday			
	16	1		Wednesday			
	17	2		Thursday			
	18	3		Friday			
	19	4		Saturday	2		Class of Jedaiah
	20	5		Sunday			
	21	6		Monday			
	22	7		Tuesday			
	23	8		Wednesday			
	24	9		Thursday			
	25	10		Friday			
	26	11		Saturday	3		Class of Harim
	27	12		Sunday			
	28	13		Monday			
June -3	29	14	Mizkan	Tuesday			
	30	15		Wednesday			
	31	16		Thursday			
	1	17		Friday			
	2	18		Saturday	4		Class of Seorim
	3	19		Sunday			
	4	20		Monday			
	5	21		Tuesday			
	6	22		Wednesday			
	7	23		Thursday			
	8	24		Friday			
	9	25		Saturday	5		Class of Malchijah
	10	26		Sunday			
	11	27		Monday			
12	28	Tuesday					
13	29	Wednesday					
14	1	Thursday					
15	2	Friday					
16	3	Saturday	6		Class of Mijamin		
17	4	Sunday					
18	5	Monday					
19	6	Tuesday					
20	7	Wednesday					
		Thursday					

	21	8		Friday				
	22	9		Saturday	7			Class of Haqqoz
	23	10		Sunday				
	24	11		Monday				
	25	12		Tuesday				
	26	13		Wednesday				
	27	14		Thursday				
	28	15		Friday				
	29	16		Saturday	8			Class of Abijah
	30	17		Sunday				
July -3	1	18		Monday				
	2	19		Tuesday				
	3	20		Wednesday				
	4	21		Thursday				Angel Gabriel announces the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-23)
	5	22		Friday		0		
	6	23		Saturday	9	1	1	Class of Jeshua
	7	24		Sunday		2		
	8	25		Monday		3		
	9	26		Tuesday		4		
	10	27		Wednesday		5		
	11	28		Thursday		6		
	12	29		Friday		7		
		13	30		Saturday	10	8	
	14	1	Tammuz	Sunday		9		
	15	2		Monday		10		
	16	3		Tuesday		11		
	17	4		Wednesday		12		
	18	5		Thursday		13		
	19	6		Friday		14		
	20	7		Saturday	11	15		Class of Eliashib
	21	8		Sunday		16		
	22	9		Monday		17		
	23	10		Tuesday		18		
	24	11		Wednesday		19		
	25	12		Thursday		20		
	26	13		Friday		21		
	27	14		Saturday	12	22		Class of Jakim
	28	15		Sunday		23		
	29	16		Monday		24		
	30	17		Tuesday		25		
	31	18		Wednesday		26		
August -3	1	19		Thursday		27		
	2	20		Friday		28		
	3	21		Saturday	13	29		Class of Huppah
	4	22		Sunday		30	2	
	5	23		Monday		31		
	6	24		Tuesday		32		
	7	25		Wednesday		33		
	8	26		Thursday		34		
	9	27		Friday		35		
	10	28		Saturday	14	36		Class of Jeshebab
	11	29		Sunday		37		
	12	1	Ab	Monday		38		
	13	2		Tuesday		39		
	14	3		Wednesday		40		
	15	4		Thursday		41		
	16	5		Friday		42		
	17	6		Saturday	15	43		Class of Bilgah
	18	7		Sunday		44		
	19	8		Monday		45		
	20	9		Tuesday		46		
	21	10		Wednesday		47		
	22	11		Thursday		48		
	23	12		Friday		49		
	24	13		Saturday	16	50		Class of Immer
	25	14		Sunday		51		

	26	15		Monday		52	
	27	16		Tuesday		53	
	28	17		Wednesday		54	
	29	18		Thursday		55	
	30	19		Friday		56	
	31	20		Saturday	17	57	Class of Hezir
September -3	1	21		Sunday		58	
	2	22		Monday		59	
	3	23		Tuesday		60	3
	4	24		Wednesday		61	
	5	25		Thursday		62	
	6	26		Friday		63	
	7	27		Saturday	18	64	Class of Happizez
	8	28		Sunday		65	
	9	29		Monday		66	
	10	30		Tuesday		67	
	11	1	Elul	Wednesday		68	
	12	2		Thursday		69	
	13	3		Friday		70	
	14	4		Saturday	19	71	Class of Pethahiah
	15	5		Sunday		72	
	16	6		Monday		73	
	17	7		Tuesday		74	
	18	8		Wednesday		75	
	19	9		Thursday		76	
	20	10		Friday		77	
	21	11	Saturday	20	78	Class of Jehzqel	
	22	12	Sunday		79		
	23	13	Monday		80		
	24	14	Tuesday		81		
	25	15	Wednesday		82	Autumn equinox	
	26	16	Thursday		83		
	27	17	Friday		84		
	28	18	Saturday	21	85	Class of Jachin	
	29	19	Sunday		86		
	30	20	Monday		87		
October -3	1	21		Tuesday		88	
	2	22		Wednesday		89	4
	3	23		Thursday		90	
	4	24		Friday		91	
	5	25		Saturday	22	92	Class of Gamul
	6	26		Sunday		93	
	7	27		Monday		94	
	8	28		Tuesday		95	
	9	29		Wednesday		96	New moon
	10	1	Tishri	Thursday		97	
	11	2		Friday		98	
	12	3		Saturday	23	99	Class of Delaiah
	13	4		Sunday		100	
	14	5		Monday		101	
	15	6		Tuesday		102	
	16	7		Wednesday		103	
	17	8		Thursday		104	
	18	9		Friday		105	
	19	10		Saturday	T	106	Yom kippur
	20	11		Sunday		107	
	21	12		Monday		108	
	22	13		Tuesday		109	
	23	14		Wednesday		110	
	24	15		Thursday		111	
	25	16		Friday		112	
	26	17		Saturday	T	113	
	27	18		Sunday		114	
	28	19		Monday		115	
	29	20		Tuesday		116	
	30	21		Wednesday		117	

	31	22		Thursday		118		
November -3	1	23		Friday		119	5	
	2	24		Saturday	1	120		Class of Jehoiarib
	3	25		Sunday		121		
	4	26		Monday		122		
	5	27		Tuesday		123		
	6	28		Wednesday		124		
	7	29		Thursday		125		
	8	30		Friday		126		
	9	1	Heshvan	Saturday		2	127	
	10	2		Sunday	128			
	11	3		Monday	129			
	12	4		Tuesday	130			
	13	5		Wednesday	131			
	14	6		Thursday	132			
	15	7		Friday	133			
	16	8		Saturday	3		134	
	17	9		Sunday		135		
	18	10		Monday		136		
	19	11		Tuesday		137		
	20	12		Wednesday		138		
	21	13		Thursday		139		
	22	14		Friday		140		
	23	15		Saturday		4	141	
	24	16		Sunday	142			
	25	17		Monday	143			
	26	18		Tuesday	144			
	27	19		Wednesday	145			
	28	20		Thursday	146			
	29	21		Friday	147			
	30	22		Saturday	5		148	6
December -3	1	23		Sunday		149		
	2	24		Monday		150		
	3	25		Tuesday	151			
	4	26		Wednesday	152			
	5	27		Thursday	153			
	6	28		Friday	154			
	7	29		Saturday	6	155		Class of Mijamin
	8	1	Kislev	Sunday		156		
	9	2		Monday		157		
	10	3		Tuesday	158			
	11	4		Wednesday	159			
	12	5		Thursday	160			
	13	6		Friday	161			
	14	7		Saturday	7	162		Class of Haqqoz
	15	8		Sunday		163		
16	9		Monday	164				
17	10		Tuesday	165				
18	11		Wednesday	166				
19	12		Thursday	167				
20	13		Friday	168				
21	14		Saturday	8	169		Class of Abijah	
22	15		Sunday		170			
23	16		Monday		171			
24	17		Tuesday	172				
25	18		Wednesday	173				
26	19		Thursday	174				
27	20		Friday	175				
28	21		Saturday	9	176		Class of Jeshua	
29	22		Sunday		177			
30	23		Monday		178	1	Angel Gabriel announces the birth	
31	24		Tuesday	179	2	of Jesus 6 months after that		
January -2	1	25		Wednesday	180	3	of John the Baptist (Luke 1:36)	
	2	26		Thursday	181	4		
	3	27		Friday	182	5		
	4	28		Saturday	183	6	Class of Shecaniah	

	5	29		Sunday		184	7	
	6	30		Monday		185	8	
	7	1	Tebeth	Tuesday		186	9	
	8	2		Wednesday		187	10	
	9	3		Thursday		188	11	
	10	4		Friday		189	12	
	11	5		Saturday	11	190	13	Class of Eliashib
	12	6		Sunday		191	14	
	13	7		Monday		192	15	
	14	8		Tuesday		193	16	
	15	9		Wednesday		194	17	
	16	10		Thursday		195	18	
	17	11	Friday		196	19		
	18	12	Saturday	12	197	20	Class of Jakim	
	19	13	Sunday		198	21		
	20	14	Monday		199	22		
	21	15	Tuesday		200	23		
	22	16	Wednesday		201	24		
	23	17	Thursday		202	25		
	24	18	Friday		203	26		
	25	19	Saturday	13	204	27	Class of Huppah	
	26	20	Sunday		205	28		
	27	21	Monday		206	29		
	28	22	Tuesday		207	30		
	29	23	Wednesday		208	31		
	30	24	Thursday		209	32		
	31	25	Friday		210	33		
February -2	1	26	Saturday	14	211	34	Class of Jeshebab	
	2	27	Sunday		212	35		
	3	28	Monday		213	36		
	4	29	Tuesday		214	37		
	5	1	Shebat	Wednesday		215	38	
	6	2		Thursday		216	39	
	7	3		Friday		217	40	
	8	4		Saturday	15	218	41	Class of Bilgah
	9	5		Sunday		219	42	
	10	6		Monday		220	43	
11	7	Tuesday			221	44		
12	8	Wednesday			222	45		
13	9	Thursday			223	46		
14	10	Friday			224	47		
	15	11	Saturday	16	225	48	Class of Immer	
	16	12	Sunday		226	49		
	17	13	Monday		227	50		
	18	14	Tuesday		228	51		
	19	15	Wednesday		229	52		
	20	16	Thursday		230	53		
	21	17	Friday		231	54		
	22	18	Saturday	17	232	55	Class of Hezir	
	23	19	Sunday		233	56		
	24	20	Monday		234	57		
	25	21	Tuesday		235	58		
	26	22	Wednesday		236	59		
	27	23	Thursday		237	60		
	28	24	Friday		238	61		
March -2	1	25	Saturday	18	239	62	Class of Happizez	
	2	26	Sunday		240	63		
	3	27	Monday		241	64		
	4	28	Tuesday		242	65		
	5	29	Wednesday		243	66		
	6	30	Thursday		244	67		
	7	1	Adar	Friday		245	68	
	8	2		Saturday	19	246	69	Class of Pethahiah
	9	3		Sunday		247	70	
	10	4		Monday		248	71	
	11	5		Tuesday		249	72	

	12	6		Wednesday		250	73	
	13	7		Thursday		251	74	
	14	8		Friday		252	75	
	15	9		Saturday	20	253	76	Class of Jehezqel
	16	10		Sunday		254	77	
	17	11		Monday		255	78	
	18	12		Tuesday		256	79	
	19	13		Wednesday		257	80	
	20	14		Thursday		258	81	
	21	15		Friday		259	82	
	22	16		Saturday	21	260	83	Class of Jachin
	23	17		Sunday		261	84	Spring equinox
	24	18		Monday		262	85	
	25	19		Tuesday		263	86	
	26	20		Wednesday		264	87	
	27	21		Thursday		265	88	
	28	22		Friday		266	89	
	29	23		Saturday	22	267	90	Class of Gamul
	30	24		Sunday		268	91	
	31	25		Monday		269	92	
April -2	1	26		Tuesday		270	93	
	2	27		Wednesday		271	94	
	3	28		Thursday		272	95	
	4	29		Friday		273	96	Birth of John the Baptist
	5	1	Nisan	Saturday	23	1	97	Class of Delaiah
	6	2		Sunday			98	
	7	3		Monday			99	
	8	4		Tuesday			100	
	9	5		Wednesday			101	
	10	6		Thursday			102	
	11	7		Friday			103	
	12	8		Saturday	24		104	Class of Maaziah
	13	9		Sunday			105	
	14	10		Monday			106	
	15	11		Tuesday			107	
	16	12		Wednesday			108	
	17	13		Thursday			109	
	18	14		Friday			110	Passover
	19	15		Saturday	T		111	
	20	16		Sunday			112	
	21	17		Monday			113	
	22	18		Tuesday			114	
	23	19		Wednesday			115	
	24	20		Thursday			116	
	25	21		Friday			117	
	26	22		Saturday	1		118	Class of Jehoiarib
	27	23		Sunday			119	
	28	24		Monday			120	
	29	25		Tuesday			121	
	30	26		Wednesday			122	
May -2	1	27		Thursday			123	
	2	28		Friday			124	
	3	29		Saturday	2		125	Class of Jedaiah
	4	30		Sunday			126	
	5	1	Iyyar	Monday		2	127	
	6	2		Tuesday			128	
	7	3		Wednesday			129	
	8	4		Thursday			130	
	9	5		Friday			131	
	10	6		Saturday	3		132	Class of Harim
	11	7		Sunday			133	
	12	8		Monday			134	Announce of <i>Brevarium</i> in Rome
	13	9		Tuesday			135	
	14	10		Wednesday			136	
	15	11		Thursday			137	
	16	12		Friday			138	

	17	13		Saturday	4	139	Class of Seorim
	18	14		Sunday		140	
	19	15		Monday		141	
	20	16		Tuesday		142	
	21	17		Wednesday		143	
	22	18		Thursday		144	
	23	19		Friday		145	
	24	20		Saturday	5	146	Class of Malchijah
	25	21		Sunday		147	
	26	22		Monday		148	
	27	23		Tuesday		149	
	28	24		Wednesday		150	
	29	25		Thursday		151	
	30	26		Friday		152	
	31	27		Saturday	6	153	Class of Mijamin
June -2	1	28		Sunday		154	
	2	29		Monday		155	
	3	1	Siwan	Tuesday	3	156	
	4	2		Wednesday		157	
	5	3		Thursday		158	
	6	4		Friday		159	
	7	5		Saturday	7	160	Class of Haqqoz
	8	6		Sunday		161	
	9	7		Monday		162	
	10	8		Tuesday		163	
	11	9		Wednesday		164	
	12	10		Thursday		165	
	13	11		Friday		166	
	14	12		Saturday	8	167	Class of Abijah
	15	13		Sunday		168	
	16	14	Monday		169		
	17	15	Tuesday		170		
	18	16	Wednesday		171		
	19	17	Thursday		172		
	20	18	Friday		173		
	21	19	Saturday	9	174	Class of Jeshua	
	22	20	Sunday		175		
	23	21	Monday		176		
	24	22	Tuesday		177		
	25	23	Wednesday		178		
	26	24	Thursday		179		
	27	25	Friday		180		
	28	26	Saturday	10	181	Class of Shecaniah	
	29	27	Sunday		182		
	30	28	Monday		183		
July -2	1	29		Tuesday		184	
	2	30		Wednesday		185	
	3	1	Tammuz	Thursday	4	186	
	4	2		Friday		187	
	5	3		Saturday	11	188	Class of Eliashib
	6	4	Sunday		189		
	7	5	Monday		190		
	8	6		Tuesday		191	
	9	7		Wednesday		192	
	10	8		Thursday		193	
	11	9		Friday		194	
	12	10		Saturday	12	195	Class of Jakim
	13	11		Sunday		196	
	14	12		Monday		197	
	15	13		Tuesday		198	
	16	14		Wednesday		199	
	17	15		Thursday		200	
	18	16		Friday		201	
	19	17		Saturday	13	202	Class of Huppah
	20	18		Sunday		203	
	21	19		Monday		204	

	22	20		Tuesday		205	
	23	21		Wednesday		206	
	24	22		Thursday		207	
	25	23		Friday		208	
	26	24		Saturday	14	209	Class of Jeshebab
	27	25		Sunday		210	
	28	26		Monday		211	
	29	27		Tuesday		212	
	30	28		Wednesday		213	
	31	29		Thursday		214	
August -2	1	1	Ab	Friday	5	215	
	2	2		Saturday	15	216	Class of Bilgah
	3	3		Sunday		217	
	4	4		Monday		218	
	5	5		Tuesday		219	
	6	6		Wednesday		220	
	7	7		Thursday		221	
	8	8		Friday		222	
	9	9		Saturday	16	223	Class of Immer
	10	10		Sunday		224	
	11	11		Monday		225	
	12	12		Tuesday		226	
	13	13		Wednesday		227	
	14	14		Thursday		228	
	15	15		Friday		229	
	16	16		Saturday	17	230	Class of Hezir
	17	17		Sunday		231	
	18	18		Monday		232	
	19	19		Tuesday		233	
	20	20		Wednesday		234	
	21	21		Thursday		235	
	22	22		Friday		236	
	23	23		Saturday	18	237	Class of Happizez
	24	24		Sunday		238	
	25	25		Monday		239	
	26	26		Tuesday		240	
	27	27		Wednesday		241	
	28	28		Thursday		242	
	29	29		Friday		243	
	30	30		Saturday	19	244	Class of Pethahiah
	31	1			Elul	Sunday	6
September -2	1	2	Monday			246	
	2	3	Tuesday			247	
	3	4	Wednesday			248	
	4	5	Thursday			249	
	5	6	Friday			250	
	6	7	Saturday	20		251	Class of Jehezqel
	7	8	Sunday			252	
	8	9	Monday			253	
	9	10	Tuesday			254	
	10	11	Wednesday		255		
11	12	Thursday		256			
12	13	Friday		257			
13	14	Saturday	21	258	Class of Jachin		
14	15	Sunday		259			
15	16	Monday		260			
16	17	Tuesday		261			
17	18	Wednesday		262			
18	19	Thursday		263			
19	20	Friday		264			
20	21	Saturday	22	265	Class of Gamul		
21	22	Sunday		266			
22	23	Monday		267			
23	24	Tuesday		268			
24	25	Wednesday		269			
	25	26		Thursday		270	Autumn equinox

	26	27	Friday			271	
	27	28	Saturday	23		272	Class of Delaiah
	28	29	Sunday			273	
	29	1	Tishri		1	1	Birth of Jesus
	30	2	Tuesday			2	
October -2	1	3	Wednesday			3	
	2	4	Thursday			4	
	3	5	Friday			5	
	4	6	Saturday	24		6	Class of Maaziah
	5	7	Sunday			7	
	6	8	Monday			8	
	7	9	Tuesday			9	
	8	10	Wednesday			10	Yom kippur
	9	11	Thursday			11	
	10	12	Friday			12	
	11	13	Saturday	T		13	
	12	14	Sunday			14	
	13	15	Monday			15	
	14	16	Tuesday			16	
15	17	Wednesday			17		
16	18	Thursday			18		
17	19	Friday			19		
18	20	Saturday	T		20		
19	21	Sunday			21		
20	22	Monday			22		
21	23	Tuesday			23		
22	24	Wednesday			24		
23	25	Thursday			25		
24	26	Friday			26		
25	27	Saturday	1		27	Class of Jehoiarib	
26	28	Sunday			28		
27	29	Monday			29		
28	30	Tuesday			30		
29	1	Heshvan	Wednesday	2		31	
30	2	Thursday				32	
31	3	Friday				33	
November -2	1	4	Saturday	2		34	Class of Jedaiah
	2	5	Sunday			35	
	3	6	Monday			36	
	4	7	Tuesday			37	
	5	8	Wednesday			38	
	6	9	Thursday			39	
	7	10	Friday			40	Presentation in the Temple
	8	11	Saturday	3			Class of Harim
	9	12	Sunday				
	10	13	Monday				
	11	14	Tuesday				
	12	15	Wednesday				
	13	16	Thursday				
	14	17	Friday				
15	18	Saturday	4			Class of Seorim	
16	19	Sunday					
17	20	Monday					
18	21	Tuesday					
19	22	Wednesday					
20	23	Thursday					
21	24	Friday					
22	25	Saturday	5			Class of Malchijah (visit of the Magi)	
23	26	Sunday					
24	27	Monday					
25	28	Tuesday					
26	29	Wednesday					
27	1	Kislev	Thursday	3			
28	2	Friday					
29	3	Saturday	6			Class of Mijamin	
30	4	Sunday					

December -2	1	5		Monday			
	2	6		Tuesday			
	3	7		Wednesday			
	4	8		Thursday			
	5	9		Friday			
	6	10		Saturday	7		Class of Haqqoz
	7	11		Sunday			
	8	12		Monday			
	9	13		Tuesday			
	10	14		Wednesday			
	11	15		Thursday			
	12	16		Friday			
	13	17		Saturday	8		Class of Abijah
	14	18		Sunday			
	15	19		Monday			
	16	20		Tuesday			
	17	21		Wednesday			Beginning of Saturnalia
	18	22		Thursday			
	19	23		Friday			
	20	24		Saturday	9		Class of Jeshua
	21	25		Sunday			Festival of Dedication
	22	26		Monday			
	23	27		Tuesday			Winter solstice
	24	28		Wednesday			
	25	29		Thursday			Murder of newborns
	26	30		Friday			Jesus is 3 months old
January -1	27	1	Tebeth	Saturday	10		Class of Shecaniah
	28	2		Sunday			
	29	3		Monday			
	30	4		Tuesday			
	31	5		Wednesday			
	1	6		Thursday			
2	7		Friday				
3	8		Saturday	11		Class of Eliashib	
4	9		Sunday				
	5	10		Monday			Fast of 10 Tebeth
	6	11		Tuesday			
	7	12		Wednesday			
	8	13		Thursday			
	9	14		Friday			Total lunar eclipse
	10	15		Saturday	12		Class of Jakim
	11	16		Sunday			
	12	17		Monday			
	13	18		Tuesday			
	14	19		Wednesday			
	15	20		Thursday			
	16	21		Friday			
	17	22		Saturday	13		Class of Huppah
	18	23		Sunday			
	19	24		Monday			
	20	25		Tuesday			
	21	26		Wednesday			
	22	27		Thursday			
	23	28		Friday			
	24	29		Saturday	14		Class of Jeshebab
	25	1	Shebat	Sunday			
	26	2		Monday			Death of Herod
	27	3		Tuesday			
	28	4		Wednesday			
	29	5		Thursday			
	30	6		Friday			
	31	7		Saturday	15		Class of Bilgah
February -1	1	8		Sunday			
	2	9		Monday			

According to the Bible, Jesus was born to a family living in Nazareth of Galilee, which, due to the recording ordered by Augustus, had to move to Bethlehem, birthplace of Joseph (Lk 1:26-27, 2:1-4). Arriving in Bethlehem, in late September -2, Mary gave birth to Jesus on September 29 and in accordance with Jewish custom, came up to the Temple in Jerusalem 40 days later (Lk 2:22, Lv 12:1-8) on Friday 7 November -2. Towards the end of November, astrologers, probably coming from Babylon, homeland of astrology (Dn 1:20; 2:27), reached Jerusalem. A few days later, they arrived and saw the baby Jesus, then went back to Babylon but without returning to Jerusalem. Late December, seeing that he had been duped, Herod decided to kill all new-borns in Bethlehem. Jesus' parents, aware of the project, left and went to Egypt. Although the event is terrible it involved only an insignificant town of Judea (Mt 2:6), which would explain the silence of Josephus. In addition, the important festival of Saturnalia would have hidden the murder of a few new-borns. This Roman festival (*Saturnalia*), celebrated on December 17 at winter solstice (December 23), was known in Palestine, according to the Talmud (Aboda zara I:3, 8a), because it was near the Feast of the Dedication (Jn 10:22) on 25 Kislev (December 21 in 2 BCE). Although Herod was unaware of the age of the child, however he knew when the star had appeared, at the beginning of the journey of the astrologers. If they have come from Babylonia on camels (between Babylon and Jerusalem is about 1500 km by road), they had to have spent between 2 and 4 months of journey (Ezr 7:7-9). At that time, 4 to 6 weeks were needed to travel the 500 kilometres from Babylon to Susa¹⁶⁴. Therefore, if the Magi left Babylon at the time of Jesus' birth (September 2 BCE), they would have come to Jerusalem in late November 2 BCE. Based on the estimated travel time and adding delay, Herod had to assess the age of the child with a comfortable safety margin of 2 years prior to order the killing of children (on December 25 in 2 BCE) because the child Jesus must have been 3 months old. The Gospels put in parallel his life with that of Moses, the latter being this age in the same circumstances (Ac 7:19-20). Jesus was born on 1 Tishri, 3 months later lead to December 26 in 2 BCE. Only the Gospels relate that event (Mt 2:1-16) but the fact is plausible because leaders at the time often consulted Chaldeans (also called magi) to know the future¹⁶⁵. Herod died shortly afterwards. Jesus' family was immediately informed and returned to live in Nazareth which allowed them to celebrate the Passover (Mt 2:19-23, Lk 2:39-41) on April 7 in 1 BCE, since the parents of Jesus are presented in the Gospels as pious Jews. The date of Jesus' birth, set on September 29 in 2 BCE, is consistent with the following chronological pieces of information from the well documented Julian reckoning:

- Jesus was born during a general registration (which was a special census)¹⁶⁶ of the Roman Empire. As they were quinquennial (every 5 years) and as these censuses at the beginning of our era are well known because they are dated respectively 4, 9 and 14 CE, it is easy to deduce that the previous one had to have taken place in summer 2 BCE. This coincidence is not accidental because on February 5, 2 BCE, Emperor Augustus became the "Father of the country" and decreed this opportunity to "inventory the world."
- Jesus being about 30 years in the year 15 of Tiberius (in 29 CE) it is still easy to calculate the year of his birth in 2 BCE (= 29 - 30, no year 0).
- The testimonies of the historians of the first six centuries are unanimous in dating the birth of Jesus in 2 BCE.

¹⁶⁴ C. WAERZEGGERS – Babylonians in Susa

in: *Der Achämenidenhof The Achaemenid Court*. Ed. Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, p. 796.

¹⁶⁵ TACITUS Annals II:27:2; XII:22:1. At the birth of Octavian, Nigidius Figulus predicted thanks to stars that he would receive a sovereign power and prevented his father who was afraid to kill him (CASSIUS DIO Roman History XLV:1:1-3). Herod had killed his son Antipater because the latter had wanted to rule preterm (FLAVIUS JOSÉPHUS Jewish Antiquities XVII:185-191).

¹⁶⁶ According to the book of Daniel: *Then shall arise in his place a raiser of taxes [in] the glorious kingdom [Israel]: but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but neither in anger, nor in battle* (Dn 11:20, King James 2000 Bible).

Dating the death of Jesus

Abstract. The dating of Jesus death is well documented in the Gospels as he died on Friday 14 Nisan in 33 CE. This dating is easy to determine since Jesus was baptized in 29 CE (Lk 3:1-23), celebrated 4 Passovers (Jn 1:28-32; 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 12:1) and was killed on Friday 14 Nisan (Jn 16:31). In addition, when he died there was a (partial) lunar eclipse, described as "blood into moon" (Ac 2:20), dated on Friday 3, April 33 CE¹⁶⁷, which was viewed in Jerusalem from 17:50 to 18:30 according to astronomy. Paradoxically, this dating is now disputed, with some preferring the year 30 CE or even 29. Those who challenge the traditional date (33 CE) arbitrarily assume that the Bible contains errors and contradictions. An examination of all the arguments shows instead consistency of chronological data from the Bible and inconsistency of assumptions from opponents. In addition, chronological examination of the famous Messianic prophecy in Daniel 9:25 involves the death of the Messiah on April 3, 33 CE.

The dating of Jesus' death on Friday 3 April 33 CE has long been accepted, both by religious authorities¹⁶⁸ and by historians¹⁶⁹, but it is currently assumed to be in 30 CE by the official Bible of Catholicism (the Jerusalem Bible¹⁷⁰), or even 29 CE by some researchers. The study by Depuydt¹⁷¹ on this subject is representative of the arguments used. He began his study by stating that since the beginning of 20th century the date 29 CE has been almost universally accepted, which is obviously false (moreover in science the truth is not measured in the ratings). He then asserts that evangelical sources are contradictory, some placing the death of Jesus at the beginning of the day and others at the end of the day and then at the beginning of 15 Nisan. In fact this idea arises from a misunderstanding of the biblical reckoning. Passover was to be celebrated on the night of 14 Nisan according to the text of Exodus 12:1-8 and among the Jews, evening (marked by sunset) is prior to morning (Gn 1:5-31) contrary to the Julian calendar in which the morning is prior to the evening. Thus this festival took place at the beginning of 14 Nisan, or at the end of 13 Nisan around 18 hours and not at the end of 14th (and early 15th Nisan).

Meier, in his book: *Jesus, A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, devotes much of his research to determining the exact date of Jesus' death and suggests, too, contradicting the biblical timeline: *As a corollary, I would add two advantages to the solution I propose which contradicts the synoptic chronology*¹⁷². This hypothesis is unlikely, because if Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover on Nisan 13 or 15 they would have been in breach of the official calendar of the Temple, which is inconceivable given the legalism that prevailed at the time¹⁷³. Luke's text gives the time of Jesus' ministry (unlike what Depuydt says) as fixed in the year 15 of Tiberius (Lk 3:1-4,21-23), from 19 August 28 CE to 18 August 29 CE. Jesus' baptism was located 6 months after that of John the Baptist (Lk 1:34-36), between 19 February and 18 August 29 CE. Regarding these texts, a duration of 3 years and 6 months covers the period from the fall of 29 CE to spring 33 CE.

¹⁶⁷ J.P. PRATT – Newton's Date for the Crucifixion
in: *Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society* 32:3 (1991), pp. 301-304.

¹⁶⁸ For example, Pius XI proclaimed the extraordinary Jubilee of 1933 to celebrate the 1900th anniversary of Jesus' death.

¹⁶⁹ G. GOYAU – *Chronologie de l'empire romain*
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 46.

¹⁷⁰ ÉCOLE BIBLIQUE DE JÉRUSALEM – *La Bible de Jérusalem*
Paris 1986 (imprimatur 23 juillet 1973) Éd. Cerf p. 1821.

¹⁷¹ L. DEPUYDT – The Date of Death of Jesus of Nazareth
in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122:3 (2002) pp. 466-480.

¹⁷² J.P. MEIER - Un certain juif Jésus Les données de l'histoire I
Paris 2004 Éd. Cerf pp. 235-262.

¹⁷³ So it is unlikely that the Essenes living away from the Temple and who proposed a dissident schedule have actually practiced it. Indeed, their solar year with only 364 days instead of 365 was out of sync with the observation and would have included 5 days late after only 4 years and so 50 days late after 40 years!

The four gospels describe several events that can be located in time (holidays, seasons, specific periods). The parallel of this data allows the following chronological reconstruction (datable benchmarks are highlighted):

year			Event situated in time	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	
29	15	1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII					
		4	I	Beginning of John the Baptist's ministry (in the 15th year of Tiberius).	3:1-12	1:1-18	3:1-18	1:6-28
		5	II					
		6	III					
		7	IV					
		8	V	Baptism of Jesus (in the 15th year of Tiberius).	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-38	1:32-34
	[16]	9	VI	Jesus, born in -2, is aged about 30 years (29 CE).				
		10	VII	Beginning of Jesus' ministry				
		11	VIII					
		12	IX					
30		1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII					
		4	I	Shrine (<i>naos</i>) built for 46 years. Passover.				2:13-25
		5	II	John the Baptist imprisoned.	4:12	1:14	3:19,20	4:1-3
		6	III	Jesus on the road to Galilee 4 months before harvest				4:35
		7	IV	(month VII) "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."	4:17	1:15	4:14,15	4:44,45
		8	V					
	[17]	9	VI					
		10	VII					
		11	VIII					
		12	IX					
31		1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII	Banquet with tax collectors.	9:9-17	2:13-22	5:27-39	5:1* ¹⁷⁴
		4	I					
		5	II	Disciples tear off some ears (wheat harvest).	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
		6	III					
		7	IV					
		8	V					
	[18]	9	VI					
		10	VII	Death of Sejanus. Imperial policy becomes pro-Jewish.				
		11	VIII	Jesus calms a storm (between August and December).	8:18-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
		12	IX					
32		1	X					
		2	XI	Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist.	14:1-12	6:14-29	9:7-9	
		3	XII	5000 men fed just before the Passover.	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-13
		4	I					
		5	II					
		6	III					
		7	IV	Olympiad 202:4				
		8	V					
	[19]	9	VI					
		10	VII	Teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles (10 Tishri).				7:11-52
		11	VIII	The harvest is great and cultured for 3 years.			10:2 13:7	
		12	IX	Feast of Dedication (25 Kislev).				10:1-39
33		1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII	Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.	21:1-17	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:1,12-19
		4	I	Passover meal on Friday 14 Nisan. Judas was dismissed and establishment of the Last Supper.	26:20,21	14:17,18	22:14-18	
		5	II		26:21-25	14:18-21	22:21-23	13:21-30
		6	III	Pentecost, lunar eclipse mentioned (Acts 2:1, 20)				
		7	IV	Paul becomes a Christian (Galatians 1:15-18, 2:1)				
		8	V					
	[20]	9	VI					
		10	VII					

¹⁷⁴ * This feast of the Jews is likely the festival of Nikanor which occurred on 13 Adar (Jewish Antiquities XII:412; 2M XV:36), as other better known festivals like Passover or the Feast of dedication are always mentioned by name in the text of John.

Paul's conversion to Christianity, shortly after Jesus' death (1Co 15:4-8), had to have occurred in 33 CE. He explains that he spent 3 years in Arabia before going up to Jerusalem after his encounter with the risen Jesus (Gal 1:15-18) and 14 years later he went again to Jerusalem with Barnabas (Gal 2:1). As this second trip is dated in 50 CE¹⁷⁵ with the expulsion of Jews from Rome mentioned at this meeting (Ac 15:1-2,18:1-2), Paul's conversion occurred between July and October of the year 33 (= 50 - [3+14]).

The death of John the Baptist occurred in 32 CE because, according to Josephus, (shortly after) that murder by Herod Antipas a "divine vengeance" would have resulted: destruction of his army by Aretas IV, king of Petra, and death of his brother Herod Philip in the 20th year of Tiberius (33/34) after 37 years of reign (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:106-119). The text of John 2:13-20 also assumes that Jesus' ministry began in 29 CE as it quotes a discussion placed at the first Passover (in 30 CE): *The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem (...) the Jews replied, 'It has taken 46 years to build this sanctuary [naos]'*. The Greek word *naos* means the sanctuary of the Temple and not the Temple itself [*ieron*]. Moreover Josephus (Jewish Antiquities XX:219) states that the Temple [*ieron*] was not yet completed at the time of the procurator Albinus (62-64 CE). Concerning the sanctuary, he writes: *When Herod completed the 17th year of his reign, Caesar came in Syria (...) It was at this time, in the 18th year of his reign, after the events mentioned above, that Herod undertook an extraordinary work: the reconstructing of the temple of God at his own expense (...) the sanctuary [naos] itself was built by the priests in 1 year and 6 months* (Jewish Antiquities XV:354,380,421). Cassius Dio placed the journey of Augustus in Syria in the spring of the year, February/ March, when Marcus Publius Silius and Apuleius were consuls in 20 BCE (Roman History LIV:7:4-6), actually corresponding to the end of the 18th year of Herod (21/20). Thus, the building of the Temple [*ieron*] began in 20 (April) and the building of the sanctuary [*naos*] began to 19 BCE (in October) and was completed in March in 17 BCE because it lasted 1 year and 6 months. For religious reasons, construction of the sanctuary was probably made during the 20th and 21st year of Herod the Great, which were sabbatical and jubilee years. The period of 46 years ending so around April 30 CE (if the 46 years were counted from the construction of the Temple, not the sanctuary, they would have been completed by October 29 CE).

Depuydt asserts that oldest sources set the death of Jesus in 29 CE citing Tertullian (155-222) who dates this death during consulates Rubellius Geminus and Rufius (sic) Geminus. In fact, the earliest source which dates the death of Jesus (in 33 CE) is the Greek historian Phlegon of Tralles who completed in 140 CE his chronology of the most important events dated by Olympiads. Matthew mentions, for example, both an earthquake and surprising darkness (Mt 27:45-54), and not a solar eclipse during the death of Jesus from noon to 3 p.m., the hour of prayer, according to Acts 3:1 (these 3 hours are beyond the duration of a solar eclipse). Several authors report this exceptional darkening. Thallus, a Samaritan historian of the 1st century, said in the third book of his Histories, quoted by Julius Africanus¹⁷⁶ (c. 220 CE): *A most terrible darkness fell over all the world, the rocks were torn apart by an earthquake, and many places both in Judea and the rest of the world were thrown down*. Phlegon of Tralles gives a specific date, reported by Eusebius: *In the 4th year, however, of Olympiad 202, an eclipse of the sun happened, greater and more excellent than any that had happened before it; at the 6th hour, day turned into dark night, so that the stars were seen in the sky, and an*

¹⁷⁵ According to Suetonius: *Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus* (The Live of Claudius XXV:4). Paulus Orosius reads: *In the 9th year of his reign, Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome* (A History, against the Pagans VII:6) and Cassius Dio: [*in 50 CE*] *As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city, he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings* (Roman History LX:6,8).

¹⁷⁶ JULIUS AFRICANUS - Chronographiae Turnhout 1966 Ed. Brepols (Migne) Patrologiae Graecae t. X p. 91.

earthquake in Bithynia toppled many buildings of the city of Nicaea¹⁷⁷. The 4th year of the 202nd Olympiad is from July 32 to June 33 CE, which confirms the date of 3 April 33 CE. This information was considered reliable at the time because Origen (in 248 CE) quoted it to refute Celsus (Against Celsus II:14,33,59), a Greek philosopher very critical of Christianity but familiar with history. Eusebius¹⁷⁸ also stated in his quotation from Phlegon that Jesus began his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius and died 3 years later in the year 18. He gave a more accurate duration of *not quite 4 years* in another of his books (Ecclesiastical History I:10:2). Jerome, who published the chronicle of Eusebius, regarded it as reliable. According to Irenaeus, some heretics propagated (in 177 CE) a period of only 1 year for the ministry of Jesus (Against Heresies II:22:5).

Two elements provided by the Gospels can confirm this dating (3 April 33 CE) by astronomy. The day of the Passover could coincide with any day of the week, but the next day, corresponding to the first day of the feast of unleavened bread was to be a Sabbath (Lv 23:5-7). If this Sabbath (15 Nisan) coincided with the usual Sabbath on Saturday, it was called a "great Sabbath". As Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week of the Jewish system (Jn 19:31; 20:1), on Sunday, he died on Friday 14 Nisan. It is possible to calculate what was the day of the week corresponding to 14 Nisan. Thus the only year for which 14 Nisan falls on a Friday¹⁷⁹ during the period from 27 to 35 CE is the year 33. Depuydt proposes Friday 15 April 29 CE assuming an error of one day on the observation of the 1st crescent, but this is unlikely because one would have to admit that the 1st crescent was seen one day too early, but a new moon is not visible. The day corresponding to 14 Nisan in the 26-36 CE period is as follows:

year	14 Nisan in Julian calendar	Lunar eclipse	Event	
26	Friday 22 March	-		
27	Wednesday 9 April	-		
28	Monday 29 March	-		
29	Saturday 16 April	-	Jesus is baptized	John 1:28-32
30	Wednesday 5 April	-	1 st Passover	John 2:13
31	Monday 26 March	-	2 nd Passover	[John 5:1]
32	Monday 14 April	(no visible in Jerusalem)	3 rd Passover	John 6:4
33	Friday 3 April	OK	4 th Passover	John 12:1
34	Monday 22 March	-		
35	Monday 11 April	-		
36	Friday 30 March	-		

A second confirmation of 33 CE comes from the book of Acts describing celestial phenomena that occurred at the death of Jesus: *The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood* (Acts 2:20), text already describing a lunar eclipse just before the destruction of the first Temple¹⁸⁰ (Jl 3:3-5). Generally, during a lunar eclipse it appears blood-red, which is the most natural explanation of the text of Acts. The Roman historian Quintus Curtius suggests, for example, a lunar eclipse, in terms that illuminate how this phenomenon was perceived at the time (c. 50 CE): *Alexander made in this place, a halt of two days, and the next, gave the order to start. But near the eve of the day, the moon was eclipsing, the brightness of its disk began to disappear, and then a kind of veil of blood came sullyng its light: worried already about the approaches of a*

¹⁷⁷ EUSÈBE - Chronicorum

Paris 1857 Patrologiae Graecae t. XIX Ed. Migne p. 535.

¹⁷⁸ R. HELM – Eusebius Werke

Berlin 1956 Ed. Akademie-Verlag Berlin pp. 174,175.

¹⁷⁹ <http://pagesperso-orange.fr/pgi/julien.htm>

¹⁸⁰ There was a lunar eclipse in 587 BCE on 4 July (13 Tammuz), which coincided with the legal end of bloody sacrifices in the Temple (Daniel 9:27). The Talmud relates that the sacrifices in the Temple ceased on 17 Tammuz because of a total lack of sheep (Mishnah 4:6 Taanit 28b) and the Bible dates the beginning of the fall of Jerusalem from 9 Tammuz (2 Kings 25:1-4).

so terrible accident, the Macedonians were imbued with a deep religious feeling, and fear at the same time. This was against the wishes of the gods, they said, that drew them to the ends of the earth, the rivers were already unaffordable and the stars did not pay more than their former clarity and everywhere they met wastelands, deserts everywhere: and why so much blood? to satisfy the vanity of one man! He disdained his homeland, he disowned his father Philip, and in the pride of his thoughts, aspired to heaven! Sedition would burst, when Alexander, still inaccessible to fear, command chiefs and principal officers of his army to assemble in his tent body and at the same time the Egyptian priests, whom he considered very skilful in knowledge of the sky and stars, to express their opinion. Those knew well that, in the course of time, a series marked by revolutions is accomplished, and that the moon is eclipsed when it passes under the earth, or it is hidden by the sun, but what calculation revealed, they careful avoid sharing with vulgar. At hearing them, the sun is the heavenly body of the Greeks, the moon for the Persians: also, whenever it vanishes, it is to the Persians a portent of ruin and desolation, and they cite to examples of ancient kings of this empire, in which the moon by eclipsing, testified that they were fighting with opponent gods. Nothing so powerfully governs the minds of the multitude that superstition carried, cruel, fickle as any other occasion, when vain ideas of religion dominate, it obeys the priests much better than its leaders. Also, the response of the Egyptians, just published in the army, revived the drooping spirits of hope and confidence (Histories of Alexander the Great IV:10). Curtius gave an accurate description of the eclipse dated 13/VI year 5 of Darius III (20 September 331 BCE) by a Babylonian astronomical tablet (BM 36761), but the alleged Egyptian source of his explanations is actually a truncated quotation from Herodotus (Histories VII:37) because it states that the Persians also sacrificed to the sun and the moon (Histories I:131). Quintus Curtius himself recognized the point: *It was a traditional use among the Persians, not turn on after sunrise, when the day was shining in all its brilliance. The starting signal given by the trumpet, left the tent of the king over the tent, loud enough for everyone could see it, shone like the sun embedded in the crystal (...) then came a chariot dedicated to Jupiter, drawn by white horses, and followed by a courier of an extraordinary size, which is called the messenger of the sun: golden wands and white garments distinguished the conductors of these horses* (Histories of Alexander the Great III: 3). When Curtius explained that a lunar eclipse with a veil of blood cannot be a harbinger of death he expressed the ideas of his time in cultivated circles but also indicated that these eclipses were seen as prescient in popular circles. In the 1st century Josephus shared this view: *do not you disturb yourselves at the quaking of inanimate creatures, nor do you imagine that this earthquake is a sign of another calamity; for such affections of the elements are according to the course of nature, nor does it import any thing further to men, than what mischief it does immediately of itself* (Jewish War I:377). The evangelist Luke, who was a doctor, had to share this scientific view about lunar eclipses (sometimes abnormal darkness is caused by thick clouds made of dust or ash). There was actually a partial eclipse of the moon on Friday 3 April 33, which began towards 3:40 p.m. and was visible in Jerusalem from 5:50 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. It is also, according to astronomical calculations¹⁸¹, the only one falling on Friday¹⁸² between 26 and 36 CE, period of Pilate's legation in Judea:

Tiberius reign	year	14 Nisan: Julian calendar	Lunar eclipse	Event
15/16	29	Saturday 16 April	-	Baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:1-23)
16/17	30	Wednesday 5 April	-	
17/18	31	Monday 26 March	-	
18/19	32	Monday 14 April	(no visible in Jerusalem)	death of John the Baptist
19/20	33	Friday 3 April	OK	death of Jesus
20/21	34	Monday 22 March	-	death of Herod Philip
21/22	35	Monday 11 April	-	

¹⁸¹ <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEcat5/LE0001-0100.html>

The maximum eclipse is at 14:47 UT and its beginning is set 86 minutes earlier, dated in Jerusalem at 15:41 (=14:47 - 86 + 2:20).

¹⁸² J.P. PARISOT, F. SUAGHER - Calendriers et chronologie Paris 1996 Éd. Masson pp. 164-166.

Dates from the lunar calendars are easy to check because the new moon precedes by 1 day (or 2) the 1st day of each month coinciding with the 1st visible crescent. The Hebrew lunar calendar sets the Passover at 14 Nisan, the traditional date of Jesus' death. This date can be back-calculated by astronomy in the period beginning with the ministry of Jesus in the year 15 of Tiberius (29 CE) until the end of the legation of Pontius Pilate (36 CE). Similarly, the lunar eclipse requires us to date in 33 CE the death of Jesus. These two coincidences on the date of Friday 14 Nisan impose on Friday 3 April 33 CE. Mainly thanks to Mark's account it is possible to reconstruct precisely the last days of Jesus' life (in 33 CE):

Calendar	Hourly	Major events of the trial.	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Wednesday 12 Nisan	15 - 18	<i>Annas and Caiaphas looking for a way to condemn Jesus to death, but not during the Passover.</i>	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	
Thursday 13 Nisan	18 - 24	<i>Judas offers Annas and Caiaphas deliver Jesus to them.</i>	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
	24 - 6	Thursday 2 April 33 CE begins after 24:00.				
	6 - 12					
	12 - 15	<i>Preparation of the Passover. The roasting of the lamb (Ex</i>	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
	15 - 18	<i>12:8) lasted from 15:00 to 18:00 (evening).</i>	26:20-21	14:17-21	22:14	
Friday 14 Nisan	18 - 22	<i>Passover meal, then Judas dismissed, institution of the Last Supper. Peter's denial planned, move to the Mount of Olives</i>	26:21-33 26:34-46	14:22-25 14:26-41	22:15-30 22:30-46	13:1-18:1
	22 - 24	<i>Jesus is arrested by the police of Temple, then is brought to Annas, the former high priest, for an investigation into his teaching, then to Caiaphas' home, the high priest in title.</i>	26:47-56 26:57-65	14:42-52 14:53-60	22:47-53 22:54	18:2-11 18:12-23 18:24
	24 - 2	Friday 3 April. <i>The Sanhedrin looks for false testimonies, but there are discrepancies. Caiaphas offers the Sanhedrin the charge of blasphemy, which does not prevail.</i>	26:65-68	14:61-65		
	2 - 6	<i>Peter denies Jesus three times. Second cockcrow.</i>	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:55-65	18:15-27
	6 - 9	<i>The Sanhedrin takes council to put Jesus to death, then delivers him to Pilate (Judas hangs himself then bursts in his fall). Inquiry of Pilate who then sends Jesus to Herod Antipas. After some mockings Herod sends Jesus to Pilate.</i>	27:1-10	15:1-5	22:66-71 23:1-11	18:28-32
	9 - 12	<i>Trial of Pilate: inquiry about the kingship of Jesus. Pilate offers an acquittal which is denied. To save Jesus, Pilate offers the release of Barabbas, a murderer, but the latter is accepted. To release Jesus he has him flogged, but the Jews accuse him of being an accomplice and thus being against Caesar. Pilate washes his hands and agrees to condemn Jesus on the grounds of lese majesty ("King of the Jews").</i>	27:11-23 27:24-31	15:6-19	23:13-23 23:24-43	18:33-40 19:1-22
	12 - 15 Night 1	<i>Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus until the place of execution. Some drugged wine is offered to Jesus, for anesthetizing. He refuses. Abnormal darkness. To refresh him someone offers some sour wine to Jesus who accepts. Death of Jesus at 15h.</i>	27:32-45	15:20-41	23:44-49	19:23-30
	15 - 18 Day 1	<i>Peace Offering of the official Passover at 15h. Josephus of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin and secret follower of Jesus asks Pilate, who accepts, the body of Jesus to put it in his grave. Lunar eclipse of blood (Acts 2:20).</i>	27:46-56 27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:31-41
Saturday 15 Nisan	18 - 24 Night 2	<i>Great Sabbath (Sabbath coinciding with the first day of Unleavened Bread).</i>				(19:31)
	24 - 6	Saturday 4 April.				
	6 - 12 Day 2	<i>At the request of Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate has guarded the grave by soldiers until the 3rd day (Sunday).</i>	27:62-66			
	12 - 18					
Sunday 16 Nisan	18 - 24	Night 3				
	24 - 6	Sunday 5 April.				
	6 - 9 Day 3	<i>Resurrection at the beginning of the 1st day of the week, an angel appears to women. Annas and Caiaphas are informed but they pay the guards in order to say that the body was stolen while they slept.</i>	28:1-15	16:1-2	24:1-14	20:1-18

This reconstruction is based on the assumption of a 1st lunar day coinciding with the 1st visible crescent. Depuydt rightly noted that this observation was delicate and could be flawed by an error of 1 day. However, in this case, there was a delay (due to observation failure) and not an advance of 1 day. Thus, contrary to what we read too often, there is no contradiction or an anachronism among the four Gospel accounts. The only difficulty is an exceptional situation of a great Sabbath (Jn 19:31). In fact, the day before the Sabbath was called the "Preparation" as stated in the text of Mark 15:42, and the eve of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15 to 21), coinciding with Passover, was also called the "Preparation". Context helps us to understand what we were talking about preparation: *Now it was preparation of the Passover (...) Then the Jews, since it was Preparation, in order that the bodies might not remain upon the torture stakes on the Sabbath, for the day of that Sabbath was a great one (...) There, then, on account of the preparation of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the memorial tomb was nearby* (Jn 19:14,31,42). In these passages, Preparation coincides with Passover and thus refers to the preparation of the Sabbath to come and not the preparation of the Passover itself which had taken place the previous day (13 Nisan).

Another text has often been misunderstood, it is John 18:28: *It was now early in the day. But they themselves did not enter into the governor's palace, that they might not get defiled but might eat the Passover*, which suggests that Jesus and his disciples had celebrated this festival with a day in advance. In fact, the Talmud (Pesachim 6:3) states that the Passover included the paschal lamb, consumed at the beginning of 14 Nisan (after sunset) and a "sacrifice of peace" consumed during the day of 14 Nisan, at 15:00 after the prayer (Ac 3:1). It is this sacrifice (not required by the Mosaic law) that the text mentions. As the Passover was celebrated in the home and the sacrifice of peace was brought to the Temple, it is the latter which came primarily to designate the festival itself. This point also explains the apparent anachronism observed in the trial of Jesus reported by the Talmud: *On the eve of the Passover Yesbu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.'* But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover! — Ulla retorted: Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not an enticer, concerning whom Scripture says, Neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him (Dt 13:6-9)? With Yesbu however it was different, for he was connected with the government. Our Rabbis taught: Yesbu had five disciples, Matthai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni and Todah (Sanhedrin 43a). This condemnation of Jesus refers to the trial before the Sanhedrin for blasphemy, involving stoning, and not the trial before Pilate for lese majesty involving crucifixion. This condemnation (stoning!) was actually considered the day of the peace offering which was marking the Temple Passover.

Most alleged anachronisms in the course of the Passover in the Gospel accounts come from interpretations based on later readings do not reflect the situation of the first century, some controversies are even artificial. For example, the determination of the day for the sacrifice of the paschal lamb is presented as problematic as it was to take place "between the two evenings", but there is no controversy about this in the Talmud. Again the lack of controversy before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE proves the interpretation of the "litigious" passage was evident at this time. Indeed, we read: *You may pick from the young rams or from the goats. And it must continue under safeguard by you until the 14th day of this month, and the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel must slaughter it between the two evenings. And they must take some of the blood and splash it upon the two doorposts and the upper part of the doorway belonging to the houses in which they will eat it. And they must eat the flesh on this night. They should eat it roasted with fire and with unfermented cakes along with bitter greens* (Ex 12:5-8). Since the Jews were to eat

roast lamb the night of Nisan 14, its immolation and preparation had necessarily occurred before that night, so between the previous evening or sunset (13th Nisan) and the evening of 14 Nisan. The precision "between the two evenings" was useful for two reasons: the preservation of meat and blood was restricted to a maximum period of 24 hours for hygiene reasons and the preparation should not encroach on the feast itself. The only discussions that are found in the Talmud are the following: if Passover fell on a Sabbath what can be prepared, at what time the preparation of the Passover has to start and at what time sacrifices may be offered to the Temple? It reads¹⁸³: *If Nisan 14 occurred on the Sabbath we must remove everything that needs to be done before the Sabbath, according to Rabbi Meir; the sages say: in its time. Rabbi Eleazar ben Zadok: sacred sampling before the Sabbath, profane foods in their time (...) The sages say: in Judea one worked on the eve of Passover until noon, but in Galilee they did absolutely nothing; about at night, Shammaites prohibited work, Hillelites permitted until sunrise (...) The evening daily sacrifice was slain at eight and a half [14:30] and offered to nine and a half [15:30]. On the eve of Passover they advanced all one hour that it was an ordinary day or a Sabbath. If the eve of Passover falls on a Sabbath day, they kill at six and a half [12:30] and one offers at seven and a half [13:30] and then (they slaughter) the Passover. Rabbi Ishmael ensures that follows the same week and the Sabbath, Rabbi Akiba is that the order followed the Sabbath is the same as the day before Passover falling one day before the Sabbath; the reason of the latter, one must leave room for the daily sacrifice (...) We offer a victim festival at the same time as lamb when it is sacrificed on a weekday (...) on the eve of Passover, close to the sacrifice of the afternoon [15:00], we do not eat anything until the night [from 18:00] (...) We must eat it the night before midnight [24:00].* These comments relate only to the time, not to the day, showing that the legislation of that time was not fixed. Jewish writers of the first century, such as Philo of Alexandria (Questions and Answers on Exodus I:11) and Josephus confirm that the offering of the sacrifice of peace was used to designate the day of the Passover: *When came the feast called Passover, during which Jews offer sacrifices from the 9th to the 11th hour [15:00 to 17:00]* (Jewish War VI:423). The preparation of the Passover, on Thursday afternoon, was seen as part of the festival since we read in the Book of Jubilees¹⁸⁴ (c. 160-150): *Let the Israelites come and observe the Passover on the correct day, on the 14th day of the 1st month, between the evenings, from the 3rd part of the day [14:00-18:00, Nisan 13] to the 3rd part of the night [2:00-6:00, Nisan 14], as two parts of the day are given to the light, and a 3rd part to the evening (...) They are to eat at evening [18:00], until the 3rd part of the night [2:00-6:00]* (Book of Jubilees 49:10-11). This conception of the "preparation" explains the apparent anomaly of the text of Mark: *Now the Passover and the [festival of] unleavened bread was two days later (...) Now on the first day of unleavened bread, when they customarily sacrificed the Passover [victim], his disciples said to him: Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?* (Mk 14:1,12). The Gospel writer therefore considered that the Passover marked the beginning of the festival of unleavened bread, as confirmed by Josephus at this time, because this festival started in practice with the preparation of that day: *The feast of unleavened bread we call "Passover" (...) When came the day of unleavened bread, the 14th of the month Xanthicus [Nisan]* (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:29; Jewish War V:99).

Some texts, such as Mark 15:25, are blown out of proportion to affirm¹⁸⁵ "chronological inconsistencies": *it was now the 3rd hour when they impaled him* when it is stated a little further in verses 33 and 34: *When it became the 6th hour a darkness fell over the whole land until the 9th hour. And at the 9th hour Jesus called out with a loud voice. Jesus was nailed at the 6th hour [12:00], not the 3rd hour, and then died at the 9th hour [15:00].* Mark's text therefore refers to

¹⁸³ J. BONSIRVEN - Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siècles
Roma 1985 Ed. Pontificio Istituto Biblico pp. 200-218.

¹⁸⁴ J.C. VANDERKAM – The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text
Louvain 1989 Ed. E. Peeters.

¹⁸⁵ R.E. BROWN – La mort du Messie. Encyclopédie de la passion du Christ.
Paris 1994 Éd. Bayard pp. 938, 939.

the 3rd hour of the trial before Pilate (who started around 9 am, after his return to Herod) and not the 3rd hour of the day [9:00] to emphasize the duration of harsh treatment inflicted on Jesus in verse 15 (Roman flogging)¹⁸⁶. Furthermore, in verse 21, we learn that Simon of Cyrene came from the field (late morning) when he was requisitioned to help Jesus carry his gallows to his place of torment. Darkness which began at noon coinciding with the killing of Jesus can be found in the text of Amos 8:9: *it must occur in that day, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, that I will make the sun go down at high noon, and I will cause darkness for the land on a bright day.* This precision allows us to understand the amazing reckoning of Matthew 12:40 giving the length of the funeral stay of Jesus: *For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish 3 days and 3 nights, so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth 3 days and 3 nights.* As Jesus died on Friday at 15:00 and rose on Sunday around 6:00 he only stayed 39 hours in death, not 72 hours (= 3x24h), but there is actually a total of 3 days and 3 nights¹⁸⁷.

Brown¹⁸⁸ spent a long excursus to the dating of Jesus' death, he explains why the final date of Friday 3 April 33 CE that should have been imposed was however rejected: *If we exclude 27, not only astronomically low, but premature for the death of Jesus in the light of almost all the information on the evangelical life and ministry listed above, this leaves two possibilities for the Nisan 14 be a Friday, that is to say, on 7 April 30 and 3 April 33 (Julian calendar). It is a general tendency to reject 33 because this would imply a Jesus too old and too long a ministry as it would have been almost 40 years old at his death, after a ministry of about 4 years. If he died in 30, he would have been 36 years old and have had a ministry of a little less than 2 years. No date meets all indices of evangelical details about the birth and ministry of Jesus, but as many of these details are approximate and theological referred, I see no problem with these two dates. Somehow the political situation in 33 (after the fall of Sejanus in Rome on October 31) better explain the vulnerability of Pilate to pressure from the people, but this is an argument too uncertain to justify a preference.* The date 33 CE is mainly rejected because of the expected date of birth in 7 BCE, which is false! Error causes error. The second reason for some to reject the historical data of the biblical text is, in the words of Brown, that: *many of these details are approximate and theological referred, in particular concerning the scandalous trial of Jesus.* In fact, evidence for dating the time of Jesus' birth (Monday 29 September 2 BCE) and those describing the trial are very precise, contrary to the disillusioned assertion of Brown. Similarly, his remark about Sejanus is removed too quickly. In fact, the veiled threat from the Jewish authorities to appeal to Caesar against Pilate (Jn 19:12) well supported that date, because this threat was likely to be understood. Yet, according to Philo of Alexandria, after the death of Sejanus in October 31 CE, Tiberius asked provincial governors to be considerate to the Jews, because the charges against them in the past [before 32 CE] were false (Legation to Gaius 159-161). This remark implies situating the trial of Jesus after 32 CE. Some commentators propose to situate Jesus' death in 30 CE because, according to a text of the Talmud, the Temple of Jerusalem was disapproved (by God) from this date: *Our Rabbis taught: During the last 40 years before the destruction of the Temple [in 70 CE] the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Sanctuary would open by themselves, until R. Johanan b. Zakkai rebuked them, saying: Sanctuary, Sanctuary, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself? I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Ido has already prophesied concerning thee: Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars (Yoma 39b).* This text does not mention the

¹⁸⁶ The usual instrument was a short whip (*flagrum* or *flagellum*) with several leather straps of unequal length, plaited or not, which were set at intervals of small metal balls or splinters of bone sheep especially sharp.

¹⁸⁷ Night 1: Friday 14 Nisan from 12h to 15h (miraculous night); Day 1: Friday 14 Nisan from 15h to 18h; Night 2: Saturday 15 Nisan from 18h to 6h; Day 2: Saturday 15 Nisan from 6h to 18h; Night 3: Sunday 16 Nisan from 18h to 6h; Day 3: 16 Nisan from 6h to 18h.

¹⁸⁸ R.E. BROWN – La mort du Messie. Encyclopédie de la passion du Christ. Paris 1994 Éd. Bayard pp. 1485-1516.

death of the Messiah, though the Gospels confirm the rejection of the temple from this date: *Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those selling cattle and sheep and doves and the money brokers in their seats. So, after making a whip of ropes, he drove all those with the sheep and cattle out of the temple, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he said to those selling the doves: Take these things away from here! Stop making the house of my Father a house of merchandise! His disciples called to mind that it is written: The zeal for your house will eat me up. Therefore, in answer, the Jews said to him: What sign have you to show us, since you are doing these things? In answer Jesus said to them: Break down this sanctuary [naos], and in 3 days I will raise it up. Therefore the Jews said: This sanctuary [naos] was built in 46 years, and will you raise it up in 3 days? But he was talking about the sanctuary [naos] of his body (Jn 2:13-21). There is clearly a misunderstanding about the identification of the "sanctuary" or "Most Holy". According to the Christian interpretation, the sanctuary (Most Holy for the Jews) became incarnate in Jesus from his baptism in 29 CE and therefore the destruction of this "sanctuary" lasted 3 days (from 14 to 16 Nisan 33). The temple [ieron] of Jerusalem, including the former sanctuary [naos] deprecated, would be permanently destroyed in 70.*

Luke's text gives more details about the baptism of Jesus because it was an important event from a chronological point of view: *In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (...) Now as the people were in expectation and all were reasoning in their hearts about John: May he perhaps be the Christ? (...) Jesus himself, when he commenced [his work], was about 30 years old (Lk 3:1,15,23). According to this text, Jesus appeared as the Messiah at his baptism (the word Messiah means "anointed" in Hebrew and was translated into Greek by Christ) in the 15th year of Tiberius (19 August 28 to 18 August 29 CE) when he was about 30 years old (in fact 29 years and 6 months). As he was born on 29 September 2 BCE, he was exactly 30 on 29 September 29 CE, which involves attaching his baptism at the end of the 15th year of Tiberius. Luke's text makes it possible to date Jesus' baptism around August 29 CE. He also indicates that at this time the people were waiting for the Messiah¹⁸⁹. The historian Josephus also explains: *Now it is fitting to relate certain things about this man (Daniel) which one may greatly wonder at hearing, namely that all things happened to him in a marvellously fortunate way as to one of the greatest prophets and during his lifetime he received honour and esteem from kings and people, and, since his death, his memory lives on eternally. For the books which he wrote and left behind are still read by us even now, and we are convinced by them that Daniel spoke with God, for he was not only wont to prophesy future things, as did the other prophets, but he also fixed the time at which these would come to pass. And, whereas the other prophets foretold disasters and were for that reason in disfavour with kings and people, Daniel was a prophet of good tidings to them, so that through the auspiciousness of his predictions he attracted the goodwill of all, while from their realization he gained credit among the multitude for his truthfulness and at the same time won their esteem for his divine power. And he left behind writings in which he has made plain to us the accuracy and faithfulness to truth of his prophecies (...) And there would arise from their number a certain king who would make war on the Jewish nation and their laws, deprive them of the form of government based on these laws, spoil the temple and prevent the sacrifices from being offered for 3 years. And these misfortunes our nation did in fact come to experience under Antiochus Epiphanes, just as Daniel many years before saw and wrote that they would happen. In the same manner Daniel also wrote about the empire of the Romans and that Jerusalem would be taken by them and the temple laid waste. All these things, as God revealed them to him, he left behind in his writings, so that those who read them and observe how they have come to pass must wonder at Daniel's having been so honoured by God, and learn from these facts how mistaken are the Epicureans, who exclude Providence from human life and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs (Jewish Antiquities X:266-276).**

¹⁸⁹ A. PAUL - Le concept de prophétie biblique Flavius Josèphe et Daniel
in: Recherches de Sciences Religieuses Tome 63 Paris 1975 pp. 367-384.

Death of the Messiah: a prophetic date

According to a Jewish comment on the Messiah of Daniel 9:26, found at Qumran (dated beginning of our era), the Messiah suppressed after the 62 weeks is the messenger announcing the good news, described in Isaiah 61:2. According to other comments¹⁹⁰, David's Messiah had to fulfil the prophecy of Genesis 49:10, announcing that he would be a king from the tribe of Judah, that the Targums of Onkelos and Jerusalem confirm that Shilo "*It is to him*" would be a king identical to the liberating messiah. Influenced by nationalism, some Jews (from 167 BCE) assimilated the Messiah to the high priest Onias III (1M 1:54), to the extent that the translators of the Septuagint modified the book of Daniel¹⁹¹ to make it stick to these events. Jesus did not adhere to this identification (Mt 24:15) because, unlike some Hellenized Jews of his time who saw this event in the past, he announced it for the future: *When you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place, let the reader use discernment.*

In the first century Messianic expectations were high mainly because of the text of Daniel¹⁹². Today, Jews (mostly) no longer expect a messiah, some of them are hoping for the coming of a collective Messiah (the State of Israel) and not a single messiah. In the preface of the Bible written by the French rabbinate Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan of France, we read: *But of all the prophecies contained in the Book, it is one that is often mentioned. It refers to the resurrection of the State of Israel. When, in November 1947, the United Nations decided to create a Jewish state, event, for many believers, appeared in a supra-terrestrial perspective. Many predictions announced — and for millennia — this back from Israel on the ancestral land that they could not help perceiving the historic vote in a striking demonstration of divine action in the world. In addition, after the proclamation of independence of Israel (14 May 1948), which was a Sabbath, the liturgical cycle, by a coincidence which deserves to be remembered, as stated the Haphtara text of Amos where could read: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when ... I restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they will restore their destroyed cities and established there, shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, cultivate gardens and eat their fruit.* What about such a political recovery of Old Testament Messianic prophecies? This Jewish interpretation, which is quite late, is due to the great figure of Judaism Rabbi Shlomo Yitshaqi called Rashi of Troyes (1040-1105) who changed his understanding of chapter 53 of Isaiah at the end of his life. Indeed, he thought, like all Jews before him, that the text had to apply to an individual messiah, but struck by the terrible massacres among the Jewish community in the Rhineland as a result of the First Crusade in 1096, he thought he saw in this terrible suffering the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53 that he applied to Israel considered as a collective messiah. This original explanation contradicts the teachings of all the rabbis (without exception) who always taught the coming of an individual Messiah (based on the Biblical chronology about the coming of the Messiah). Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) also recalls in his 13 principles founding the Jewish faith that he who does not believe in the Messiah as a future king from the house of David has denied God¹⁹³.

According to the text of Micah 5:1-2, the Messiah would come from the city called Bethlehem Ephrathah, implying an individual messiah. This understanding is confirmed by

¹⁹⁰ M. WISE, M. ABEGG JR., E. COOK - Les manuscrits de la mer morte
Paris 2001 Éd. Plon p. 171, 340, 600.

¹⁹¹ H. COUSIN - La Bible grecque
in: supplément aux Cahiers Évangile 74 St. Étienne 1990 Éd. Cerf pp.105-111
S. PACE JEANSONNE - The Old Greek Translation of Daniel 7-12
Washington 1988 Ed The Catholic Biblical Association of America pp. 29,125

¹⁹² P. GRELOT - L'espérance juive à l'heure de Jésus
in: collection «Jésus et Jésus-Christ» n°62, 1994 Éd. Desclée.

¹⁹³ M. MAÏMONIDE - Épitres (traduit de l'hébreu par Jean de Hulster)
Paris 1983 Éd. Gallimard (Verdier) pp. 193-195.

the text of Matthew 2:2-6 and the Targum of Mika which says: *unto thee [Bethlehem] Messiah will come out before me*. Moreover, in the two major Jewish prayers Messiah is invoked. In the fourteenth blessing of the Tephilla it is said: *Be merciful, Y., our God (...) to your people Israel (...) and the reign of the house of David, Messiah of righteousness*. The Kaddish says: *May he introduce his Messiah and may he redeem his people*¹⁹⁴. This understanding of an individual messiah led many Jews to calculate the time of his coming, especially at the beginning of our era. For example, the famous Rabbi Akiba believed to see in Bar Kohkba (killed in 135 CE) the awaited Messiah (Talmud Ta'anit 68d).

The identification of the Messiah depends primarily on the biblical chronology indicating at what time he would appear. Thus, it is in this way that the Jews and the Christians decided in 1263 to settle this old controversy that opposed them during the famous Barcelona dispute through the debate organized by the King of Spain between Paul Christiani, a Jew converted to Catholicism and Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides), one of the highest authorities of Spanish Judaism. As we know¹⁹⁵, there was no agreement on the interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel, because to Christiani the Messiah had to appear in 70 during the destruction of the Temple (!) while Nahmanides prophesied his coming for 1358 (!). These two famous protagonists are clearly wrong. For Christians, Jesus is the Messiah, who died in 33 while in 1358 no messiah appeared, no more than in 70 (Josephus predicted for Titus, son of Vespasian, a messianic destiny as future king of the world). Given their importance, the arguments of this controversy deserve to be reviewed. The Talmud (Megillah 3a) states that when the Targum of the Prophets (containing Daniel) was composed by Yonatan ben Uzziel, a *bat qol* (heavenly voice) was heard saying: *Who is the one who revealed my secrets to men?* The author replied that he had not done it for his honour, but for God's honour, in order that divisions would not multiply in Israel. He wanted to publish the Targum of hagiographers, but the *bat qol* said: *Enough is revealed because here is the term (date of arrival) of the Messiah*.

In 1263 the protagonists in the debate accepted the prophecy of weeks of years of Daniel chapter 9 as referring to the time of the appearance of the Messiah, but this is no longer the case today (which further complicates things). By viewing comments of current translators, one notices that for many biblical scholars:

- The book of Daniel was written by an anonymous author shortly after 167 BCE.
- The Messiah from Daniel 9:26 would designate the high priest Onias III murdered into 172 BCE by Antiochus IV Epiphanes¹⁹⁶.

DANIEL, DID HE WRITE THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Since the advent of source criticism then literary criticism which is closely related, many experts believe (although there are a multitude of "chapters") as the books of the Bible follow a sort of literary Darwinism, that is to say that "various sources more or less old" were gradually amalgamated by an author (or authors) more or less skilfully. What are the arguments that allow a conclusion so categorical? The text of Daniel 7:1 says that Daniel wrote his book! Similarly, the text of Exodus 17:14 (and 34:27) says that Moses was the author of the work that is assigned to him. These statements are they authentic? The main arguments of the critics are threefold: If a document has a word which appeared at a given time, the entire document had to appear, at the earliest, from this time. The book of Daniel

¹⁹⁴ J. BONSIRVEN - Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siècles
Roma 1985 Ed. Pontificio Istituto Biblico pp.2,3.

¹⁹⁵ NAHMANIDE - La dispute de Barcelone
in: collection «Les Dix Paroles» 1984 Éd. Verdier pp.45-47.

¹⁹⁶ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandrie à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique
Paris 2001 Éd. Fayard p. 344

contains Greek words appearing in the 2nd century BCE, It would therefore be of this time. A recent document is always a copy, more or less well made, from an old document (or more). The book of Daniel evoking Babylon, it would have drawn its sources in Babylonian stories. Miracles are, from a rational point of view and in principle, impossible. "*The abomination that causes desolation*" mentioned in Daniel 11:31 is identified in the book of Maccabees (c. -100) with the desecration of the Temple by Antochius IV in 167 BCE (1M 1:54). Biblical scholars conclude that this prophecy must have been written after the described event (prophecy being postulated impossible) and therefore assume a date of writing of the book of Daniel in the period 167-164. These three objections may be refuted. The first is based on ignorance. The Hebrew word *pardes* "park", which appears 3 times in the Bible (Ct 4:13; Ec 2:5, Ne 2:8), would derive from the Greek word *paradeisos* and as this word appears for the first time, among known texts, in the narrative of Xenophon (Anabasis 6,29,4-8), written around 400 BCE, some conclude that the books of the Bible could have not been written prior to this time. Subsequent studies have shown that the Greek word *paradeisos* comes from Old Persian (c. -600). Thus a dating based only on the very limited knowledge we have over the history of ancient languages is often speculative¹⁹⁷. For example, according to a reference dictionary¹⁹⁸, the words *ketem* "gold" (Job 28:16,19), *pardes* "park" and *karoz* "herald" (Dn 3:4) are late since *pardes* and *karoz* have been borrowed from Greek. However, according to a later dictionary¹⁹⁹, these rare words already existed in Akkadian: *kutîmu* from the Sumerian KU-DIM "goldsmith" (c. -2000), *pardêsu* "enclosure" from the Old Persian *pari-dîdâ* "low wall around" and *kirenzi* "proclamation" would be borrowed from the Hurrian language (c. -1500). In a further study²⁰⁰, the Old Persian *pari-dîdâ* would come from the Median *pari-daiza*, a language spoken in Ecbatana which began around 1000 BCE²⁰¹. Former assertions of anachronisms are now anachronistic and were actually based on an illusion, missing words were in fact hibernating words²⁰². In the present state of our knowledge there are only three words: zither, lute and bagpipe in Daniel 3:5, which would have a Greek origin and would have arisen after 400 BCE. Even this assumption is questionable because the Hebrew word *sûmponyâ* "bagpipe", Greek *sumphônia*, already appears as *sumphônos* in Pythian Ode 1:70, dated 460 BCE, at the time of Ezra.

Rewriting by Ezra the scribe of all the biblical books (originally in paleo-Hebrew) into Aramaic (Talmud Sanhedrin 21b), complicates text criticism. Ezra (485-400?) was a contemporary of Nehemiah, he wrote his book around 405. Indeed, Darius the Persian mentioned in Nehemiah 12:22 is identified with Darius II (called Ochos or Nothos), who reigned from 423 to 405. Thus, if Nehemiah was able to recount this, he wrote it after the beginning of Darius II's reign (after 423 BCE). In addition, in a letter found among the Elephantine papyri (dated 408 BCE)²⁰³, it is mentioned that Johanan was high priest in Jerusalem at that time. But again, if Nehemiah recounts this fact he had to have written it

¹⁹⁷ P. GUILLEMETTE M. BRISEBOIS - Introduction aux méthodes historico-critique in: Héritage et projet 35 Québec 1987 Éd.Fides pp. 287-300

¹⁹⁸ F. BROWN, S.R. DRIVER, C.A. BRIGGS – A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament Oxford 1951 Ed. Oxford University pp. 508, 825, 1097.

¹⁹⁹ J. BLACK, A. GEORGE, N. POSTGATE – A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian Wiesbaden 2000 Ed.Harrassowitz Verlag pp. 159, 171, 266.

²⁰⁰ P. LECOQ – Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide Paris 1997 Éd. Gallimard p. 116.

²⁰¹ F. JOANNÈS – Dictionnaire de la civilisation mésopotamienne Paris 2001 Éd. Robet Laffont p. 517.

²⁰² A.R. MILLARD - The Tell Fekheriyeh Inscriptions in: Biblical Archaeology Today 1990. Jerusalem 1993, Ed. Israel Exploration Society p. 523

A.R. MILLARD - A Lexical Illusion in: *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986) pp. 1-3.

²⁰³ A. COWLEY -Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C. Oxford 1923 N°30-31, pp.108-122

after 408 BCE. If Nehemiah was able to describe the succession of high priests until the end of the reign of Darius II, he had to have finished his book around 405 BCE. In addition, it is likely, according to Jewish tradition, that Ezra began his work as a copyist at the age of 30, acquiring over the years a great reputation. It also seems logical to assume that he wrote his own book at the end of his life, or at the same time as Nehemiah. Ezra probably copied the entire Bible over a period ranging from 455 (20th year of Artaxerxes) to 405 (last year of Darius II), which may explain the anachronistic presence of certain words. Ezra had to update some technical terms. The word *daric* (1Ch 29:7), for example, is anachronistic since this monetary unit appearing only after 520 BCE was unknown at the time of David, four centuries earlier. Ezra obviously made a conversion of an old unit into an other more common and familiar at his time (Ezr 8:27). The historian Xenophon (428-355) commits the same "anachronism" in his book on Cyrus (Cyropaedia V:2)! Thus, concluding that the book of Daniel was written in the 2nd century BCE, only because of 3 words considered late, generates unexplainable paradoxes. It is generally accepted that the book of Ezekiel was written in the early 6th century BCE. However, this book quotes the prophet Daniel, proving that he already had a great reputation at that time (Ezk 14:14,20, 28:3). How then can we explain this anachronism? In addition, Aramaic used in Daniel²⁰⁴ is very similar to that used by Ezekiel or Ezra (Empire Aramaic mostly used from 600 to 330), well before the Aramaic of the Qumran scrolls written in this language and dated to the 2nd century BCE. In fact, one could reverse the argument: how do you explain that the Book of Daniel contains only 3 words of Greek origin if it had been written in the 2nd century BCE, when Greek language largely submerged the world of that time? More surprisingly, as noted by the Hebrew scholar Carl Keil, the Septuagint omitted to mention women in Daniel 5:3 and 5:23, according to the custom of the Macedonians, Greeks and Romans. But the original in Hebrew says there were concubines (as archaeology has shown). This unusual detail indirectly proves that the Greek translation of the book of Daniel is late and was carried out during the 2nd century BCE. The fact that the Hebrew version speaks, on the contrary, of concubines assumes a date of writing well prior to the Greek period.

Some little-known historical details confirm the antiquity of the book of Daniel. The writer of this book was presented primarily as an eyewitness, he cites no Babylonian story and was not sticking to any polytheistic mythology. The only source that he specifically cites is the book of Jeremiah (Dn 9:2). To assume that Daniel wrote his story from Babylonian sources is pure speculation. Evidence that he was actually a contemporary of the items he mentioned is the discovery made in 1854, in the ruins of Ur, of an inscription confirming the existence of a character named Belshazzar. No historian had never heard of such an individual, neither Herodotus (484-425) or Thucydides (460-398), nor Xenophon (428-355), nor Ctesias (450-390), or Berosus (330-250?), so much so that historians of the early 19th century claimed that the king Belshazzar appearing in Daniel 5:1 must be a myth because, according to "known sources", it was universally accepted that Nabonidus was the last king at the fall of Babylon in -539. The tablets of 1854 also showed that Nabonidus (Nabunaid) had entrusted the kingdom to his eldest son Belshazzar (Belšarušur) "Bel, protect the king", explaining his absence in Babylon during its fall. Last detail again showing the accuracy of the biblical narrative: Belshazzar being a co-regent (since his father Nabonidus remained the titular king, not mentioned in the story of Daniel), he could offer to Daniel as highest position in his kingdom only the third place, according to what relates specifically Daniel 5:16, and not the second because the first two were already occupied (by him and his father). Finally, historians have "rediscovered" what readers of Daniel knew long ago.

²⁰⁴ A.K. KITCHEN "The Aramaic of Daniel"

in: *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* London 1965 Ed.The Tyndale Press pp. 31-79.

Similarly, a Babylonian chronicle reveals that Cyrus during his first year of reign, appointed Ugbaru as king of Babylon, as indicated in the text of Daniel where he is called Darius the Mede (Dn 5:31) or Harpagus by Herodotus (The Histories I:108,127-130,162,177-178).

In fact, the presence of specific chronological prophecies in the book of Daniel is unacceptable, in principle, for rationalist atheists. However, to deny prophecies a priori is to deny the distinctive element of the Bible in relation to other religious books: *At the same time, we must recognise that the interpretation of scriptural prophecy is never a matter for the individual. For no prophecy ever came from human initiative. When people spoke for God it was the Holy Spirit that moved them* (2Pe 1:20-21). This biblical feature helps us to explain some surprising events. For example, when Alexander the Great led a campaign to remove all friends of Persia he strangely spared Judea, which was yet one of their allies, and paradoxically, maintained good relations with the Jews. The historian Josephus gives the reason: when Alexander tried to invade Jerusalem, the city opened its gates and showed him the prophetic book of Daniel announcing a powerful Greek king who would conquer and dominate the Persian Empire, according to the text of Daniel 8:20-21, which favourably impressed Alexander (Jewish Antiquities XI:337). Some sceptics argue that all this had to be written after the fact to turn this happy event (which becomes inexplicable) into prophecy. To resolve without appeal this chronic objection of prophecies, it is advantageous to examine the one of the seventy weeks of years. Qumran discoveries have established beyond any doubt that the book of Daniel existed before 100 BCE (Hebrew manuscript 4Q114 is dated 115 BCE and Greek manuscript²⁰⁵ 4QDan^c between 100 and 50 BCE). However, if the chronology of the Messiah announced in Daniel 9:25 is exactly the appearance of Jesus as the Messiah, the affirmation of a writing afterwards (rational explanation) becomes unsustainable.

HISTORY OF THE MESSIAH

The messiah of Daniel 9:25 is special because he is called "guide" and is associated with the "removal of sin" (verse 24). The Messiah must appear before the destruction of the Second Temple (which took place in 70 CE) as the prophecy indicates that the period before the Messiah would begin with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, and that once the Messiah came the sanctuary would be destroyed (verse 26). Aware of the difficulty in identifying the high priest Onias III to a Prince, the Bible French rabbinate guide assumes that the Messiah (or prince) here means another messiah and proposes that Cyrus was actually a qualified King Messiah (or anointed) in Isaiah 45:1. Nahmanides believed that Messiah prince rather meant Zerubbabel who was the first governor of Judah, and he quoted the passage from Psalms 105:15 where God says: *Do not touch my messiahs [or anointed ones]* to indicate that Zerubbabel could be considered a messiah because this term refers to those who are anointed and appointed for a mission.

Jewish commentators²⁰⁶, unable to clearly identify the prince of Daniel 9:25, offer the following optional candidates: Cyrus, Zerubbabel or Jeshua son of Jozadaq, although none of these characters²⁰⁷ corresponds to the chronology of the book of Daniel. To support their choice these commentators prefer to read (despite the grammar): *until the anointing of the prince* the sentence: *until Messiah the prince*. Regarding chronological inconsistencies produced, they say that Daniel made a mistake! The different identifications proposed are unlikely because they do not explain how sin is removed by the death of a prince, whose life is in general poorly known, and how justice is restored, and the chronological identification is

²⁰⁵ S. PACE JEANSONNE - The Old Greek Translation of Daniel 7-12
in : *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series* 19 Washington 1988 p. 7.

²⁰⁶ H. GOLDWURM, N. SCHERMAN - Daniel, traduction et commentaires
Paris 2001 Éd. du Sceptre pp. 240-242, 260-263.

²⁰⁷ Herod Agrippa I, died in 44 CE, was regarded by some as a King Messiah (Jewish Antiquities XIX:343-350; Ac 12:19-23).

impossible while according to Daniel 9:2 and 9:22, this prophecy was given to perform accurate chronology and not vague speculation. The Bible of the French rabbinate translates paradoxically the text of Daniel 9:25 by: *Know therefore and well understand that from the moment the order was given to start rebuilding Jerusalem until an anointed prince (Cyrus) there is seven weeks, and for sixty-two weeks [Jerusalem] shall be rebuilt again.* A note states that the weeks mean weeks of years, on which all translators agree²⁰⁸. The translation of the French rabbinate defies common sense for two reasons, in fact it implies that:

- Jerusalem would be rebuilt over a period of 434 years (=62x7 years = 62 weeks), contradicting the text of Ezra 6:14-15 fixing the end of the rebuilding of the Temple in the 6th year of Darius I, in 515 BCE, followed by the end of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in the 20th year of Artaxerxes I (Ne 2:1; 6:15), in 455 BCE (see Dating the reign of Xerxes and Artaxerxes).
- The most important event would no longer be the Messiah to come (as Daniel knew Cyrus the "messiah") but the announcement of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Once again this interpretation is contradicted by chronology since Cyrus freed the Jews from Babylon, in -538. The order of reconstruction in -455 would have been given 7 weeks later, in -489 (= -538 + 7x7). There is a gap of 34 years (= 489 - 455) unbridgeable.

With the replacing of Cyrus by Zerubbabel, who began to govern in -537 (Ezr 3:1-8), the gain is only 2 years, there are still about 32 years to fill. Worse, the book of Daniel states that the Messiah is cut off after 62 weeks, or 434 years (= 62x7). However, if this Messiah was the high priest Onias III (murdered in 172 BCE), the order to rebuild Jerusalem (beginning of 62 weeks, according to the Bible the French rabbinate) would have been given in 606 BCE (= 434 + 172), new impossibility, since there would be this time 161 years (= 606 - 445) to fill. Chronology eliminates all these candidates, but what about Jesus?

DOES JESUS MATCH THE MESSIAH OF DANIEL 9:25 CHRONOLOGICALLY?

Jews do not accept obviously identifying Jesus as the Messiah for at least three reasons: 1) having been persecuted for nearly two thousand years by people who called themselves Christians, they held for a long time the name of Jesus in horror; 2) the recognizing of Jesus would imply a total questioning of the foundations of Judaism; 3) if Jesus was the Messiah promised, why are there still wars, diseases and misfortunes, when the Messiah would bring a reign of peace and happiness? These three objections, absolutely legitimate, are refutable: 1) Jesus himself announced that God would reject anyone who murders in his name, Jew (Jn 8:40,44) or Christian (Mt 7:21-23; 1Jn 3:10,11). Faithful Christians cannot fight and hurt their neighbours (2Co 10:3,4; Jn 13:35, Mt 5:44,45). 2) If one rejects the biblical text of Daniel, it is not possible to determine at what time the Messiah would be revealed. Furthermore, on what criteria should a biblical text be rejected? 3) The third objection is based on an anachronistic amalgam of various messianic prophecies. The Jews noticed that chapter 53 of Isaiah describes a "suffering messiah" while the following chapters (60 and 61) of the same book describes a "glorious messiah."

How can one reconcile these seemingly contradictory descriptions? To solve this puzzle, some Jews suppose, as we have seen, a "suffering messiah" representing Jewish people, and expect a "glorious Messiah" (unidentified). They came to think of 2 messiahs²⁰⁹. Jews of Qumran had already arrived at this conclusion, but for completely different reasons.

²⁰⁸ This choice is based on the following texts: *You shall count 7 weeks of years, 7 times 7 years, that is to say, the time of 7 weeks of years, 49 years (Lv 25:8) You have recognized the country 40 days. Every day is a year: 40 years you carry the weight of your sins (Nb 14:34) I'll have time to set a day for a year (Ezk 4:6).*

²⁰⁹ C. CHALIER, M. FAESSLER - Deux messies : fils de Juda, fils de Joseph in: *Judaïsme et christianisme l'écoute en partage*, Paris 2001 Éd. Cerf pp. 307-345.

Having found that the "glorious Messiah" was also a "royal Messiah," they concluded logically that he had to come from the tribe of Judah. This "royal messiah" being known to lead a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:6), they concluded that he would be also a priest. However, there was an unsolvable problem since a Jew could not simultaneously belong to the tribe of Levi (associated with the priesthood) and the tribe of Judah (associated with royalty). The Essenes therefore assumed the simultaneous existence of two messiahs: one from Levi and another from Judah²¹⁰. In the Talmud (Sukka 52a), there are also discussions about a messiah who was the son of Joseph, killed before the appearance of another messiah son of David, coming from Judah. Judah and Joseph being representative of the two parts of Israel together, according to Ezekiel 37:16. The solution of resorting to two messiahs, rather than one with two achievements is complicated, but more importantly, contrary to common sense because it requires (as recognize some Jewish commentators today) this implausible conclusion: *The Messiah will arrive when all will be righteous, he will arrive when all will be sinners. He will come with great pomp and glory, he will come in the utmost discretion and destitute. He will come at a fixed date and can come at any time (...)* *Conflicting and confusing texts are dealing in this long-awaited climax of history*²¹¹. The inconsistency is obvious. In fact, the solution proposed by the Gospels solves this apparent paradox. The right to the priesthood was hereditary (Nb 3:6-9), as was the right to the throne, however, the right to the priesthood could also be of divine right (exceptional case), as was the case for Aaron and Melchizedek (Heb 5:6; Ps 110:4). If the Bible announced that the Messiah would appear in the tribe of Judah (Gn 49:10) no prophecy mentions that he should appear in the tribe of Levi.

CHRONOLOGICAL CALCULATIONS OF DANIEL 9:24-27

Before performing chronological calculations, there must be a literal translation free of pro or anti-Messianic influences because, given the stakes, translators have often been tempted to influence their translation. Some have speculated, for example, that since the Messiah and the period are mentioned twice in verses 24 to 27, it would imply the existence of two messiahs or two distinct periods! If this were the case, we could find some perversity in Daniel since he would have written: *I have come forth to make you insight with understanding* (Dn 9:22-23), whereas it finally would apply to anyone in a clear manner! This is not reasonable, especially since it is easy to see that the first period of 70 weeks is identical to the second count (7 + 62 + 1, a total of 70 weeks). Therefore this period regards the same messiah or anointed one.

Textual criticism now considers that the Masoretic text of Daniel is reliable and differences with the text of the Septuagint are generally in favour of the Hebrew text but with some exceptions²¹². Several Hebrew manuscripts of Daniel, dated around 100 BCE, are close to the Masoretic text but not identical to it²¹³. In addition, the Greek translation of the book of Daniel (LXX) is not literal and contains errors or corrections, but it is unclear whether it would not be the case of the Hebrew text as well²¹⁴. The only way to know is to do a chronological analysis of historical data inside the two texts²¹⁵:

²¹⁰ M. WISE, M. ABEGG JR., E. COOK - Les manuscrits de la mer Morte Paris 2001, Éd. Plon pp.171,340.

²¹¹ H. GOLDWURM, N. SCHERMAN - Daniel, traduction et commentaires Paris 2001 Éd. du Sceptre p. XLVIII.

²¹² D. BARTHÉLEMY – Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament Tome 3 Göttingen 1992 Éd. Universitaires Fribourg pp. 435-496.

²¹³ J.J. COLLINS, P.W. FLINT, C. VAN EPPS – The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception, Volume 2 Leiden 2002 Ed. Brill pp. 573-607.

²¹⁴ S. PACE JEANSONNE - The Old Greek Translation of Daniel 7-12 in : *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series* 19 Washington 1988 pp. 103-133.

²¹⁵ R.T. MCLAY – Daniel. Old Greek / Theodotion in : New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007) Ed. Oxford University Press pp. 991-1022.

Correct text of Daniel is highlighted in green and (wrong) corrections and additions in orange:

Old Greek LXX	Theodotion LXX	Daniel
O King, you made a feast for <i>your friends</i> , and you were drinking wine, and the vessels of the house of the living God were brought to you, and you were drinking with them, you and your nobles	and you have exalted yourself against the Lord God of heaven, and the vessels of his house they brought before you, and you and your nobles and <i>your concubines and your consorts</i> were drinking wine with them	5:23
<i>Then Baltasar the king clothed Daniel in purple, and he put a gold torque on him, and he gave him authority over a 3rd part of his kingdom.</i> And the meaning came upon Baltasar the king, and the rule was taken away from the Chaldeans and was given to the Medes and to the Persians, and <i>Xerxes who was king of the Medes, received the kingdom.</i>	<i>And Baltasar spoke and they clothed Daniel in purple, and the gold torque they put around his neck, and he proclaimed concerning him that he was 3rd in the kingdom.</i> In that very night <i>Baltasar the Chaldean king, was killed and Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being 62 years old.</i>	5:29-30
(...) and shattered their bones, and <i>Daniel was appointed over the whole kingdom of Darius.</i>	(...) and pulverized all their bones.	6:24
And <i>King Darius was added to his fathers, and Cyrus the Persian received the kingdom</i>	And <i>Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian</i>	6:28
<i>During the 3rd year, when Baltasar was king, there was a vision, which I, Daniel, saw (...)</i> <i>The ram that you saw, which had the horns, is the king of the Medes and Persians.</i>	<i>In the 3rd year of the reign of King Baltasar a vision appeared to me —I, Daniel (...)</i> <i>The ram that you saw, which had the horns, is the king of the Medes and Persians.</i>	7:1,20
70 weeks have been decided for your people and for the city, Sion: for sin to be consummated and to make iniquities scarce and to blot out iniquities and to comprehend the vision and for everlasting righteousness to be given and for the vision to be consummated and to gladden a holy of holies. <i>And you shall understand and will rejoice and will discover ordinances to respond, and you [Daniel] will build Ierousalem as a city for the Lord. And after 7 and 70 and 62 weeks, an anointing will be removed and will not be. And a king of nations will demolish the city and the sanctuary along with the anointed one [Messiah], and his consummation will come with wrath even until the time of consummation. He will be attacked through war. And the covenant will prevail for many, and it will return again and be rebuilt broad and long and at the consummation of times and in half of the week the sacrifice and the libation will cease, and in the temple there will be an abomination of desolations until the consummation of a season, and a consummation will be given for the desolation.</i>	70 weeks have been cut short for your people and for the holy city: for sin to be consummated and to seal sins and to atone for iniquities and to bring everlasting righteousness and to seal vision and prophet and to anoint a holy of holies. <i>And you shall know and shall understand: from the going forth of the word to respond to and to rebuild Ierousalem until an anointed [Messiah] leader, there will be 7 weeks and 62 weeks, and it [Ierousalem] will return, and streets and a wall will be built, and the seasons will be emptied out. And after the 62 weeks, an anointing will be destroyed, and there is no judgment in it. And it will destroy the city and the sanctuary along with the leader who is to come. And they will be cut off by a flood, and there will be annihilations to the finish of a shortened war. And it will strengthen a covenant with many, 1 week, and by half of the week sacrifice and libation will cease, and in the temple there will be an abomination of desolations</i> even until a consummation, and a consummation will be given for the desolation.	9:24-27
at a set time. And he will enter into Egypt, and <i>as the first so the last will be. And the Romans will come and will expel him and rebuke him [the king of Egypt].</i> And he will back [and will be angered] against the covenant of the holy one	At the appointed time he will return and will come into the south, and <i>as the first even so the last will not be. And the Kitians who go forth will come against him [the king of the north],</i> and he will be humbled, and he will return and will be enraged against the holy covenant	11:29-30
From the time that the [perpetual] sacrifice was taken away and the abomination of desolation was prepared to be given, there are 1290 days.	From the time of the removal of the regular offering and the abomination of desolation will be given —1290 days.	12:11

The two Greek translations (LXX) are similar, but the original Hebrew text used (H*) had to be very close to the Masoretic text (MT). The first translator has corrected the Hebrew text to match the desecration of the Temple of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV²¹⁶ that lasted about 3 years (from 15 Kislev in 167 BCE to 25 Kislev in 164 BCE). The name Kittim was formerly understood by the Jews as representing the Greeks, from Alexander to Antiochus IV (1M 1:1, 8:5), then from Antiochus IV the Kittim were representing the Romans, according to the Peshar Nahum (4Q169)²¹⁷. The ancient Phoenicians referred to the people of Cyprus as Kitti[m]²¹⁸. As one can see the text of Daniel 9:24-27 is translated differently, several indicators show that the Hebrew text of reference was indeed the Masoretic text. A Qumran manuscript in Hebrew (11Q13), dated around 100 BCE, explains the text of Daniel 9:26²¹⁹: *He will proclaim to them the Jubilee, thereby releasing them from the debt of all their sins. He shall proclaim this decree in the 1st week of the jubilee period that follows 9 jubilee periods. Then the "Day of Atonement" shall follow after the 10th jubilee period, when he shall atone for all the Sons of Light, and the people who are predestined to Melchizedek (...) "The messengers" is the Anointed [Messiah] of the spirit, of whom Daniel spoke; "After the 62 weeks, an Anointed [Messiah] shall be cut off" (Dn 9:26). The "messenger who brings good news, who announces Salvation" is the one of whom it is written; "to proclaim the year of YHWH's favour, the day of the vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn" (Is 61:2).* The quoted text is strictly that of the Masoretic text, while that of the Septuagint is (incomprehensible): *And after 7 and 70 and 62 weeks, an anointing will be removed.* The word Messiah has disappeared and the durations have been changed (those of the Masoretic text are logical since the total duration of 70 weeks is equal to the sum of the intermediary durations: 7 + 62 + 1 = 70).

The book of Daniel is little commented on in the Qumran manuscripts with two exceptions: when it is commented on the Book of Jubilees serves as a reference and the "son of man, chosen by God himself, who has to become the king of the coming world" (Dn 7:9-14) is widely quoted and commented on in the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch XLVI:1-4, XLVIII:2-7; LXII:6-16). These texts show that most of the first-century Jews were expecting a messianic king (rather than a messiah for salvation). For example, according to Tacitus: *The majority [of the Jews] were convinced that the ancient scriptures of their priests alluded to the present as the very time when the Orient would triumph and from Judaea would go forth men destined to rule the world. This mysterious prophecy really referred to Vespasian and Titus, but the common people, true to the selfish ambitions of mankind, thought that this exalted destiny was reserved for them, and not even their calamities opened their eyes to the truth* (Histories 5:13). According to Suetonius: *There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world. This prediction, referring to the emperor of Rome, as afterwards appeared from the event, the people of Judaea took to themselves* (The Life of Vespasian IV:5). According to Dio Cassius: *This prophecy about the tooth became a reality on the following day; and Nero himself in his dreams once thought that he had brought the car of Jupiter to Vespasian's house. These portents needed interpretation; but not so the saying of a Jew named Josephus: he, having earlier been captured by Vespasian and imprisoned, laughed and said: You may imprison me now [in 68 BCE], but a year from now, when you have become emperor, you will release me* (Roman History LXV:1). According to Josephus: *But now, what did the most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found*

²¹⁶ M. HADAS-LEBEL – La révolte des Maccabées
Clermont-Ferrand 2012 Éd. LEMME edit pp. 41-46.

²¹⁷ [The interpretation of it concerns Jerusalem, which has become] a dwelling for the wicked ones of the nations. "Where the lion went to enter, the lion's cub [and no one to disturb". The interpretation of it concern Deme]trius, King of Greece, who sought to enter Jerusalem on the advice of the Seeker-After-Smooth-Things, [but God did not give Jerusalem] into the power of the kings of Greece from Antiochus until the rise of the rulers of the Kittim; but afterwards [the city] will be trampled [by the Gentiles ...].

²¹⁸ Josephus associated Kittim with Cyprus and with this name given by the Hebrew to all islands (Jewish Antiquities I:128).

²¹⁹ M. WISE, M. ABEGG JR, E. COOK – Les manuscrits de la mer Morte
Pari 2001 Éd. Plon pp. 257-260, 598-600.

in their sacred writings, how about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth. The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. However, it is not possible for men to avoid fate, although they see it beforehand. But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure, and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction (Jewish War VI:312-315). The text of Daniel 7 was well known at that time, but if Josephus was able to apply the prophecy of the "Son of man" to Vespasian it is because he read and interpreted the Hebrew text (MT): *And it will destroy the city and the sanctuary along with the leader who is to come [Roman ruler?], rather than the Greek text of the Septuagint: And a king of nations will demolish the city and the sanctuary along with the anointed one [Messiah].*

What proves that the text of Daniel was written in 535 rather than in 165 BCE? In fact, several very precise pieces of information inside could only have been known prior to 535 (which have been known from the 19th century through archaeological discoveries):

- Babylonian kings were in the habit of drinking wine with their concubines and their consorts at royal banquets. Former historians did not know this strange custom.
- The inscriptions of Nabonidus²²⁰ show that in his 3rd year of reign (553 BCE) he entrusted the kingdom to his eldest son, Belshazzar (Baltasar), and retired to Tema. According to these indications, the actual king of Babylon in 539 was therefore Belshazzar, (in his 14th year of reign), not Nabonidus.
- According to Daniel 8:1-6,20 a ram with two horns appeared in the 3rd year of Belshazzar, in 550 BCE, representing the kings of Media and Persia. Indeed in 550 Cyrus II became king of Persia and Harpagus, his coregent, was king of Media²²¹.
- According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, Ugbaru (Gobryas) was the governor of Gutium, the Darius the Mede of Daniel, who actually led Cyrus the Great's army that captured Babylon on 17/VII/17 of Nabonidus (October 539 BCE), then Cyrus entered Babylon on 3/VIII/17. Ugbaru, his co-ruler, installed governors in Babylon²²². According to the timeline of the Nabonidus Chronicle the [actual] king of Babylon was Ugbaru (even if he was not formally enthroned) during the period from 3/VIII/00 to 11/VIII/01 of Cyrus. As Cyrus received the title of "King of Babylon" only after month X of the 1st year of his reign²²³ (prior to this date, he was only "King of Lands"), year 1 of Cambyses coincides with year 2 of Cyrus. Cyrus chose Cambyses as King of Babylon from [-]/X/01, who was enthroned by the Babylonians only from 4/I/02 (Akitu feast) 2 months later. The coregency between Cyrus (actual King of Babylon) and Cambyses (official king of Babylon) began informally from [-]/X/01 of Cyrus as confirmed by a double dated document (TuM 2-3, 92)²²⁴: *month XI, day 25, year 1 of [Cyrus] year of accession of kingship! of Ganzysel! King of Babylon and of Lands.* It is interesting to note that Ugbaru was likely 62 years old²²⁵ in 539 BCE (Dn 5:31).

²²⁰ J. BRIEND M.J. SEUX Les textes du Proche-Orient ancien et l'histoire d'Israël Paris 1977 Éd. Cerf pp. 147-150.

²²¹ The chronology of Median kings comes from Herodotus (The Histories I:101-108) who mentions a total solar eclipse (dated May 28, 585 BCE) at the end of Cyaxares reign. He wrote that Astyages, after a reign of 35 years, was defeated by Cyrus who thus became the ruler of Persia and Media, Harpagus becoming a coregent (The Histories I:127-130, 162, 177-178) called "Lieutenant of Cyrus" by Strabo (Geography VI:1) or "Commandant of Cyrus" by Diodorus Siculus (Historical Library IX:31:1). Harpagus is called Oibaras by Ctesias (Persica §13,36,45). According to Flavius Josephus, Cyrus took Babylon with the help of Darius the Mede, a "son of Astyages", at the epoch of Belshazzar, in the year 17 of Nabonidus (Jewish Antiquities X:247-249).

²²² As he died on October 26, 538 BCE he can not be the Gubaru appearing 3 years later in November 535 BCE.

²²³ S. ZAWADZKI - Gubaru: A Governor or a Vassal King of Babylonia? in: *Eos* vol. LXXV (1987 Wrocław) pp.69-86.

²²⁴ O. KRÜCKMANN – Neubabylonische Rechts- und Verwaltungstexte in: *Texte und materialien der Frau prof. Hilprecht collection of Babylonian antiquities* II-III, Leipzig 1933, N°92.

²²⁵ One can suppose that Harpagus (Ugbaru) was at least 20 years old at the birth of Cyrus (The Histories I:108) who began to reign in 559 BCE, when he was probably 20 years old. Under this assumption, Harpagus was born in 599 BCE (= 559 + 20 + 20) and was around 60 years old at the time of the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE, that agrees with the biblical text.

Even if the authenticity of the book was sometimes disputed, the great Maimonides (Guide for the Perplexed 2:45) acknowledged it as an inspiration of divine origin and placed Daniel on a par with David and Solomon. Literal translation of Daniel 9:23-27's text:

Hebrew	Literal translation	Comment
וּבִין	<i>and understand</i>	
בְּדָבָר	<i>in the word</i>	
וְהִבֵּן	<i>and make understand</i>	The phrase "make understand" is found in Daniel 8:16 where the angel Gabriel <i>make understand</i> to Daniel who had in turn to <i>make understand</i> the people.
בַּמְרָאָה:	<i>in the matter seen</i>	
שָׁבָעִים	<i>weeks [of years]</i>	The word "week" is usually feminine in Hebrew whereas is masculine in Daniel's text. To keep this variant, translators use either the term "weeks [of years]" or the word "sevens".
שִׁבְעִים	<i>seventy</i>	
נִחְתָּד	<i>was determined</i>	
עַל-עַמּוֹת	<i>upon people of you</i>	
וְעַל-עִיר	<i>and upon city</i>	
קֹדֶשְׁךָ	<i>sanctuary of you</i>	The word "sanctuary" could also be translated as "holy" but as in verse 26 it clearly refers to the holy [place] the word "sanctuary" is required.
לִבְלֹא	<i>to make cease</i>	
הַפֶּשַׁע	<i>the transgression</i>	
וּלְהַחֵם	<i>and to finish</i>	
חַטָּאוֹת	<i>the sin</i>	
וּלְכַפֵּר	<i>and to absolve</i>	
עוֹן	<i>fault</i>	
וּלְהָבִיא	<i>and to make come</i>	
צְדָקָה	<i>justice</i>	
עֲלָמִים	<i>of durations</i>	
וּלְחַתֵּם	<i>and to seal</i>	The meaning of "seal" is both "accomplish" and "put an end".
חִזְוִן	<i>vision</i>	The word "vision" has the meaning of prophecy.
וְנָבִיא	<i>and prophet</i>	
וּלְמַשֵּׁחַ	<i>and to anoint</i>	
קֹדֶשׁ	<i>sanctuary</i>	The word <i>qodesh</i> means "holy" / "sacred". The holy of holies generally refers to the Most Holy
קֹדֶשִׁים:	<i>of sanctuaries</i>	
וְתֹרַע	<i>And you will know</i>	
וְתִשְׁלַל	<i>and you will be insightful</i>	
מִן-מִצָּא	<i>since output</i>	
דְּבָר	<i>of word</i>	
לְהָשִׁיב	<i>to make return</i>	
וּלְבִנֵּת	<i>and to build</i>	
יְרוּשָׁלַם	<i>Jerusalem</i>	
עַד-מָשִׁיחַ	<i>until messiah</i>	The word "messiah" could be translated as "anointed one" but the whole revelation of Gabriel relates this particular messiah, qualified as guide or remarkable. It is therefore the Messiah and not a messiah of some sort.
נֹדֵד	<i>remarkable</i>	The word "remarkable" has a literal meaning "to be in front" in Hebrew, it means "chief" in Jeremiah 20:1 or "important" in Proverbs 8:6 when it describes another word (which is the case here). This qualification therefore draws attention to a remarkable anointed one: the Messiah. Used alone it means "leader" or "guide". Theodotion, for example, translated it into Greek as "until an anointed leader / Christ prince".

שבועים	<i>weeks [of years]</i>	
שבעה	<i>seven</i>	
ושבועים	<i>and weeks [of years]</i>	The word "and" has also the meaning of "then".
ששים ושנים	<i>sixty and two</i>	
תשוב	<i>she will return</i>	"she" is the city of Jerusalem.
ונבנתה	<i>and been built</i>	
רחוב	<i>public square</i>	
והחיוץ	<i>and moat</i>	
ובצוק	<i>in the straits</i>	
העתים :	<i>of the times</i>	
ואחרי	<i>and after</i>	
השבועים	<i>the weeks [of years]</i>	
ששים ושנים	<i>sixty and two</i>	
יִכָּרֵת	<i>will be cut off</i>	
משיח	<i>Messiah</i>	
ואין	<i>and nothing</i>	
לו	<i>for himself</i>	
והעיר	<i>And the city</i>	
והקדש	<i>and the sanctuary</i>	
יִשְׁחַת	<i>he will destroy</i>	"he" is the remarkable people.
עם נָדָר	<i>people remarkable</i>	Remarkable*(see above) people are described in Daniel 2, first the Babylonians, then the Medo-Persians, the Greeks and other peoples to come with a link to the servants of God. The remarkable people after the Greeks were the Romans.
הבא	<i>coming</i>	
וקצו	<i>And end of him</i>	The word "him" seems to refer to the sanctuary.
בשֹׁף	<i>in the flood</i>	The word "flood" is used in a metaphorical sense describing a military force, as in Daniel 11:26.
ועד קץ	<i>And until [the] end</i>	
מלחמה	<i>war</i>	
נִחְרְצָה	<i>It has been decreed</i>	
שממות :	<i>some desolations</i>	
והנָבִיר	<i>He will make prevail</i>	The word "he" seems to refer to the Messiah.
בְּרִית	<i>covenant</i>	
לרבים	<i>for the multitude</i>	Multitudes or multitude. Some Jewish translators translate it as "grand ones", retaining its usual meaning elsewhere as in Daniel 11:44.
שבוע	<i>Week [of years]</i>	
אחד	<i>one</i>	
וחצי	<i>and the half</i>	
השבוע	<i>of the week [of years]</i>	
יִשְׁכֹּת	<i>he will make cease</i>	
זֶבַח	<i>sacrifice</i>	
ומנחה	<i>and offering</i>	
ועל כנף	<i>Upon [the] wing</i>	
שקוצים	<i>of disgusting things</i>	"Disgusting things" refer to pagan idols (Jer 7:30-31), here the ensigns of the Roman armies represented by eagle wings.
משחם	<i>a desolator</i>	<i>This desolator will stand up after the king of Greece (Dn 8:20-25).</i>
ועד-קָלָה	<i>And until extinction</i>	
ונִחְרְצָה	<i>It has been decreed</i>	
תִּסָּךְ	<i>will pouring out</i>	
על-שָׁמֵם :	<i>upon [that is] desolate</i>	"[that is] desolate" could refer to the sanctuary (Dn 9:17).

Taking into account the above remarks, the literal translation becomes: *Therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks [of years] are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies. And you should know and have the insight [that] from the going forth of [the] word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah [the] Leader, there will be seven weeks [of years], and sixty-two weeks [of years]. She will return and be actually rebuilt, with a public square and moat, but in the straits of the times. And after the sixty-two weeks [of years] Messiah will be cut off, with nothing for himself. And the city and the holy place the people of a leader that is coming will bring to their ruin. And the end of it will be by the flood. And until [the] end there will be war; what is decided upon is desolations. And he must keep [the] covenant in force for the many for one week [of years]; and at the half of the week [of years] he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease. And upon the wing of disgusting things there will be the one causing desolation; and until an extermination, the very thing decided upon will go pouring out also upon the one lying desolate (Dn 9:23-27).* It is possible that this highly controversial text has undergone some changes from the Jewish copyists, as evidenced by the pro-Maccabean translation of the Septuagint²²⁶. However, the Jewish translation of Theodotion (c. 175 CE) written in an anti-Christian context is still very close to the Masoretic Text, it reads: *Therefore consider the matter, understand the vision. Seventy weeks have been determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, for sin to be ended, and to seal up transgressions, and to blot out the iniquities, and to make atonement for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy. And thou shalt know and understand, that from the going forth of the command for the answer and for the building of Jerusalem until Christ the prince [there shall be] seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks; and then [the time] shall return, and the street shall be built, and the wall, and the times shall be exhausted. And after the sixty-two weeks, the anointed one shall be destroyed, and there is no judgment in him: and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary with the prince that is coming: they shall be cut off with a flood, and to the end of the war which is rapidly completed he shall appoint [the city] to desolations. And one week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink-offering shall be taken away: and on the temple [shall be] the abomination of desolations; and at the end of time an end shall be put to the desolation.* Paradoxically, the accurate Jewish translation of Theodotion (who made a revised Septuagint) is even more favourable to Christian interpretation than the Masoretic text which provides the basis for current translations (current Jewish translations also derived from the Masoretic text). These remarks may remove some erroneous propositions and focus on what was really the problem in the identification of the Messiah.

The text of Daniel 9:24-27 is clearly messianic and evokes an individual messiah whose chronological frame is perfectly defined. The whole period is 490 years = 70 x 7 years and is divided into 3 parts: 7+62+1 = 70. The starting point for calculating the appearance of this particular messiah is specified by the expression: *from the going forth of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader.* This messiah chief is killed with nothing for himself, then the holy city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary are destroyed. The text states that during the 70th and last week, after the appearance of the Messiah, sin is removed and justice is restored, resulting de facto in the abolition of the offering and sacrifice. The translation highlights the following chronologically points:

- After the starting point there is a period of 49 years (= 7x7) and 434 years (= 62x7) or 483 years in all. This period ends with the appearance of the Messiah. The text also states that the period of reconstruction (49 years) will be in the "distress of the times" and after a period of 434 years the Messiah shall be cut into destitution.

²²⁶ Some modern commentators have tried to link the book of Daniel to the Poem of Danel unearthed at Ugarit (c. -1350), but excluding the name of the character, and even without the "i", there is clearly no point of contact between the two accounts.

- After the period of 490 years a new world power (Romans) will come to destroy the city and the sanctuary. The text states that the covenant will continue, but only up to half of the last week ($7/2 = 3.5$ years) and then offering and sacrifice are no longer needed.

According to the present chronology, Artaxerxes I would have begun to reign from -465 and 20 years later (in 445 BCE) Nehemiah was authorized to begin work (Ne 2:1-8), the starting point of the prophecy. In fact, the current Achaemenid chronology is wrong because Artaxerxes I began to reign from 475 and not 465 (see Dating the Reign of Xerxes and Artaxerxes). This chronological error is the cause of countless debates about this famous prophecy²²⁷. The starting point of the 490 years is set: *from the going forth of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*. This order to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes I in the month of Nisan in the 20th year of his reign (Ne 2:1,5,8) in April 455 BCE. As Nehemiah said that the city wall was completed in 52 days on 25 Elul (22 September), he therefore made to hear this “*word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*” on 3 Ab (2 August) to the Jewish deputy rulers who returned to the city (Ne 2:16-18). Thus Ezra and Nehemiah gave a precise chronology: Cyrus issued a decree releasing the Jews in his 1st year of reign (Ezr 1:1-2), thus the Jews arrived in Jerusalem around October 538 BCE. The 2nd month of the 2nd year of their arrival (May 537 BCE) they began rebuilding the Temple, which was completed at the end of the 6th year of Darius I (in 515 BCE). In the 7th year of his reign, Artaxerxes I requested Ezra (in 468 BCE) to go to Jerusalem to beautify the Temple then, in his 20th year, he gave the order to Nehemiah to rebuild the city and not only the Temple. The city was finally inaugurated in 406 (= 455 - 7x7) towards the end of the reign of Darius II (Ne 12:22). Chronology of events²²⁸:

Julian date (BCE)	Event and dating	Reference
May? 538	Order to rebuild the Temple by Cyrus the 1 st year of his reign.	Ezr 1:1-2
October 538	All the people gathered in Jerusalem on the 7 th month of the year.	Ezr 3:1
May 537	Beginning of the rebuilding of the Temple, the 2nd year of arrival.	Ezr 3:8-10
March-November 522	Samaritans' opposition who write to Artaxerxes [Bardiya].	Ezr 4:7-23
12 March 515	Temple completed (outside) at the end of the year 6 of Darius I.	Ezr 6:15
485/484	Attempted genocide against the Jews shortly after the death of Darius I, dated in year 12 of Xerxes (Esther 3:7).	Ezr 4:5-6
April 468	An order to beautify the Temple (inside) in the year 7 of Artaxerxes.	Ezr 7:8,20
April 455	An order to rebuild Jerusalem is read to Nehemiah in the year 20.	Neh 2:1-8
2 August 455	The order to rebuild Jerusalem is read to the Jewish leaders (3 Ab).	Neh 2:16-18
22 September 455	Walls of Jerusalem completed in 52 days on 25 Elul.	Neh 6:15
28 September 455	The Law of Moses is read to the people likely on 1 st Tishri.	Neh 8:1-2
[26 September] 406	City of Jerusalem completed (inauguration) at the end of Darius II.	Neh 12:22-43

According to this chronological reconstruction, the people, or the multitude of Jews at the time, heard *the order to rebuild Jerusalem* on the 1st of Tishri 455 BCE, the starting point of the Messianic prophecy of the 70 weeks of years. By adding the 69 weeks of years, or 483 years, the last week of years of the alliance (the 70th) covers a period from the 1st of Tishri 29 (= -455 + 483 + 1) to the 1st of Tishri 36 (= -455 + 490 + 1), and half of that last week ($7/2 = 3.5$ years) therefore falls on April 33 (= 29 + 3.5). It is possible to determine exact matching dates thanks to astronomy, knowing that the 1st of Tishri corresponds to the 1st visible crescent (new moon = + 1) after the autumnal equinox²²⁹:

²²⁷ L. BIGOT - Les 70 semaines de Daniel

Paris 1911 Éd. Letouzey & Ané in: Dictionnaire de théologie catholique tome VI.1 pp. 75-103.

²²⁸ L. PIROT, A. CLAMER – La Sainte Bible Tome IV

Paris 1949 Éd. Letouzey et Ané pp. 305-310.

²²⁹ <http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/temps/saisons.php>

http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/phenomenes/phases_lune/index.php

Year	Jewish calendar	Astronomical event	Julian calendar	Day number
29		Spring equinox	Sunday 25 September	
		New moon	Monday 26 September	0000
	1st Tishri	1 st crescent	Tuesday 27 September	0001
33	[14 Nisan]	[Full moon]	Friday 3 April	1284
36		Autumn equinox	Monday 24 September	2554
		New moon	Monday 8 October	2568
	1st Tishri	1 st crescent	Tuesday 9 October	2569

Since the Messiah was cut off in the middle of the last week which lasted 7 years (= 7x12 + 3 lunar months = 87x29.530588 days = 2569 days), the date indicating when he was cut off is the 1284th day (= 2569/2) because that day is half of this week. The date is therefore Friday 3 April 33 CE, which corresponds to the death of Jesus (14 Nisan 33). Was Jesus baptized on 1st Tishri 29 CE? The answer is no for the three following reasons:

- If Jesus had been baptized on 1 Tishri, he could not have attended the feast of Yom Kippur on 10 Tishri and the Feast of Tabernacles from 15 to 21 Tishri (Nb 29:12) since he spent 40 days in the desert immediately after his baptism (Mt 3:16-4:2). Because Jesus is presented as a devout Jew (who was observing Jewish law strictly) so it would be illogical to accept that he could violate an obligation so paramount of the Jewish law.
- The 1st Tishri 29, Jesus was exactly 30 years old. But as Luke chose to write "about 30 years", that implied that Jesus was not exactly this age (Lk 3:23). Luke is usually more accurate than the other evangelists²³⁰.
- The Messiah would have had to appear exactly when *the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem* was pronounced, yet this word had not been issued on 1st Tishri but almost two months earlier when this order to rebuild Jerusalem was read by Nehemiah to the Jewish leaders on 3 Ab. The Messiah therefore had to appear on 3 Ab 29 CE (Monday 1^{er} August) which is the baptism date of Jesus. At that time Jesus' age was 29 years and 10 months and it was in the 15th year of Tiberius rule (from 19 August 28 CE to 18 August 29 CE).

The messianic prophecy of Daniel gives a precise chronology that exactly matches the important events of Jesus' life. Furthermore this prophecy makes a strong link between the destruction of the Messiah, of the sanctuary (the Most Holy), of the temple and of the city of Jerusalem. Likewise the Gospels quote the prophecy of Daniel announcing the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem (Mt 24:15-22) by the Roman armies (Lk 19:43-44, 21:20-24). Chronological parallel between the Jerusalem rebuilt by Nehemiah and the Jerusalem above of Messianic Christians (Gal 4:24-26):

Julian date	Event and dating	Reference
1 August 29	The order to build <i>the Jerusalem above</i> is read to Messiah the Leader on 3 Ab . The sanctuary of sanctuaries is anointed (Lk 3:1,21-23; 4:1-2).	Dn 9:24-25
22 September 29	<i>The Jerusalem above</i> (Ga 4:24-26) completed in 52 days on 25 Elul .	
27 September 29	The order to build <i>the Jerusalem above</i> is read to the multitude of Jews, on 1st Tishri , entering into the covenant of the Kingdom (Heb 8:6).	Dn 9:27
3 April 33	The Messiah is cut off with nothing for himself in half of the last week of 7 years, on 14 Nisan (Jesus death) . Sacrifices cease (Heb 10:2-14).	Dn 9:26-27
9 October 36	The covenant is kept for the multitude for 7 years (until 1st Tishri).	Dn 9:27
30 August 70	The wing of disgusting things (Roman armies) had to cause desolation burning the Temple, on 9 ab (War of the Jews VI:249-250).	Dn 9:27
28 September 70	Extermination upon Jerusalem, on 7 Elul (War of the Jews VI:435).	Dn 9:27

²³⁰ He uses 14 times the term ~~about~~ "about" in his writings, but only 6 times for all the other writers of the New Testament: *about the 6th hour* (Lk 23:44), whereas it is only *the 6th hour* in Mark. This difference is not systematic, as Mark says: *about 4000 men* (Mk 15:33; 8:9), while Matthew mentions merely a simple: *4000 men* (Mt 15:38). Luke writes: *about the 6th hour* in Acts when he implies the word "about" in another place (Ac 10:3, 3:1).

The duration of 52 days (Ne 6:15) is not accidental because the sanctuary, the Most Holy of the temple, had to be rebuilt in 3 days according to John 2:19-22 and the Temple, represented by the Christian church anointed by the Holy Spirit, according to Ephesians 2:20-22, had to appear at Pentecost (Ac 2:1-4) 52 days after the 14th of Nisan (Lv 23:15-16), the day when occurred the "demolition" of the sanctuary represented by the body of Jesus. Pentecost of 33 CE is dated 6 Siwan (Sunday 24 May 33 CE). The text of Daniel thus heralded the appearance of the Messiah on Monday 1st August 29 CE and his death on Friday 3 April 33 CE. The 70th week of years started on Tuesday 27 September 29 CE when Jesus was exactly 30. This coincidence is not accidental because the New Testament gives Jesus a role of high priest (Heb 3:1, 7:26, 8:1) and this important character began to officiate as a priest only from 30 years old (Nb 4:3, 1Ch 23:3). The alliance with the multitude of Jews ended on 1st Tishri 36 CE (Tuesday 9 October) marked by the conversion of the centurion Cornelius (Ac 10:30). All these prophetic events occurred at exactly 3:00 p.m., the hour of prayer (Ac 3:1).

Daniel's prophecy which is very precise chronologically was supplemented by some additional chronological information: *I then said, My lord, what is to be the outcome? (...) those who are wise will understand. From the moment that the perpetual sacrifice is abolished and the appalling abomination set up: 1290 days. Blessed is he who perseveres and attains 1335 days* (Dn 12:8-12). Both durations are extremely accurate. Although Daniel's prophecy announces the destruction of the Temple by the Roman armies, it mainly concerns the chronology of the Messiah²³¹ (Talmud Megillah 3a), because *the witness of the Messiah is the spirit of prophecy* (Talmud Shabbat 63a, Rv 19:10). The first duration of 1290 days lasts between *the moment that the perpetual sacrifice is abolished and the moment the appalling abomination is set up*. The perpetual sacrifice had to be abolished when Jesus died (Heb 10:1-14), on Friday 3 April 33 CE. If *the wing of the appalling abomination* (Dn 9:27) was historically the Romans armies in 70 CE *the appalling abomination* was the result of a powerful wicked spirit in heavens (Dn 10:13) called Satan (Job 1:6). Immediately after the completion of the "Jerusalem above", on 25 Elul 29 CE (Thursday 22 September), Satan was set up to destroy it (Lk 4:1-13). It is noteworthy that between Thursday 22 September 29 CE and Friday 3 April 33 CE there are exactly 1290 days. Likewise, between the beginning of the covenant of the Kingdom, on 1st Tishri 29 CE (Tuesday 27 September), and its validation by God (Heb 9:23-28) at Pentecost (Ac 2:1-18), on 6 Siwan 33 CE (Sunday 24 May). Consequently, between Tuesday 27 September 29 CE and Sunday 24 May 33 CE there are 1335 days (see chronology hereafter).

Chronological details are frequent in the Bible and those concerning the conversion of Cornelius may be used to verify the date of the 1st Tishri 36 CE: *Now in Caesarea there was a certain man named Cornelius, an army officer of the Italian band, as it was called, a devout man and one fearing God together with all his household, and he made many gifts of mercy to the people and made supplication to God continually. Just about the 9th hour of the day he saw plainly in a vision an angel of God come in to him and say to him: Cornelius! (...) Cornelius said: 4 days ago counting from this hour I was praying in my house at the 9th hour, when, look! a man in bright raiment stood before me and said: Cornelius, your prayer has been favourably heard and your gifts of mercy have been remembered before God* (Ac 10:1-3,30). As the 1st Tishri 36 CE matches Tuesday 9 October 36 CE, the day of the conversion of Cornelius, the 4th day earlier (not 3rd)²³² when this officer was praying had to be a Saturday (the Sabbath) at the hour of prayer (Ac 3:1).

²³¹ The vision in Daniel 8:11-14 concerns only the time of the End: *How long is this vision to be -- of perpetual [sacrifice], of horrifying iniquity, of sanctuary and army trampled underfoot? The first replied: Until 2300 evenings and mornings have gone by: then the sanctuary will have its rights restored, but this vision shows the time of the End* (Dn 8:17) *the vision of the evenings and the mornings (...) for there are still many days to go* (Dn 8:26).

²³² B.M. METZGER – A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament Stuttgart 1989, Ed. United Bible Societies pp. 375-377.

Chronology of main prophetic events over the period 29-33 CE:

Jul. 29	30	1	Ab	Saturday			
	31	2		Sunday			
Aug. 29	1	3		Monday	1	Baptism of Jesus as Messiah [the] Leader (Lk 3:1,21-23; 4:1-2). The order to build [the] Jerusalem [above] is read to him (Ne 2:16-18).	
	2	4		Tuesday	2		
	3	5		Wednesday	3		
	4	6		Thursday	4		
	5	7		Friday	5		
	6	8		Saturday	6		
	7	9		Sunday	7		
	8	10		Monday	8		
	9	11		Tuesday	9		
	10	12		Wednesday	10		
	11	13		Thursday	11		
	12	14		Friday	12		
	13	15		Saturday	13		
	14	16		Sunday	14		
	15	17		Monday	15		
	16	18		Tuesday	16		
	17	19		Wednesday	17		
	18	20		Thursday	18		
	19	21		Friday	19		
	20	22		Saturday	20		
	21	23		Sunday	21		
	22	24		Monday	22		
	23	25		Tuesday	23		
	24	26		Wednesday	24		
	25	27		Thursday	25		
	26	28		Friday	26		
	27	29		Saturday	27		
	28	30		Sunday	28		
Sep. 29	29	1	Elul	Monday	29		
	30	2		Tuesday	30		
	31	3		Wednesday	31		
	1	4		Thursday	32		
	2	5		Friday	33		
	3	6		Saturday	34		
	4	7		Sunday	35		
	5	8		Monday	36		
	6	9		Tuesday	37		
	7	10		Wednesday	38		
	8	11		Thursday	39		
9	12	Friday	40				
10	13	Saturday	41	End of Jesus' temptation by the Devil (Lk 4:1-2).			
11	14	Sunday	42				
12	15	Monday	43				
13	16	Tuesday	44				
14	17	Wednesday	45				
15	18	Thursday	46				
16	19	Friday	47				
17	20	Saturday	48				
18	21	Sunday	49				
19	22	Monday	50				
20	23	Tuesday	51				
21	24	Wednesday	52	Completion of the walls of the Temple (Ne 6:15).			
22	25	Thursday	1	Abomination (Satan) that desolates is set up (Dn 12:11).			
23	26	Friday	2				
24	27	Saturday	3	Wedding at Cana? (John 2:1-2).			
25	28	Sunday	4	Spring equinox.			
26	29	Monday	5	New moon.			
Oct. 29	27	1	Tishri	Tuesday	6	0 Jesus was 30 years old. Beginning of the 70 th and final week of Daniel.	
	28	2		Wednesday	7	1 Multitude enters into the covenant of the Kingdom (Heb 8:6).	
	29	3		Thursday	8	2	
	30	4		Friday	9	3	
	1	5		Saturday	10	4 Jesus read the text of Isaiah 61:1 about the Jubilee (Lk 4:16-21).	
	2	6		Sunday	11	5	
	3	7		Monday	12	6	
	4	8		Tuesday	13	7	
	5	9		Wednesday	14	8	
	6	10		Thursday	15	9 Yom Kippur.	
7	11	Friday	16	10			
8	12	Saturday	17	11			
9	13	Sunday	18	12			

Mar. 33	19	28	Adar	Thursday	1275	1269			
	20	29		Friday	1276	1270			
	21	1	Nisan	Saturday	1277	1271	Beginning of Jubilee year		
	22	2		Sunday	1278	1272			
	23	3		Monday	1279	1273			
	24	4		Tuesday	1280	1274			
	25	5		Wednesday	1281	1275			
	26	6		Thursday	1283	1276			
	27	7		Friday	1282	1277			
	28	8		Saturday	1284	1278			
	29	9		Sunday	1285	1279			
	30	10		Monday	1286	1280			
Apr. 33	31	11		Tuesday	1287	1281			
	1	12		Wednesday	1288	1282			
	2	13		Thursday	1289	1283			
	3	14		Friday	1	1290	1	1284	The continual [sacrifice] has been removed (Dn 12:11; Heb 10:1-14)
	4	15		Saturday	2		2	1285	(Great) Sabbath (Jn 19:31)
	5	16		Sunday	3	1	3	1286	Beginning of Pentecost (Lv 23:15-16).
	6	17		Monday	2	4	2	1287	
	7	18		Tuesday	3	5	3	1288	
	8	19		Wednesday	4	6	4	1289	
	9	20		Thursday	5	7	5	1290	
	10	21		Friday	6	8	6	1291	
	11	22		Saturday	7	9	7	1292	
	12	23		Sunday	8	10	8	1293	
	13	24		Monday	9	11	9	1294	
	14	25		Tuesday	10	12	10	1295	
	15	26		Wednesday	11	13	11	1296	
	16	27		Thursday	12	14	12	1297	
	17	28		Friday	13	15	13	1298	
	18	29		Saturday	14	16	14	1299	
	19	30		Sunday	15	17	15	1300	
May 33	20	1	Iyyar	Monday	16	18	16	1301	
	21	2		Tuesday	17	19	17	1302	
	22	3		Wednesday	18	20	18	1303	
	23	4		Thursday	19	21	19	1304	
	24	5		Friday	20	22	20	1305	
	25	6		Saturday	21	23	21	1306	
	26	7		Sunday	22	24	22	1307	
	27	8		Monday	23	25	23	1308	
	28	9		Tuesday	24	26	24	1309	
	29	10		Wednesday	25	27	25	1310	
	30	11		Thursday	26	28	26	1311	
May 33	1	12		Friday	27	29	27	1312	
	2	13		Saturday	28	30	28	1313	
	3	14		Sunday	29	31	29	1314	
	4	15		Monday	30	32	30	1315	
	5	16		Tuesday	31	33	31	1316	
	6	17		Wednesday	32	34	32	1317	
	7	18		Thursday	33	35	33	1318	
	8	19		Friday	34	36	34	1319	
	9	20		Saturday	35	37	35	1320	
	10	21		Sunday	36	38	36	1321	
	11	22		Monday	37	39	37	1322	
	12	23		Tuesday	38	40	38	1323	
	13	24		Wednesday	39	41	39	1324	
	14	25		Thursday	40	42	40	1325	
	15	26		Friday	41	43	41	1326	
	16	27		Saturday	42	44	42	1327	
	17	28		Sunday	43	45	43	1328	
	18	29		Monday	44	46	44	1329	
May 33	19	1	Sivan	Tuesday	45	47	45	1330	
	20	2		Wednesday	46	48	46	1331	
	21	3		Thursday	47	49	47	1332	
	22	4		Friday	48	50	48	1333	
	23	5		Saturday	49	51	49	1334	
	24	6		Sunday	50	52	50	1335	The Jerusalem above (Gal 4:24-27) begins at the Pentecost (Ac 2:1,15).
	25	7		Monday					Happiness of the multitude of Messianic Jews (Dn 12:12).
	26	8		Tuesday					

Year 33 CE plays therefore an important role in messianic prophecies. As the first prophecy quoted by Jesus was about the "liberty of captives" (Lk 4:1-21), which relied on a Jubilee of 50 years (Lv 25:10), Jubilees calendar allow one to check Bible chronology.

PERIOD OF THE SECOND TEMPLE (517 BCE - 133 CE)

According to the biblical text, a jubilee lasted 50 years and was ended with a release of the captives, regarded as a "jubilant" year. This system was codified after the Exodus, but as Maimonides says, even if the Sabbatical cycles (every 7 years) and Jubilee (every 50 years) were not observed, however, they were counted. The letters (a, b, c) in the table below refer to key dates marking the beginning or end of an event. The grayed areas mark periods of reigns or events in the life of a character, the dark gray areas indicate anchored periods and those coloured in blue refer to periods of 50 years of the Jubilee cycle.

609	598	588	587		539	538	518	517	468	455		-18	29	33		133
a		b	c		d			e	f	g		h	i	i		k
31	11	10	1		70			49	13		483		4	100		
					70								46			
								50			9x50		50		2x50	

- a) Beginning of the 70-year Babylonian domination (609 BCE) which ends with the seizure of Babylon by Cyrus (539 BCE). The death of King Josiah (2Ki 23:29), 4 years before the battle of Carchemish (Jr 46:2) in 605 BCE, marked the end of the Judean kingdom legitimately established. Jehoahaz was enthroned by the people and reigned only 3 months (2Ki 23:31). Pharaoh Necho II, satrap of Nebuchadnezzar from 609 BCE (Against Apion I:133-137), enthroned Jehoiakim who reigned 11 years (2Ki 23:34-36). Nebuchadnezzar then enthroned Zedekiah who reigned 11 years (2Ki 24:17-18) until the destruction of the Temple (587 BCE). Josiah's death marked the beginning of a period of 70 years of Babylonian domination (Jr 25:11-12) beginning with the reign of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 27:1-7) after the Battle of Harran (609 BCE) and ending with the destruction of Babylon. It is noteworthy that the text of Matthew sets the beginning of the captivity "of" Babylon (Βαβυλῶνος), not "at", after the reign of Josiah (Mt 1:11,17).
- b) During the 10th year of Zedekiah a jubilee "to proclaim liberty" was deliberately violated (Jr 32:1), resulting in the destruction of the Temple and deportation to Babylon. The release associated with this jubilee occurred 50 years later (Jr 34:8-11, 13-22).
- c) Destruction of the Temple dated 10/V/18 by Nebuchadnezzar (Jr 52:12,13) according to the Babylonian reckoning (October 587 BCE). This "devastation of the temple" would last 70 years (Dn 9:2).
- d) Destruction of Babylon (539 BCE) and liberation of exiles in Babylon on Cyrus' 1st year (Ezr 1:1-4) in 538 BCE.
- e) End of the 70-year desolation period and of the exile (517 BCE); beginning of a new 50-year Jubilee cycle, from the 4th year of Darius (Zc 7:1-5) in 518 BCE.
- f) First Jubilee celebrated, dated to Artaxerxes' 7th year, because Ezra's text mentions that in this year there was a tax exemption (Ezr 7:1,8,24) and a liberation of captives (Ezr 8:35). Jewish authorities agree that the count of Jubilees must start on this year²³³.
- g) Start of the 483-year period leading to the appearance of the Messiah, according to Daniel 9:25. Nehemiah adds that the command to re-establish and to rebuild Jerusalem was issued by Artaxerxes I in the 20th year of his rule (Ne 2:1,5,8). According to this calendar, the Messiah was to come 483 years after Artaxerxes' 1st year, i.e. on the 13th year (= 20 - 7) after the first Jubilee of Ezra dated to Artaxerxes' 7th year. The appearance of the Messiah foretold by Daniel then was to occur 4 years before the end of the 11th Jubilee. Eusebius had already noted this point in his *Chronicle*, where he said that Jesus started preaching on Olympiad 202:1 (29 CE), which corresponded to the 81st Jubilee according to Hebrew tradition. Eusebius dated the 71st Jubilee to 472/471 and noted that 500 years (equivalent

²³³ A. STROBEL - Ursprung und Geschichte des frühchristlichen Osterkalenders in: *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 121 (1977) pp. 92-95.

- to 10 Jubilees) elapsed between 483 and 472 BCE²³⁴.
- h) The sanctuary (*naos*) of the temple was completed in 46 years on the 1st Passover on April 30 CE (Jn 2:20), in agreement with Josephus (Jewish Antiquities XV:354, 380, 421).
- i) Appearance of the Messiah. According to Luke 3:1,23, Jesus the Messiah came in 'Tiberius' 15th year (29 CE).
- j) Messiah was cut off with nothing for himself at the half of the last week (Dn 9:26-27) [of years], i.e. 3,5 years (7/2) after his appearance around October 29 CE.
- k) Some coins dated during the revolt of Bar Korkhba were minted for a jubilee dated 133 CE, because the Bar Kokhba revolt took place over a period²³⁵ from December 131 to September 135 during which the Jews minted two coins²³⁶ dated: one of *year 1 for the redemption of Israel* (132 CE) and another one: *year 2 for the freedom of Israel* (133 CE).

The dates of Artaxerxes' reign and of the 70-year desolation period are controversial. According to the Jubilee calendar, Artaxerxes' reign would have started in 475 BCE and not in 465. This gap is of no consequence for biblical chronology. The biblical text makes a distinction between two 70-year periods: one of slavery: the "70 years for Babylon", and another one: the "70 years of desolation and exile". Let us check:

- Isaiah relates how this slavery period was to end (Is 44:28-45:13). He points out five features: The future conqueror of Babylon was: to be called Cyrus; to submit the nations; to rebuild Jerusalem; to lay the foundations of the temple and to free the Jews from their exile in Babylon. *The One saying of Cyrus: He is my shepherd, and all that I delight in he will completely carry out; even in [my] saying of Jerusalem: She will be rebuilt, and of the temple: You will have your foundation laid. This is what Jehovah has said to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of, to subdue before him nations (...) For the sake of my servant Jacob and of Israel my chosen one, I even proceeded to call you by your name; I proceeded to give you a name of honour, although you did not know me (...) I myself have roused up someone in righteousness, and all his ways I shall straighten out. He is the one that will build my city, and those of mine in exile he will let go.* Babylonian domination began in 609 and ended in 539. Those "70 years for Babylon" were succeeded by a period that would close with the end of the exile and the rebuilding of the temple.
- *And in the 1st year of Cyrus [in -538] the king of Persia, that Jehovah's word from the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah roused the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia so that he caused a cry to pass through all his realm, and also in writing, saying: This is what Cyrus the king of Persia has said: All the kingdoms of the earth Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me, and he himself has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God prove to be with him. So let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel (Ezr 1:1-3).* A passage of the Chronicles explains that whereas the 70 years of slavery in Babylon ended at Cyrus time, the main reason for the desolation (that was still lasting in Cyrus time) was the breaking of the sabbaths.
- *So he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who (...) proceeded to burn the house of the [true] God and pull down the wall of Jerusalem (...) Furthermore, he carried off those remaining from the sword captive to Babylon (...) until the royalty of Persia began to reign [in -539]; to fulfil Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid off its sabbaths. All the days of lying desolated it kept sabbath, to fulfil 70 years. And in the 1st year of Cyrus the king of Persia, that Jehovah's word by the*

²³⁴ EUSÈBE - S. Hieronymi interpretatio chronicae Eusebii pamphili
Paris 1846 Éd. Migne *Patrologia Latina* XXVII pp. 438-442, 570-574

²³⁵ M. SARTRE – D'Alexandre à Zénobie
Paris 2001 Éd. Fayard pp. 601-607.

G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'Empire romain
Paris 2007 Éd. Errances pp. 114-116.

²³⁶ D. HENDIN – Guide to Biblical Coins
New York 2001 Ed. Amphora pp. 273-302.

mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished (...) This is what Cyrus the king of Persia has said, 'All the kingdoms of the earth Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me, and he himself has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem (2Ch 36:17-23). This explanation about the reason of the desolation already appears in the first books of the Bible.

- *I shall indeed give your cities to the sword and lay your sanctuaries desolate (...) And I, for my part, will lay the land desolate (...) And you I shall scatter among the nations (...) At that time the land will pay off its sabbaths [during] all the days of its lying desolated, while you are in the land of your enemies. At that time the land will keep sabbath, as it must repay its sabbaths. [During all] the days of its lying desolated it will keep sabbath, for the reason that it did not keep sabbath during your sabbaths when you were dwelling upon it (...) Yet I, for my part, proceeded to walk in opposition to them, and I had to bring them into the land of their enemies. Perhaps at that time their uncircumcised heart will be humbled, and at that time they will pay off their error. And I shall indeed remember my covenant (...) and the land I shall remember. All the while the land was left abandoned by them and was paying off its sabbaths while it was lying desolated without them and they themselves were paying for their error (...) And yet for all this, while they continue in the land of their enemies, I shall certainly not reject them (Lv 26:31-44).* According to this text, the desolation period starts with the destruction of the city and of its sanctuary. The land and its temple must stay desolated for 70 years, and this period includes a time of humiliation or of deportation to an enemy country. The exile is included in the 70 years, but its length is not stipulated. It is linked to the desolation, but it differs from it. The beginning of the exile at Babylon is dated to Jehoiachin's 1st year (Ezk 40:1), that is 11 years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the last exile is dated to Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year (Jr 52:30), that is 4 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the exile is at its maximum in 587, the year of the destruction of the temple (Jr 52:28-30). According to the adopted chronology, the exile at Babylon ended in the 50th year of a Jubilee [588-538]. This is what Josephus says: *[Berosus] comes down to Nabopolassar, who was king of Babylon, and of the Chaldeans. And when he was relating the acts of this king, he describes to us how he sent his son Nabuchodonosor against Egypt, and against our land, with a great army, upon his being informed that they had revolted from him; and how, by that means, he subdued them all, and set our temple that was at Jerusalem on fire; nay, and removed our people entirely out of their own country, and transferred them to Babylon; when it so happened that our city was desolate during the interval of seventy years, until the days of Cyrus king of Persia (...) These [Berosus] accounts agree with the true histories in our books; for in them it is written that Nebuchadnezzar, in the eighteenth year of his reign, laid our temple desolate, and so it lay in that state of obscurity for 50 years (Against Apion I:131,132;154).* Josephus makes a distinction between two periods: one [of slavery] of 70 years which starts at the end of Nabopolassar's reign and which ends at the beginning of Cyrus' reign, and another period of 50 years which starts at the destruction of the temple and ends with the liberation by Cyrus and his command to rebuild the temple (Ezr 1:1,2). Eusebius (Preparatio evangelica IX:40:11; X:9:3-5; X:10:3-6) also distinguishes between several periods: two periods of 70 years and another one lasting 50 years. There are the "70 years for Babylon" from 609 to 539 and the "70 years of desolation" when there was no cult rendered in the temple at Jerusalem from 587 to 537. Although Mordecai (Est 2:6) was still called a son of the exile under Xerxes' reign around 470, the bulk of the exiles had gone back to Jerusalem between 537 and 517.
- Zechariah's book throws some light on the link between the "70 years for Babylon" which ended with the fall of Babylon in 539 and the "70 years of desolation" which begin with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 587.
- *On the 24th day of the 11th month, that is, the month Shebat, in the 2nd year of Darius (...) the angel of Jehovah answered and said: O Jehovah of armies, how long will you yourself not show mercy to Jerusalem*

and to the cities of Judah, whom you have denounced these 70 years? (...) I shall certainly return to Jerusalem with mercies. My own house will be built in her (...) and a measuring line itself will be stretched out over Jerusalem (Zc 1:7,12,16). This message (dated January/February 520 BCE) announced the near end of the 70 years of desolation and the upcoming completion of the temple and rebuilding of Jerusalem.

- *And it came to pass in the 4th year of king Darius, that the word of Jehovah came unto Zechariah in the 4th day of the 9th month, even in Chislev (...) Should I weep in the 5th month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? (...) Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the 5th and in the 7th month, even these 70 years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? (Zc 7:1-5, 1901 American Standard Version). The words "these 70 years" in Zechariah 7:5 are the same as in Zechariah 1:12. They may be understood in two ways: "[in relation with] those 70 years", or "[during] those 70 years". The first meaning goes better with the context of Zechariah 1:12, the declaration being dated to Darius' 4th year [518 BCE], soon before the end of the 70-year desolation. Moreover, the fast of the 5th month that marked the destruction of the temple in 587 BCE (beginning of the desolation) was still observed in 518 BCE, since we read: "Shall I weep in the fifth month?" and not "Had I to weep in the 5th month?" This 70-year span was to end with the liberation of the captives (end of the Jubilee) and with the rebuilding of the temple, an expression of God's mercy according to Jeremiah. The temple was inaugurated soon thereafter, in Darius' 6th year in 515 (Ezr 6:15,16). The twofold period of 70 years is confirmed by a passage from Daniel.*
- *In the 1st year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes (...) I myself, Daniel, discerned by the books the number of the years concerning which the word of Jehovah had occurred to Jeremiah the prophet, for fulfilling the devastations of Jerusalem, [namebly,] 70 years (...) And now listen, O our God, to the prayer of your servant and to his entreaties, and cause your face to shine upon your sanctuary that is desolated (...) Do open your eyes and see our desolated conditions and the city that has been called by your name (Dn 9:1,2,17-24). Let us say first that Darius the Mede is called Ugbaru in a Babylonian tablet; he ruled over Babylon and appointed governors (Dn 6:1) during the 5 last months of his reign and died at the end of his 1st year of reign, on the 11 Arahshammu (November 538). So, one year after the destruction of Babylon, Daniel explains that the 70 years would also be the length of the desolation (which was to end in 517, since the temple was destroyed in 587).*

The words "desolated and devastated land" are controversial, for they can mean either a "land deserted and without inhabitants" (literal meaning) or a "land without worshippers" (religious meaning). The biblical text favours the second meaning. Indeed, the start (as well as the end) of the literal exile cannot be dated accurately, since it expands between Nebuchadnezzar's 7th and 23rd year (Jr 52:28-30) and the exile was still going on at Esther's time around 470 BCE (Est 2:6). However, the length of the religious exile (the period when there were "no worshippers") is easier to settle, since it runs from the destruction of the temple to the "liberation of the captives" on the 50th year of the Jubilee (religious meaning). The words "causing desolation (Dn 9:27)" was understood by the Jews as the disappearance of the sacrifices in the temple (and consequently of the worshippers) and not as the disappearance of the inhabitants. When we read: *by reason of my house that is waste, while you are on the run, each one in behalf of his own house (Hg 1:1,9)*, text written in Darius' 2nd year (520 BCE), we may understand also that the temple was waste of worshippers, not of people. This religious meaning is used in Ezekiel, where it is said that Egypt would be: *desolate waste (...) for 40 years (Ezk 29:10-12)*. This could not be understood in a literal way (a deporting of all Egyptian people in a foreign land would have left some traces). But the religious meaning "without worshippers" (Ezk 30:7,13) is appropriate, since Jeremiah states

that the sign (the 40-year period was beginning) would be pharaoh Hophra's death (Jr 44:29,30; Ezk 30:20-22), exactly as Zedekiah's death marked the end of worship in the temple. Pharaoh Hophra (whom Egyptian were viewing as a living god) was replaced in 570 by Amasis, a mere general, who ruled from 569 to 526. Pharaoh Hophra died a few years after the beginning of Amasis' reign, probably in 566, his death being reported as occurring soon after Amasis' 3rd year²³⁷ [in 567]. Egypt then had no visible god (Pharaoh) between 566 and 526. Herodotus wrote: *It is said however that Amasis, even when he was in a private station, was a lover of drinking and of jesting, and not at all seriously disposed (...) when finally he became king he did as follows: -as many of the gods as had absolved him and pronounced him not to be a thief, to their temples he paid no regard, nor gave anything for the further adornment of them, nor even visited them to offer sacrifice, considering them to be worth nothing and to possess lying Oracles* (The Histories II:174).

The role of the Jubilee to mark the end of a captivity is a recurrent theme in the Bible. When Zerubbabel was appointed, Ezra says: *And in the 1st year of Cyrus [538 BCE] (...) Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God prove to be with him. So let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel-he is the [true] God-which was in Jerusalem* (Ezr 1:1-3). Zerubbabel's mission was twofold: To gather the Jews (Ne 1:8,9; 7:5) and to rebuild the temple (Ezr 3:1,2): *And it must occur in that day that there will be the root of Jesse [Zerubbabel] that will be standing up as a signal for the peoples [in 538]. To him even the nations will turn inquiringly, and his resting-place must become glorious [the temple will be rebuilt] (...) to acquire the remnant of his people who will remain over 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 will certainly raise up a signal for the nations and gather the dispersed ones of Israel; and the scattered ones of Judah he will collect together from the four extremities of the earth* (Is 11:10-12). The gathering of the dispersed ones would end by a Jubilee: *The spirit of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah is upon me [Zerubbabel, according to Zechariah 4:6-14], for the reason that Jehovah has anointed me to tell good news to the meek ones. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to those taken captive [in 518/517 a Jubilee will put an end to the desolation] and the wide opening [of the eyes] even to the prisoners (...) And they must rebuild the long-standing devastated places; they will raise up even the desolated places of former times, and they will certainly make anew the devastated cities, the places desolate* (Is 61:1-4). According to the Gospels, Zerubbabel's mission foretold in details that of Jesus. We read in Luke that Jesus proclaimed a year of liberation to come (Lk 4:18), and John reports that this liberation (Jubilee year) was to exceed a traditional Jubilee (Jn 8:36). This year of liberation is linked to Jesus' death in 33 CE (Rm 8:2), which marked a Jubilee (the one of 133 CE is well attested²³⁸). The Biblical chronology, based on Jubilee cycles, then is independent from other chronologies.

THE JUBILEE CALENDAR

The Bible has a "messianic calendar"²³⁹ which relies on the regular succession of sabbatical and Jubilee years. Though this system was very old (Lv 26:33-35), it was but scarcely observed. The very reason for the 70-year deportation was precisely the breaking of the sabbatical years (2Ch 36:21). And the liberation that happened after Babylon's destruction in 539, when the 70-year Babylonian domination (609-539) was over, is associated with Daniel's 70 weeks messianic prophecy. Some testimonies attest that the sabbatical years system was partly observed, as well as the exemption from certain debts.

²³⁷ G. DARESSY - Stèle de l'an III d'Amasis

in: Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie Paris 1900 pp. 1-9.

²³⁸ J. FINEGAN - Handbook of Biblical Chronology

Massachusetts 1999 Ed. Hendrickson Publishers pp. 125-126.

²³⁹ J.-F. LEFEBVRE - Le jubilé biblique

Göttingen 2003 Éd. Universitaires Fribourg pp. 77,85.

Some scholars have tried to reconstitute this calendar. According to the biblical text, the 7th year is a sabbatical one (Ex 23:10,11), and the 50th year (Lv 25:8-11) was a Jubilee year. Some recent Jewish authorities include the Jubilee in the 49th year, but the Talmud²⁴⁰ and the biblical text show that the Jubilee was the 50th year. Though they were not observed, Jubilees were counted. However, in the 2nd century before C.E. some Jewish mystics suggested that the liturgical calendar based on observation be replaced by a theological calendar based on computation. For example, we read in the Book of Jubilees (written between 150 and 100) that Jubilees were to last 49 years and that the year was to be 364-day long (Book of Jubilees VI:30-38). The Book of Enoch (c. 100-50) divides each year into four 3-month seasons, the 3 months being respectively 30, 30 and 31 days long; and it specifies that such year was 10 days longer than the 354-day lunar year (Book of Enoch LXXIV:10-LXXII:6). These mystic calendars²⁴¹, dissociated from observation, influenced Qumran Essenes. Anyway, in the 1st century, the Jubilee was generally considered as a 50-year period. Philo of Alexandria (*De specialibus legibus* II:110-117) explained (c. 30 CE) the reasons for a 50-year Jubilee, and Josephus wrote in the 1st century: *They should do the same after 7 times 7 years, which in all are 50 years; and that 50th year is called by the Hebrews The Jubilee, wherein debtors are freed from their debts, and slaves are set at liberty; which slaves became such, though they were of the same stock, by transgressing some of those laws the punishment of which was not capital, but they were punished by this method of slavery. This year also restores the land to its former possessors in the manner following: - When the Jubilee is come, which name denotes liberty* (Jewish antiquities III:281-283). The counting of Jubilees became controversial in 130 CE, when a Talmud commentary (Nedarim 61a) related two different ways of counting the Jubilees: either every 49 or every 50 years. The Jews possibly were influenced by Babylonian chronology, since, according to tradition, the counting of Jubilees started again in Ezra time, in Artaxerxes' 7th year (dated to 458/457). The "freedom" year celebrated by Bar Kokhba thus fell in 131/132 if we go by 49-year Jubilees, but in 143/144 if we go by 50-year Jubilees. Indeed, if Artaxerxes' 7th year is dated to 468/467, Bar Kokhba's Jubilee did fall in 133/134.

The year of debts "remission" (*shemita* in Hebrew) might point to the sabbatical year (Dt 15:1), but its exceptional "release (Dt 15:12)" aspect makes it apply only to the Jubilee year, also called a "year of liberty" for captives (Lv 25:10). In actual practice, regarding fallowing land and debts remission (returning of land possessions does not seem to have ever been applied), the Jubilee year looked the same as a second sabbatical year. It is possible to reconstitute this calendar from historical and archeological evidence. As a religious calendar, it starts on 1st Nisan. Only after the exile appeared a civil year beginning on 1st Tishri, as in surrounding nations, and ended with harvest (Ex 23:16); but the biblical calendar was still beginning in Nisan (Ex 12:2). Even if the passages of Nehemia 1:1 and 2:1 caused much ink to flow, the beginning of the year still was Nisan, since Nehemia first mentioned Kislev of the 20th year (after he came in Susa), then Nisan of Artaxerxes' 20th year. He further mentioned a 7th month (Ne 7:73) duly counted from Nisan (Ne 8:17,18). Sabbatical years and Jubilees also began in Nisan. The Talmud is less clear on this point, as this question was a theoretical rather than a practical matter. The Jerusalem Talmud (Rosh Hashana III:4) notes that Tishri is spoken of as the 7th month of the Jubilee (Lv 25:9), which means that the first month was Nisan. Moreover, if the Jubilee year had begun in Tishri, it would have been on the 10th day, and so the nine first days would not belong to any year. According to Leviticus, the day chosen for sanctifying the Jubilee year was the day

²⁴⁰ R. SAMUEL – le livre des 613 commandements
Paris 1974 Éd. C.L.K.H 253-256.

²⁴¹ U. GLESSMER – Calendars in the Qumran Scrolls
in: The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty years Vol. II. 1999 Leiden pp. 213-237.

of the liberation of slaves, the Yom Kippur (Lv 23:27). The problem of knowing whether a debt could be cancelled in the case of a cow that had been bought at the end of the sabbatical year on a doubled month (necessarily Adar) and had been cut up early the next year show that the sabbatical year ended in Adar and did begin in Nisan (Shebi'ith X:2). The Jubilee year also began on 1st Nisan, but was celebrated only on 10th Tishri.

HISTORICALLY ATTESTED SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS

The Bar Kokhba revolt²⁴² took place over a period which may be dated from December 131 to September 135 during which the Jews minted coins²⁴³, the first one dated *year 1 for the redemption of Israel* (132) then, *year 2 for the freedom of Israel* (133):

year	month	[A]	[B]	[C]	
131	8	V	15	[48]	[A] reign of Hadrian [C] No of year within the Sabbatical cycle
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
132	1	X	0	[49]	<i>Year 1 for the redemption of Israel</i> [C] Sabbatical year
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
133	1	X	16	[50]	Quintus Tineius Rufus <i>governor of Judaea</i> G. Q. Certus Publicius Marcellus <i>governor of Syria</i>
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
134	1	X	17	[50]	<i>Year 2 for the freedom of Israel</i> [C] Jubilee year
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
135	1	X	18	[1]	<i>For the Freedom of Israel</i>
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			
	12	IX			
135	1	X	19	[2]	<i>For the Freedom of Israel</i> G. M. F. Sextus Iulius Severus <i>governor of Palestine</i> Death of Bar Kochba in Bethar <i>Papyrus Mur 30,8 dated 21 Tishri year 4 of the freedom of Israel</i>
	2	XI			
	3	XII			
	4	I			
	5	II			
	6	III			
	7	IV			
	8	V			
	9	VI			
	10	VII			
	11	VIII			

²⁴² 3 years and 6 months are accounted for in Hadrian's reign, when Jerusalem was completely destroyed and the Jewish nation was massacred in large groups at a time, with the result that they were even expelled from the borders of Judaea (Commentary on Daniel 9:27).

²⁴³ D. HENDIN – Guide to Biblical Coins
New York 2001 Ed. Amphora pp. 273-302.

According to Dio Cassius (Roman History LXIX:12-15), the Jews revolted shortly after Hadrian's passage on his second visit (August 131), when he decided to transform the city of Jerusalem into Colonia Aelia Capitolina. Eusebius, in his Chronicle, dates the suppression of the revolt in the 16th year of Hadrian (which started at 8 August), in agreement with the archives of the house of Babatha which stop on 19 August 132 (last document dated consuls Gaius Serrius Augurinus and Publius Trebius Sergianus 14 days before the Kalends of September)²⁴⁴. The war reached its climax the 18th year of Hadrian in 134 (Ecclesiastical History IV:6:3). The last document from the revolt²⁴⁵ is dated 21 Tishri, 4th year of the liberation of Israel (October 135). The 1st year of redemption (גאולת) therefore began around April 132 and the 2nd year of freedom (חרות) around April 133.



Jerusalem Year 1 for the redemption of Israel

Jerusalem Year 2 for the freedom of Israel

The Bar Kokhba war was conducted primarily to achieve a religious release rather than a political revolt for at least three reasons: the coins minted during the revolt were not dated his reign, there is no coins of year 3 and 4 of Simon²⁴⁶, the Jerusalem Talmud (Taanit 68d) reports that the famous Rabbi Akiba applied to Bar Kokhba the messianic prophecy of the *Star rising from Jacob* (Nb 24:17), the name of Bar Koseba²⁴⁷ was also changed to Bar Kokhba "son of the star" to match the prophecy and the first coin was minted commemorating the "redemption of Israel", characterizing the buyout of the sabbatical year. A receipt also evokes this religious year²⁴⁸: *On the twentieth of Shebat, Year two of the redemption of Israel by Simeon ben Kosiba, Prince of Israel, in the encampment situated at Herodium, Judah ben Baba said to Hillel ben Garis, "I of my own free will have subleased over to your jurisdiction on a sharecropping basis, this day, the land that is in my landholding which I leased on a sharecropping basis from Simeon Prince of Israel. This land have I subleased over to your jurisdiction from this day until the end of the eve of the release, which are full years, fiscal years five. (This is) the rent which I shall pay to you at Herodium*²⁴⁹. The 20th of Shebat (month X) Year 2 (February 134) matches the end of the Jubilee year. The normal sabbatical cycle of 7 years has 6 fiscal years but the 7th cycle (Jubilee) has only 5 fiscal years (= 7 years of the cycle - [1 sabbatical year + 1 jubilee year]).

Some evidence shows that the system of sabbatical and jubilee years was partially observed (as was the exemption of certain payments) which enables us to reconstruct this calendar. According to the biblical text, the 7th year is a sabbatical year (Ex 23:10,11) and the 50th year is a Jubilee year (Lv 25:8-11). Some recent Jewish authorities include the Jubilee in the 49th year, but the Talmud²⁵⁰ and the Bible show that the jubilee year was the 50th. Even unobserved, jubilees were numbered. However, from the 2nd century BCE, some mystical Jews proposed to replace the liturgical calendar based on observation by a theological

²⁴⁴ Y. YADIN – Guide to Biblical Coins

Jerusalem 1989, Ed. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem pp. 28-29,116-117.

²⁴⁵ E. SCHÜRER – The History of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)

Edinburgh 1987 Ed. T. & T. Clark LTD pp. 535-557.

²⁴⁶ J. MALTIEL-GERSTENFELD – 260 Years of Ancient Jewish Coins

Tel Aviv 1982, Ed. Kol Printing Service Ltd pp. 200-227.

²⁴⁷ In fact, Bar Koseba "son of like-Seba(?)" was renamed Bar Kozeba "son of falsehood" after his failure to be the Messiah.

²⁴⁸ J. FINEGAN - Handbook of Biblical Chronology

Massachusetts 1999, Ed. Hendrickson Publishers pp. 125-130.

²⁴⁹ J.A. FITZMYER – The Semitic Background of the New Testament

Michigan 1997, Ed. Eerdmans Publishing pp. 325-330.

²⁵⁰ R. SAMUEL – le livre des 613 commandements

Paris 1974 Éd. C.L.K.H 253-256.

calendar based on calculations. We read, for example, in the Book of Jubilees (c. 160-150) that the jubilee should be 49 years and a year had to last 364 days (Book of Jubilees VI:30-38). The Book of Enoch (c. 100-50) divides the year into 4 regular seasons of 3 months respectively 30, 30 and 31 days, indicating that this year was 10 days longer than the lunar year of 354 days (Book of Enoch LXXIV:10-LXXII:6). These mystical calendars, unrelated to observation, influenced the Essenes of Qumran²⁵¹. However, in the 1st century, the majority opinion saw the jubilee a period of 50 years. Philo (De specialibus legibus II:110-117) for example explains (c. 30 CE) the reasons a Jubilee lasts 50 years and Josephus wrote (c. 95): *He ordained, that they should do the same after 7 times 7 years, which in all are 50 years; and that 50th year is called by the Hebrews The Jubilee, wherein debtors are freed from their debts, and slaves are set at liberty; which slaves became such, though they were of the same stock, by transgressing some of those laws the punishment of which was not capital, but they were punished by this method of slavery. This year also restores the land to its former possessors in the manner following: - When the Jubilee is come, which name denotes liberty* (Jewish Antiquities III:281-283).

Counting the jubilees became controversial, however, from 135 CE. According to a comment from the Talmud (Nedarim 61a), the 50th year of Jubilee was to be counted as the first of the next cycle. It is possible that Babylonian chronology influenced the Jews because, according to tradition, the counting of jubilees started with Ezra in the 7th year of Artaxerxes (dated 458/457 in the Babylonian king lists). The year of "freedom" celebrated by Bar Kokhba fell therefore in 131/132, according to the reckoning of jubilees of 49 years, but 143/144 with biblical jubilees of 50 years. In fact, if the 7th year of Artaxerxes is correctly dated in 468/467 the jubilee of Bar Kokhba falls actually in 133/134.

The year of "release (*shemittah* in Hebrew)" of debts may designate a sabbatical year, but with its unique aspect of "liberation" this term applies only to the Jubilee Year which is also described as "year of liberation" of captives (Dt 15:1,12, Lv 25:10). In practice, the set-aside of land and the release of debts (restitution of properties was never applied), the jubilee year was like a doubled sabbatical year. As religious calendar, jubilee cycle begins at 1st Nisan. It was only after the Exile that there was a calendar year beginning on 1st Tishri like other nations in the region (harvest ending the agricultural year according to Exodus 23:16). But the biblical calendar began in Nisan (Ex 12:2). Even if the passages from Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 have spilled much ink, the beginning of the year remains Nisan²⁵² as Nehemiah speaks first of Kislev 20th year (20th year since his arrival at Susa) then of Nisan 20th year of Artaxerxes. Besides, he then speaks of the 7th month corresponding to a year beginning in Nisan (Ne 7:73, 8:17-18). Sabbatical years and jubilees also began in Nisan. On this issue the Talmud (written after 200 CE) is less clear, because it was more a theoretical issue than practical. In the Jerusalem Talmud the 7th month of a jubilee is mentioned at Tishri (Rosh Hashana III:4), so the 1st month of a jubilee was Nisan. In addition, if the Jubilee Year began in Tishri, from the text of Leviticus 25:9, it would have been the 10th. However, in this case, the first 9 days would belong to a year that does not exist. The day chosen to sanctify the jubilee year corresponded to the day of liberation of slaves, on Yom Kippur (Lv 23:27). The issue of whether a debt is cancelled in the case of a cow purchased at the end of the sabbatical year, during a month doubled (thus necessarily Adar), and butchered at the beginning of the following year, shows that sabbatical year ended at Adar and began from Nisan (Shebi'ith X:2). In fact, jubilee year also began on 1 Nisan, but was celebrated on 10 Tishri this year. Sabbatical and Jubilee years attested historically:

²⁵¹ U. GLESSMER – Calendars in the Qumran Scrolls
in: The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty years Vol. II. 1999 Leiden pp. 213-237.

²⁵² J. FINEGAN - Handbook of Biblical Chronology
Massachusetts 1999 Ed. Hendrickson Publishers p. 167.

- After the Bar Kokhba revolt, sabbatical years (release) were counted but no longer the year of liberation (Jubilee) as can be seen from the dates on some tombstones: *10 of month Shebat, the 3rd year of the sabbatical cycle, year 346 of the destruction of the Temple (415/416), 1st of month of Marheshwan, the 1st year of the release, year 364 of the destruction of the Temple (433/434), 3 of Adar, 7th year of the release, year 385 of the destruction of the Temple (454/455), 3 of Kislev, the 5th year of the sabbatical cycle, year 390 the destruction of the Temple (459/460)*²⁵³. The destruction of the Temple in 70 CE being dated 9 Ab (5th month), year 1 of the destruction of the Temple was from 1 Tishri (7th month) 69 CE to 1 Tishri 70 CE, and year 346 ran from 1 Tishri 415 to 1 Tishri 416. As year 433 is not mentioned as a Jubilee, counting jubilees (of 50 years) seems to have ceased after 134 CE.
- 132/133, **133/134** -A contract dated to Bar Kokhba time (papyrus Mur 24 E) mentions a Jubilee year: *20th Shevat year 2 of the redemption of Israel by Shimeon ben Kosba, prince of Israel (...) This land I rented it to you from this day until the end of the eve of the release, which are full years, fiscal years five.* The 20th Shevat of year 2 corresponds to February 134 CE. The Jubilee year then ended in March/April (Nisan) 134 CE. The contract was to expire at the next sabbatical year, 5 years later, that is in 139/140. Then year 132/133, which preceded the Jubilee year, was indeed a sabbatical year²⁵⁴.
- 68/69 -According to the Talmud (Taanith 29a), Jerusalem's temple was destroyed the year after a sabbatical year. The reckoning of years after the destruction of the temple is peculiar because this "one year after the destruction [of the Temple]" is from 9 Ab (5 August 70) to 1 Tishri (25 September 70), Year 2 is up to the next 1 Tishri (13 October 71). This "year 1" corresponding to the year 69/70 with a beginning on 1st Nisan, the previous year was therefore 68/69.
- 54/55 -A papyrus from Murabbaat, dated to Nero's 2nd year (13 October 55 to 12 October 56) mentions a sabbatical year²⁵⁵ that was in progress in 55, it was then year 54/55 (if counted from Tishri to Tishri).
- 40/41 -The Mishna (Sotah 7:8) relates that King Agrippa I read passages of Deuteronomy in the synagogue on the 1st day of the Sukkoth festival, in the 8th year, at the end of the sabbatical year. This event could only have occurred when Agrippa began to rule over Judea after having been appointed by emperor Claudius (41-54), that is in 41. The 8th year being 41/42, the preceding sabbatical year was 40/41.
- 33/34 -At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus preached a year of release to come (Lk 4:18), and he specified that it (Jubilee year) would be greater than that of a traditional Jubilee (Jn 8:36). This year of release is linked to his death (Romans 8:2) on 14th Nisan 33 which then marked the start of a Jubilee. As the Jews no longer observed sabbatical and Jubilee years, the New Testament does not mention it. However it can be noted that Jesus began preaching to large crowds only on 1st Nisan 32, which marked the start of the sabbatical year (Jn 6:1-10), and that the colt borrowed in Nisan 33 (Mk 11:3) was not paid for according to buying practices of the Jubilee year (Lv 25:13-16).
- 40/39 -According to Josephus (Jewish Antiquities 14:16:2-4), Herod was appointed as king by Rome (around winter 40/39)²⁵⁶ and began besieging Jerusalem during the spring

²⁵³ Y. WILFAND – Aramaic Tomstones from Zoar and Jewish Conceptions of the Afterlife in: *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40 (2009) pp. 510-539.

B.Z. WATCHOLDER - The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973) pp. 169-171, 182-183.

²⁵⁴ J. FINEGAN - Handbook of Biblical Chronology Massachusetts 1999 Ed. Hendrickson Publishers pp. 116-130

²⁵⁵ B.Z. WATCHOLDER - The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period in: *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973) pp. 169-171.

²⁵⁶ C. SAULNIER - Histoire d'Israël Paris 1985 Éd. cerf p. 195

of a sabbatical year. Herod conquered the city in 37, but the spring in question refers to the beginning of the campaign, that is 40/39 and not 37.

- 133/132 -According to the Book of Maccabees, Simon went to Jericho in 177, in the 11th month (Shebat), and was killed with his two sons by Ptolemy (1M 16:14-16). Josephus specifies that this happened during a sabbatical year (Jewish Antiquities 13:8:1,2) which he dated to the 162nd Olympiad (132). Since the Seleucid year started in April 311, the year 177 corresponds to 133, and the sabbatical year is 133/132.
- 161/160 -According to the Book of Maccabees (1M 6:20,49), the siege of Bethsur began in 150 during a sabbatical year. Since the Seleucid year started in April 311 BCE, the year 150 ended in April 161 BCE, and the sabbatical year is 161/160 (from Tishri to Tishri).
- 333/332 -Josephus (Jewish Antiquities 11:8:4-5) says that when Alexander besieged Tyre, he requested the high-priest Yaddus to pay him the tribute formerly paid to Darius III. Because Yaddus explained it was then the 7th year (sabbatical year), the Jews were exempted. As the siege of Tyre ended approximately in June/July 332²⁵⁷, and since it began seven months earlier according to Josephus (i.e. in November/December 333), the 7th year should have begun toward March/April (Nisan) 333 BCE.
- 454/453 -Nehemia's text (Ne 10:31) mentions a 7th sabbatical year that would have taken place after Artaxerxes' 20th year (Ne 2:1), when Jerusalem walls were rebuilt and the Festival of Booths on the 7th month was celebrated (Ne 8:14). This sabbatical year would be dated to Artaxerxes' 21st year.
- 468/467 -Ezra's text (Ezr 7:24) tells about a tax exemption in Artaxerxes' 7th year (Ezr 7:1-8), the year captives were released (Ezr 8:35). On this ground, Jewish authorities agree that Jubilees must be counted again from that date. Maimonides wrote in a treaty on this question: *With Ezra remissions (shemitah) started being counted and after 7 of them the 50th year was sanctified. Even if the Jubilee was not observed [in the economical field, not in the liturgical one], those years were nevertheless counted for the remission to be sanctified*²⁵⁸.
- 518/517 -Since the Jubilee cycle was in relation to the worship organized from the temple, it seems logical to have this calendar begin with the dedication of the temple. Zechariah's text specifies that God approved the temple in Darius I's 4th year (Zc 7:1,5,14, 8:9-19), that is in 518/517.
- 588/587 -Jubilee (not celebrated), dated the 10th year of Zedekiah (Jr 32:1). It was a jubilee (violated) because it referred to "proclaim liberty" and was preceded by a sabbatical year (Jr 34:8,14-17)" in the 9th year of Zedekiah (Jr 39:1, 34:7).

Though Jubilees were not observed, they are attested in two ways: either by the specific phrase "to proclaim liberty" which was not used in relation with the sabbatical year, or by the indication of two successive sabbatical years. For example, in the Murabbaat papyrus, the year of redemption (גאולת), i.e. the sabbatical year, is followed by the year of liberty (חרות), i.e. the Jubilee year²⁵⁹.

Cycle	Year	Year of the rebellion	Theme of the coin	Biblical year name
49	132/133	1	Year of redemption	Sabbatical year
50	133/134	2	Year of liberty	Jubilee year

The length of a Jubilee can be estimated from biblical periods: The 1st Jubilee cycle began after the entrance in the Promised Land (1488 BCE) and ended in Zedekiah's 10th

²⁵⁷ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandrie à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique Paris 2001 Éd. Fayard pp. 74-79

²⁵⁸ MAIMONIDES - *Hilchot Shemita VeYovel* 10:47 (en hébreu). Sive R. Mosis filii Maimon Tractatus de juribus anni septimi et jubilaei, Frankfurt 1708 Ed. Henricus Maius

²⁵⁹ D. HENDIN - Guide to Biblical Coins New York 2001 Ed. Amphora pp. 283-302.

year (588 BCE). This period lasted exactly 900 years, i.e. 18 x 50-year Jubilees. Between the sabbatical year of 133 and the one of 161, there are 28 years, that is 4 sabbatical years (4 x 7-year periods). Between the sabbatical year of 333 and the one of 133, there are 200 years, that is 4 x 50-year Jubilees²⁶⁰. The dates of the Jubilees then can be fixed as follows:

These dates can be calculated with the equation $Y = aX + b$, with: X = Jubilee number, Y = date, $a = 50$ and $b = -517^*$ (518 BCE). The length of a Jubilee then is 50 years and the date of the first one in Artaxerxes I's 7th year is 468 BCE and not 458 BCE. According to this calendar, since the first Jubilee started in Artaxerxes' 7th year and the Messiah was to appear 483 years after Artaxerxes' 20th year ($20 - 7 = 13^{\text{th}}$ year of his reign), the Messiah announced by Daniel was to appear 4 years before the end of the 11th Jubilee. Eusebius already noticed this coincidence in his *Chronicle*. He wrote that Jesus began his ministry in Olympiad 202:1 (29 CE), this year corresponding to the 81st Jubilee in Hebrew tradition. Eusebius also dated the 71st Jubilee to 472/471 and remarked that between those two dates there was a 500-year span equivalent to 10 Jubilees²⁶¹. Even if historical testimonies about Jubilees are not numerous, they confirm that the Jubilee cycle was 50 years long. Biblical testimonies on Jubilees also are scarce (because Jubilees were only counted), but they give some important chronological markers. The words "on the 7th year" indicates a sabbatical year, and the words "year to proclaim liberty" indicates a Jubilee year.

- **1488** Beginning of the Jubilee cycle, according to the Leviticus text, which stipulates: *When you eventually come into the land that I am giving you, then the land must observe a sabbath* (Leviticus 25:2). The Israelites were given the land by Joshua after a 5-year conquest (Jos 11:23; 14:7,10). Scholars²⁶² noticed that the biblical Jubilee is associated to a process: "God brings out to give something." God brought the Israelites out of Egypt to give them a land, in the same manner that He brought Abraham out of Ur to give him an heir (Isaac) who was to take possession of the gate of his enemies (Gn 22:17). The births of Abraham in 2038 and Isaac in 1938 resemble Jubilee events.
- **588** Non-celebrated Jubilee dated to Zedekiah's 10th year (Jr 32:1). It was a true Jubilee since the very Jubilee prescription to "proclaim liberty" had been broken. This Jubilee had been preceded by a sabbatical year the 7th year (Jr 34:8,14-17) in Zedekiah's 9th year (Jr 39:1; 34:7).
- **538** Liberation (in a political sense) from Babylon under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who was appointed as governor in Cyrus' 1st year (Ezr 1:1,4) to restore the temple and gather other captives disseminated in Egypt, Assyria, etc. End of the first Jubilee cycle.
- **518** Liberation (in a religious sense) under the leadership of high-priest Joshua in Darius' 4th year (Zechariah 7:1), after a 70-year period without worship (Zc 7:4; 8:9,15). Joshua seemingly accomplished Isaiah's promise to "proclaim liberty (Is 61:2)". This release inaugurated a new Jubilee cycle.
- **468** Ezra's text mentions a tax exemption (Ezr 7:24) and a release of captives (Ezr 8:35) in Artaxerxes' 7th year (Ezr 7:1-8).
- **33** Jesus applies to himself Isaiah's promise to "preach a release to the captives (Lk 4:18)". This Jubilee release is associated to Jesus' death (Ga 5:1) and is said to be greater than the release of a traditional Jubilee (Jn 8:36).

²⁶⁰ A 49-year Jubilee cycle (even with a maximum error of 2 years when the beginning at Tishri or Nisan is unknown) makes no sense, since the 200-year span = 28 x 7-year periods + 4 years. Along the same lines, there are 172 years (= 4x50 - 4x7) between the sabbatical year of 40 and the one of 133, and 172 years = 24 x 7-year periods + 4 years. The 4-year gap exceeds the possible 2-year error.

²⁶¹ EUSÈBE - S. Hieronymi interpretatio chronicæ Eusebii pamphili Paris 1846 Éd. Migne *Patrologia Latina* XXVII pp. 438-442, 570-574.

²⁶² J.-F. LEFEBVRE - Le jubilé biblique Göttingen 2003 Éd. Universitaires Fribourg pp. 369,370.

Annex

Dating the last Passover of Jesus (by the hour)

Abstract. The last days of Jesus are extremely well documented in the Gospels because they constitute about 30% of their content. Furthermore the last Passover of Jesus which occurred during this short period of time (one week) is historically fundamental for understanding the origin of Easter for Christians or the Pesach seder for Jews. Paradoxically, despite many studies on the chronological matter of knowing with accuracy the date of the Last Supper (13, 14 or even 12 Nisan), there is still no consensus. Most current historical studies either fail to establish a chronology anchored to absolute dates, or sometimes replace chronological data from ancient documents by some crafty guesses. Actually, all these studies agree that many events in the Gospels are partly anachronistic or wrongly reported. These findings are extremely damaging for believers because they destroy trust and confidence in the biblical accounts, which would not be historically accurate but only used for building "founding myths". A rigorous chronological study of historical documents prove on the contrary that Jesus ate the Passover lamb just after sunset on Friday 14 Nisan according to the biblical commandment (c. 18:00 Thursday 2 April 33 CE), and died just before the end of that day (15:00 Friday 3 April). The dating of Jesus' death is easy to determine since Jesus was baptized in 29 CE (Lk 3:1-23), celebrated 4 Passovers (Jn 1:28-32; 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 12:1) and was killed on Friday 14 Nisan (John 19:31). In addition, when he died there was a lunar eclipse, described as "blood into moon" (Ac 2:20), dated on Friday 3 April 33 CE, which was viewed in Jerusalem from 17:50 to 18:30 according to astronomy. Consequently an accurate examination rather shows the consistency of chronological data from the Bible and inconsistency of assumptions from so called "debunkers".

The death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the grave : a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels is a magisterial commentary on the Gospel passion narratives by Raymond E. Brown, Professor Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary. It is the *opus magnum* of a distinguished scholar. Within the covers of 2 massive volumes, the author offers a virtually exhaustive analysis of the historical and exegetical issues that confront readers of these narratives. It is considered as an indispensable reference tool for those studying the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death and its conclusion is scathing: *My judgment is that the various attempts to reconcile the chronological discrepancies between the Synoptics and John are implausible, unnecessary and misleading. The two Gospel traditions have given us irreconcilable chronological notices* (Yale University Press 2010, Vol 2, p. 1369). Although this final finding is the result of an impressive study of 2,485 pages, one can easily see, in only one line, that it is false because *the Passover mentioned in John 18:28; 19:14 is not the family Passover instituted by Moses and which was to be eaten on 14 Nisan at night (Ex 12:8) but the "sacrifice of peace", also called Passover in the Talmud (Tractate Pesakhim), celebrated in the temple of Jerusalem on 14 Nisan at 15:00 (Ac 3:1).* In fact, the so-called chronological discrepancies found in the Gospels come mainly from some scholarly ravings which have appeared in the later Talmud. John P. Meier, in his book: *Jesus, A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, devoted much of his research to determining the exact date of Jesus' death and suggested as well: *As a corollary, I would add two advantages to the solution I propose which contradicts (sic) the synoptic chronology* (Cerf 2004, pp. 235-262)! This hypothesis (which is widely spread)²⁶³, is unacceptable because if Jesus and his disciples would have celebrated the Passover one day earlier (or two), they would have been in breach of the official calendar of the Temple²⁶⁴, which is inconceivable given the legalism that prevailed at the time (Ga 4:10). According to the Gospels Jesus fulfilled the Jewish Law (Mt 5:17-18)

²⁶³ A. JAUBERT – La date de la Cène. Calendrier biblique et liturgie chrétienne Paris 1957 Éd. J. Gabalda pp. 134-136.

C.J. HUMPHREYS – The Mystery of the Last Supper. Reconstructing the Final Days of Jesus Cambridge 2011 Ed. Cambridge University Press pp. 1-11.

²⁶⁴ In the same way it is unlikely that the Essenes living away from the Temple and who proposed a dissident schedule have actually practiced it. Indeed, their (theoretical) solar year with only 364 days (= 4x[13x7]) instead of 365 was out of sync with the observation and would have included 5 days late after only 4 years and so 50 days late after 40 years!

and ate the Passover with his disciples (Lk 22:8,11) as was the custom (Col 2:16-17; 1Co 5:7-8). The dating of Jesus' death on Friday 3 April 33 CE has long been accepted, both by religious authorities²⁶⁵ and by historians²⁶⁶, but it is currently assumed in 30 CE by the official Bible of Catholicism (Jerusalem Bible²⁶⁷), or even 29 CE by some researchers. Depuydt's study²⁶⁸ is representative of the arguments used. He began his study by stating that since the beginning of the 20th century the date 29 CE is almost universally accepted, which is obviously false (unfortunately nobody checks). He then asserts that evangelical sources are contradictory, some placing the death of Jesus at the beginning of the day and others at the end of the day and then at the beginning of 15 Nisan²⁶⁹. This assertion is based on later Jewish speculations. Passover was to be celebrated on the night of 14 Nisan according to the text of Exodus 12:1-8 and in the Jewish calendar, evening (appearing with sunset) is prior to morning (Gn 1:5-31) contrary to the Julian calendar in which morning is prior to evening. Thus this festival took place at the beginning of 14 Nisan, just after the sunset of 13 Nisan, and not at the end of 14, which is early 15 Nisan.

Before establishing an accurate chronology of the Last Supper (which should be the role of any serious historian) it is necessary to consider why the Jews today celebrate the Passover on 15 Nisan instead of 14 as the Bible clearly indicates (Lv 23:5), as well as the early Jewish historians (1st century CE) and the Talmud itself. Incredible as it may seem there were never any controversies in the first century about the preparation and eating of the paschal lamb neither in the Bible nor in the Talmud. The only discussions that are found are the following: if Passover fell on a Sabbath what could be prepared, at what time the preparation of the Passover was to start and at what time sacrifices (Lv 3:1-17) may be offered at the Temple? It reads²⁷⁰: *If 14 Nisan occurred on the Sabbath we must remove everything that needs to be done before the Sabbath, according to Rabbi Meir; the sages say: in its time. Rabbi Eleazar ben Zadok: sacred sampling before the Sabbath, profane foods in their time (...) The sages say: in Judea one worked on the eve of Passover until noon, but in Galilee they did absolutely nothing; about at night, Shammaites prohibited work, Hillelites permitted until sunrise (...) The evening daily sacrifice was slain at eight and a half [14:30] and offered to nine and a half [15:30]. On the eve of Passover they advanced all one hour that it was an ordinary day or a Sabbath. If the eve of Passover falls on a Sabbath day, they kill at six and a half [12:30] and one offers at seven and a half [13:30] and then (they slaughter) the Passover. Rabbi Ishmael ensures that follows the same week and the Sabbath, Rabbi Akiba is that the order followed the Sabbath is the same as the day before Passover falling one day before the Sabbath; the reason of the latter, one must leave room for the daily sacrifice (...) We offer a victim festival at the same time as lamb when it is sacrificed on a weekday (...) on the eve of Passover, close to the sacrifice of the afternoon [15:00], we do not eat anything until the night [from 18:00] (...) We must eat it the night before midnight [24:00].* These comments relate only to the exact time (hour), not to the day, showing that the legislation of that time was not fixed. Jewish writers of the 1st century as Philo of Alexandria (Questions and Answers on Exodus I:11) and Josephus confirm that the offering of the sacrifice of peace was used to designate the day of Passover: *When came the feast called Passover, during which the Jews offer sacrifices from the 9th to the 11th hour [15:00 to 17:00]* (Jewish War

²⁶⁵ The extraordinary Jubilee proclaimed in 1933 by Pius XI celebrated the 1900th anniversary of the death of Jesus.

²⁶⁶ G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'empire romain Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 46.

²⁶⁷ ÉCOLE BIBLIQUE DE JÉRUSALEM – La Bible de Jérusalem

Paris 1986 (imprimatur 23 juillet 1973) Éd. Cerf p. 1821.

²⁶⁸ L. DEPUYDT – The Date of Death of Jesus of Nazareth

in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122:3 (2002) pp. 466-480.

²⁶⁹ His reconstruction is based on the assumption of a 1st lunar day coinciding with the 1st visible crescent. If Depuydt rightly noted that this observation depended on the weather (mainly clouds) and could be flawed by an error of 1 day, however, in this case, there was a delay (due to observation failure) and not an advance of 1 day.

²⁷⁰ J. BONSRIVEN - Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siècles

Roma 1985 Ed. Pontificio Istituto Biblico pp. 200-218.

VI:423). Flavius Josephus reminds one that according to the Bible, Passover was on 14 Nisan and the 7 days of the festival of Unleavened Bread began on 15 Nisan (Jewish Antiquities III:248-249). Passover could be eaten just after dark but before midnight (Tosephta Pesakhim 1:34; 5:13). According to Philo of Alexandria (c. -20 to 50), a Jewish philosopher: *after the feast of the new moon comes the fourth festival, that of the Passover, which the Hebrews call Pascha, on which the whole people offer sacrifice, beginning at noonday [12:00] and continuing till evening [18:00]. And this festival is instituted in remembrance of, and as giving thanks for, their great migration which they made from Egypt, with many myriads of people, in accordance with the commands of God given to them; leaving then, as it seems, a country full of all inhumanity and practicing every kind of inhospitality, and (what was worst of all) giving the honour due to God to brute beasts; and, therefore, they sacrificed at that time themselves out of their exceeding joy, without waiting for priests (...) each house is at that time invested with the character and dignity of a temple, the victim being sacrificed so as to make a suitable feast for the man who has provided it and of those who are collected to share in the feast, being all duly purified with holy ablutions. And those who are to share in the feast come together not as they do to other entertainments, to gratify their bellies with wine and meat, but to fulfil their hereditary custom with prayer and songs of praise. And this universal sacrifice of the whole people is celebrated on the 14th day of the month [after 18:00 and before 24:00], which consists of two periods of 7, in order that nothing which is accounted worthy of honour may be separated from the number 7. But this number is the beginning of brilliancy and dignity to everything* (The Special Laws II:145-149). The comment of Josephus shows that many Jews used to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover but the sacrifices mentioned were those associated with the prestigious "Passover" made by the priests in the Temple: *So these high priests, upon the coming of that feast which is called the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the 9th hour till the 11th [15:00 to 17:00] (...) Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city [Jerusalem] when it was crowded with inhabitants* (War of the Jews VI:423-428). The comments of Josephus and Philo show that in the 1st century the word Passover was designating primarily the celebration made by priests in the temple rather than the family feast instituted by Moses (Jewish Antiquities II:311-314). Although the same word was used there could be no confusion because the biblical Passover was celebrated on 14 Nisan in homes after sunset (18:00) and before midnight, whereas the official Passover (not biblical) was celebrated by priests in the temple from 15:00 to 17:00:

evening						midnight						morning noon evening						midnight																								
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6
Preparation						Passover						Preparation Passover						Unleavened Bread																								
until > 13 Nisan						14 Nisan (1 st day of the feast)						15 Nisan																														
						Babylonian/Jewish calendar						Julian calendar (33 CE)																														
2 April						Friday 3 April												4 April																								

However from King Josiah's time the Passover celebrated by priests in the temple was closely related to that celebrated by families in homes: *Josiah then celebrated a Passover to Yahweh in Jerusalem. The Passover victims were slaughtered on the 14th day of the 1st month. He assigned the priests to their posts, encouraging them to do their duty in the Temple of Yahweh (...) Slaughter the Passover, sanctify yourselves and prepare it so that your brothers can observe it in the way the word of Yahweh through Moses requires. For the laity Josiah provided small livestock, that is, lambs and young goats —everything for the Passover offerings for all who attended— to the number of 30,000 as well as 3,000 bullocks; these were from the king's own possessions. His officials also made voluntary contributions for the people, the priests and the Levites; and Hilkiab, Zechariah and Jehiel, the chiefs of the Temple of God, gave 2,600 lambs and 300 bullocks to the priests for the Passover offerings; while Conaniah, Shemaiah, Nethanel his brother, Hashabiah, Jeiel and Jozabad, the head Levites, provided 5,000 lambs*

and 500 bullocks as Passover offerings for the Levites. So the service was arranged, the priests stood in their places and the Levites in their orders as the king had commanded. Then they slaughtered the Passover victims and while the priests sprinkled the blood as they received it from the Levites, the latter did the skinning. Next they put the burnt offering aside for presentation to the family divisions of the laity, so that they could offer it to Yahweh in the way prescribed in the Book of Moses; they did the same with the bullocks. They roasted the Passover victim over an open fire in accordance with the regulation and boiled the consecrated offerings in pots, kettles and pans, which they then distributed to all the laity as quickly as they could. Afterwards they provided for themselves and the priests, since the Aaronite priests were kept busy till nightfall making the burnt offerings and offering the fat; that was why the Levites prepared the Passover for themselves and for the Aaronite priests (...) Because they could not leave their duties, their brothers the Levites prepared the Passover for them. So the whole service of Yahweh was arranged that day to celebrate the Passover and to bring burnt offerings on the altar of Yahweh, in accordance with King Josiah's command. On that occasion the Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread for 7 days. No Passover like this one had ever been celebrated in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel, nor had any of the kings of Israel ever celebrated a Passover like the one celebrated by Josiah, the priests, the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This Passover was celebrated in the 18th year of Josiah's reign (2Ch 35:1-19). As this Passover was celebrated by priests for the people until nightfall, not at sunset (Dt 16:6, LXX), it was actually an exceptional substitution feast.

The preparation of the Passover (slaughtering and roasting of the lamb) was seen as part of the festival and this conception of the "preparation" explains an apparent anomaly: *Now the Passover and the [festival of] unleavened bread was two days later (...)* Now on the first day of unleavened bread, when they customarily sacrificed the Passover [victim], his disciples said to him: *Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?* (Mk 14:1,12). The Gospel writer therefore considered that the Passover (on 14 Nisan) marked the beginning of the unleavened bread festival (on 15 Nisan), as confirmed by Josephus at that time, because this festival started in practice with the preparation of that day: *The feast of unleavened bread we call "Passover" (...)* When came the day of unleavened bread, the 14th of the month Xanthicus [Nisan] (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:29; Jewish War V:99). Since the Jews were to eat a roast lamb on the night of Nisan 14 (Ex 12:6-8) before midnight (Ex 11:4) its immolation and preparation had necessarily occurred before that night, so between the previous evening or sunset of Nisan 13 (evening 1) and the sunset of Nisan 14 (evening 2), more exactly between the "going down of the sun" from midday at 12:00 (Dt 16:6-7) until sunset at 18:00 (Dt 23:11). However the preparation of the lamb, as is requested in the Bible: *the whole assembly of Israel must slaughter it between the two evenings*, which was clearly understood as "afternoon" before the Temple's destruction (in 70 CE) was re-interpreted in the Targum of the Pentateuch as "between the two suns" after 150-200 CE. A text of the Talmud dated around 200 CE explains "between the two suns" to mean the time between sunset and the stars becoming visible²⁷¹ (B. Shabbat 34a). This new theological interpretation altered the time when the preparation was to be performed because afternoon is before sunset (around 17:30 in April) whereas twilight is after, consequently at the beginning of a new day (on 15 instead of 14 Nisan). This interpretation has become the norm for Judaism defined by Maimonides²⁷² (1138-1204), but it amended the chronology of the biblical Passover: its preparation, which was taking place in the afternoon [on 13 Nisan] just before the evening meal after sunset on 14 Nisan, was moved to the afternoon of 14 Nisan just before the evening meal during dusk after sunset on 15

²⁷¹ The equivalence "between the two suns = twilight" from the Targum is far from clear. There is an equivalence "between the two suns" and "between the battlements" because the words "suns" and "battlements (Is 54:12)" are close in Hebrew.

²⁷² R. SAMUEL – Le livre des 613 commandements
Paris 1974 Éd. Keren Hasefer p. 13.

Nisan. That's why some Jewish scholars wonder today: *Was Jesus' Last Supper a Seder?*²⁷³.

PASSOVER ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE (BEFORE 150 CE)																																										
noon evening						night						midnight						morning						evening						midnight												
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6
Preparation						Passover												Peace offering						Unleavened Bread																		
13 Nisan						14 Nisan												15 Nisan																								

PASSOVER ACCORDING TO THE TARGUM (AFTER 200 CE)																																										
noon evening						night						midnight						morning						evening						twilight						midnight						
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6
																		Preparation						Passover						Unleavened Bread												
13 Nisan						14 Nisan												15 Nisan																								

It is easy to show that this interpretation elaborated from a belated Targum of the Pentateuch is wrong because it contradicts, without exception, all historical documents before 150 CE, describing the Passover and its preparation. In addition, famous rabbis²⁷⁴ like Saadia Gaon (882-942), Rashi of Troyes (1040-1105) and David Kimchi (1160-1235) said the 1st evening is when the sun begins to decline in the west (after noon) and cast its shadows, and the 2nd evening is the beginning of night (after sunset). First of all, the translation of the idiomatic phrase²⁷⁵ *between the couple of evenings* into *twilight* is not possible since the word "twilight (תְּשׁוּבָה)" already exists in Hebrew (unlike the word "afternoon"), for instance in the following phrases: *they rose up in the twilight* (2Ki 7:5); *in the twilight, in the evening of the day* (Pr 7:9); *Let the stars of its twilight grow dark* (Job 3:9). So, the idiomatic phrase *between the couple of evenings [or 2 evenings]* could be translated as "afternoon":

« between the 2 evenings » (Hebrew)	Reference	Date
<i>towards evening</i>	Exodus 12:6; 16:12; Numbers 9:3 (Greek LXX)	280 BCE
<i>in the evening</i>	Exodus 29:39,41; 30:8; Numbers 9:11; 28:4,8 (LXX)	280 BCE
<i>between the evening times</i>	Leviticus 23:5 (LXX)	280 BCE
<i>the 3rd part of the day [14:00-18:00]</i>	Book of Jubilees 49:10-11 (Greek/ Hebrew)	160-150 BCE
<i>after noon and before sunset</i>	Mishna Pesakhim 5:1,3; Mekhilta on Exodus 12:6	1-200 CE
<i>(eaten after sunset and before midnight)</i>	Tosephta Pesakhim 5:13 (Aramaic)	1-200 CE
<i>between noon and evening</i>	Mark 14:12-18 (Greek New Testament)	60 CE
<i>between 15:00 to 17:00</i>	War of the Jews 6:423-428 (Greek)	100 CE
<i>between the 2 suns (?)</i>	Targum of Exodus 12:6 (Neofiti I in Aramaic)	150-200 CE
<i>between the 2 suns = twilight</i>	Shabbat 34a (Babylonian Talmud)	200-250 CE

The time period called "*between the two evenings*" was understood without controversy until 200 CE as designating the afternoon²⁷⁶. The terms "towards evening/ in the evening" in the Septuagint are particularly interesting because the Jewish translators made an accurate translation of the Pentateuch. In fact right from the very beginning of the Bible the words: day/night / evening/morning are defined in relation to the cycle of the sun (Gn 1:5), the evening coinciding with sunset (c. 18:00) and the morning with sunrise (c. 06:00). Thus, the word "evening" can conveniently be replaced by "sunset"²⁷⁷ and the word "morning" by

²⁷³ J. KLAUANS in: Bible Review, Oct 2001, pp 24-47.

²⁷⁴ S.R. DRIVER – The Book of Exodus: Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges New York 1953 Ed. The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press pp. 89-90.

²⁷⁵ Likewise the idiomatic expression "couple of shining (or 2 shining)" is always translated into "midday/ noon" (see Job 11:17). P. JOÛON, T. MURAOKA – A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew in: *subsidia biblica* 14/I (Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Roma 1993) pp. 274-275.

²⁷⁶ J. FINEGAN – Handbook of Biblical Chronology Massachusetts 1998, Ed. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., pp. 11-12.

²⁷⁷ F. BROWN, S.R. DRIVER, C.A. BRIGGS – Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament Oxford 1951 Ed. Clarendon Press p. 787.

"sunrise". The phrase "between the two evenings (Ex 12:6)" is explained "as soon as the sun sets (Dt 16:6)", a period of time between midday and sunset when the day is declining in the shadows of evening (Jr 6:4). The text of Exodus 29:38-39: *this is what you will offer upon the altar: young rams each a year old, 2 a day constantly. And you will offer the one young ram in the morning, and you will offer the other young ram between the two evenings*, also proves that the period "between the two evenings" was before sunset because the 1st ram was offered in the morning (after sunrise) and the 2nd before sunset because if it had been offered after sunset it would have been the next day.

Name (in Hebrew)	Meaning	c. Period of time	Reference
evening	sunset	[18:00]	Genesis 1:5; Job 24:14-17
twilight	just after sunset	[18:00-19:00]	Job 3:9; 2Kings 7:5
morning	sunrise	[06:00]	Judges 9:23
dawn	just before sunrise	[05:00-06:00]	Job 3:9; Genesis 19:15
night	darkness	[18:00-06:00]	Genesis 1:5
middle of the night	midnight	[24:00]	Exodus 11:4
day	lightness	[06:00-18:00]	Genesis 1:5; John 11:9
two shining (noon)	Midday (noon)	[12:00]	Nehemiah 8:3; Job 11:17
between the two evenings	afternoon	[12:00-18:00]	Exodus 12:6
as soon as the sun sets	afternoon	[12:00-18:00]	Deuteronomy 16:6
from noon until grain offering	early afternoon	[12:00-15:00]	1Kings 18:29
evening grain offering	middle of afternoon	[15:00]	Psalm 141:2; Acts 3:1
in the time of evening	late afternoon	[15:00-18:00]	Genesis 8:11; 2Samuel 11:2

The expression "between the two evenings" was translated in the Septuagint as "towards evening" or "in the evening"²⁷⁸. It is noteworthy that the Greek word δειλινός is used in Exodus 29:39,41 (and in 1Kings 18:29), which means "afternoon/ evening"²⁷⁹ and the word ὀψέ is used in Exodus 30:8 (and in Isaiah 5:11), which means "late [in the day]"²⁸⁰. More generally the expression "between the two evenings (Ex 12:6)" was translated πρὸς ἑσπέραν into Greek, which means literally "before evening". Thus, the Hebrew idiomatic phrase "between the two evenings" was understood before 150 CE as "afternoon (δείλη)" (the modern word απόγευμα "afternoon" did not exist in Old Greek).

The preparation of lambs for the Passover was beginning after noon of 13 Nisan then roasted lambs were being eaten just after sunset (beginning of 14 Nisan) but before midnight. Thus, as a paschal lamb had to be eaten after sunset and before midnight (18:00-24:00), it was the sunset at the beginning of 14 Nisan, not the end of that day. In addition, as the preparation had to be made before the Passover festival (14 Nisan) it was on the day before (end of 13 Nisan). If the biblical command had been "at twilight", instead of "in the afternoon", it would have been impossible to apply because the roasting of a lamb, the main part of the preparation (Nb 9:5,11), as the Samaritans continue to practicing it²⁸¹, needs at least 3 to 4 hours²⁸², it would have been impossible to roast the lamb at twilight [18:00-19:00], which lasts around 1 hour. One can verify that the preparation of Jesus' last Passover took place on Thursday afternoon [of 13 Nisan] and it was eaten after sunset early Friday 14 Nisan (Mk 14:13-18). If the lamb was beginning to be roasted after sunset, Jesus and his disciples would have had to wait at least 3 hours before eating it.

²⁷⁸ Except in Leviticus 23:5: *In the 1st month, on the 14th day of the month, between the evenings times [in the evening] is the Lord's passover.*

²⁷⁹ A. BAILLY – Dictionnaire grec français
Paris 1950 Éd. Hachette p. 438.

²⁸⁰ W.E. VINE – An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words
Ontario 1985 Ed. Thomas Nelson Publishers p. 208.

²⁸¹ http://www.egrc.net/articles/other/articles_sam_passover.html
<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3394699,00.htm>

²⁸² http://moroccanfood.about.com/od/beeflambandgoatrecipes/r/Moroccan_mechoui_recipe.htm

The interpretation held by Maimonides, which is now the official interpretation of Judaism, is very surprising because it totally contradicts the Bible which orders to eat the Passover on 14 Nisan, not on 15 as stated in some ancient Targums²⁸³. How can one justify such a contradiction. The chronology of the biblical Passover is the following: *Speak to the whole community of Israel and say: On the 10th day of this month [Nisan] each man must take an animal from the flock for his family: one animal for each household. If the household is too small for the animal, he must join with his neighbour nearest to his house, depending on the number of persons. When you choose the animal, you will take into account what each can eat. It must be an animal without blemish, a male one year old; you may choose it either from the sheep or from the goats. You must keep it till the 14th day²⁸⁴ of the month when the whole assembly of the community of Israel will slaughter it between the two evenings [14:00-18:00]. Some of the blood must then be taken and put on both door-posts and the lintel of the houses where it is eaten. That night [18:00-24:00], the flesh roasted over the fire must be eaten; it must be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with the head, feet and entrails. You must not leave any of it over till the morning [6:00]: whatever is left till morning you must burn (...) you will tell them: It is the Passover sacrifice in honour of Yahweh who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, and struck Egypt but spared our houses. And the people bowed in worship. The Israelites then went away and did as Yahweh had ordered Moses and Aaron. And at midnight [24:00] Yahweh struck down all the first-born in Egypt* (Ex 12:3-10, 27-29).

Given that the preparation of Passover took place in the afternoon (before sunset) then it was eaten in the night (after sunset), it had to overlap on 2 days, end of 13 Nisan for preparation and beginning of 14 Nisan for eating. Reading of the text gives the impression that these two actions: preparation (slaughtering then roasting) and eating of the lamb, were performed the same day (14 Nisan). If the slaughtering is performed on 14 Nisan, the eating should be performed on 15 Nisan as the Book of Jubilees explains²⁸⁵: *Remember the commandment the Lord gave you about the Passover to celebrate it at the right time which is on the 14th day of the 1st month, and you should kill the sacrifice before evening [18:00], and eat it at night [18:00-24:00] on the evening of 15th around sunset [18:00] (...), observe the Passover on the correct day, on the 14th day of the 1st month, between the evenings, from the 3rd part of the day [14:00-18:00] to the 3rd part of the night [2:00-6:00], as 2 parts of the day are given to the light, and a 3rd part to the evening [14:00-18:00]. The Lord ordered you to observe it between the evenings. You are not permitted to kill the sacrifice during any period of the light, but during the period bordering the evening* (Book of Jubilees 49:1-11). The period bordering the evening overlaps on two days 13/14 Nisan, not 14/15. The Targum of the Pentateuch drew inspiration from another text with a similar difficulty: *On the 7th day God had completed the work he had been doing. He rested on the 7th day after all the work he had been doing* (Genesis 2:2), implying that the work ceased at the end of the 6th day and coincided with the rest that began at the beginning of the 7th day. The translators of the Targums have imagined a brief intermediate period called "between the two suns (twilight)", belonging to both the 6th and 7th day, in which God had created and ceased to create (in order to resolve this apparent difficulty the translators of the Septuagint have replaced the 7th day God had completed the work by 6th day). In the same way, the preparation of Passover was supposed to belong to that same theological period called "between the two suns (twilight)". As we have seen this theological explanation contradicts both the Bible and logic (roasting a 1-year

²⁸³ R. LE DÉAUT – Targum du pentateuque II Exode et Lévitique (Add. 27031) in: *Sources Chrétiennes* n°256 (Cerf, 1979) pp.84-85.

²⁸⁴ Many readers understand this phrase as "You must keep it [alive] till the 14th day" like in Exodus 1:18 ("keep alive"), instead of "You must keep it [personally] till the 14th day", involving to the householder "that is your responsibility". If it was written: "You must keep it alive till the 14th day", the slaughtering of the lamb could not take place in the afternoon of 13 Nisan but only in the afternoon of 14 Nisan.

²⁸⁵ J.A. NYLAND – The Book of Jubilees Australia 2010, Ed. Smitandstirling pp. 119-120.

lamb in less than one hour is impossible). Ritual conditions to prepare the Passover were therefore quite simple. It was only requested that the selected 1-year lamb had to be and remain pure until the 14th day of Nisan (Lv 22:21-24). The date of the Passover was modified (Nisan 15 instead of 14) in some Targums after 150 CE but nowhere in the Talmud, moreover this date was formalized much later by Maimonides, disagreeing with all previous rabbinic authorities, including Rashi of Troyes. The few groups of Christians, who were celebrating the Last Supper on 14 Nisan, almost disappeared after 150 CE and thus did not influence the Jews who anyway no longer celebrated the Passover after 135 CE. According to Eusebius (Church History V:23-25) in the mid-second century, the practice in the Roman province of Asia, where there were many Christians of Jewish origin, was for the pre-Paschal fast to end and the feast to be held on the 14th day (the full moon) of the Jewish lunar month of Nisan, the date on which the Passover sacrifice had been offered when the Second Temple stood, and "the day when the people put away the leaven". Those who observed this practice were called Quartodecimani, Latin for "fourteenters", because of holding their celebration on the fourteenth day of Nisan. Thus the churches in Asia appealed to the Apostle John in support of their practice, while Sozomen reports that the Roman custom (observed, Irenaeus says, since at least the time of Bishop Xystus of 115–125 CE) was believed to have been handed down by the Apostles Peter and Paul, and Eusebius states that in Palestine and Egypt the Sunday observance was also believed to have originated with the Apostles. Thus, contrary to what we read too often, there is no contradiction or anachronism among the four Gospel accounts.

The Passover in the Gospels can be reconstructed unambiguously thanks to accurate indications from hourly events. The division of the day into 12 hours appears in John 11:9 where it is asked: *Are there not 12 hours in the day?* Likewise in Matthew 20:1-12 the householder goes to hire labourers early in the morning, and again at the 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th hours, and the last ones have only 1 hour of work before the end of the day. If an average daytime lasting from 6 a.m. to 6 a.m. was taken as the basis, then the 3rd hour was what we could call 9 o'clock [= 3 + 6] in the morning, and so on. In the Babylonian Talmud there is a discussion in connection with the testimony of witnesses of the extent of reasonable error in a man's estimate of what the hour is, and it is noted that "in the 6th hour the sun stands in the meridian" (Pasakhim 11b-12b). Although the day was beginning just after sunset [18:00] in the Jewish system, the counting of hours of the day was starting in the morning just after sunrise [06:00]. In official Roman usage the reckoning of the day was from midnight [24:00], however, it is noteworthy that the word "siesta", meaning a nap around noon [12:00], comes from the Latin expression: *sexta [hora]* "sixth [hour]". In the Jewish system, hours of the night [18:00-06:00] were not counted, but only the 4 watches of 3 hours (I, II, III, IV) coming from the Roman way of reckoning:

PASSOVER ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE (EXODUS 12)																																															
noon						evening						night						midnight						morning						noon						evening						midnight					
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	1	2	3	4	5	6					
6						7						8						9						10						11						12											
Preparation						Passover												Peace offering						Unleavened Bread																							
until >																																															
13 Nisan						14 Nisan																		15 Nisan																							

The chronological analysis of the Last Supper shows clearly that Jesus died on Friday 14 Nisan 33 CE (Friday 3 April in Julian calendar) at 15:00, which means he ate the Passover lamb (Lk 22:15) during the first watch of the night of 14 Nisan²⁸⁶ (Thursday 2

²⁸⁶ J. FINEGAN – Handbook of Biblical Chronology
Massachusetts 1998, Ed. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., pp. 354-364.

April 18:00-21:00). Consequently, as Jesus ate the Passover after evening (Mk 14:17-18) its preparation began before, that is to say during the afternoon of Thursday 13 Nisan (Mk 14:12-16). Some argue that this preparation was not to slaughter and roast the lamb but to clean the room, however the text of Mark 14:15 clarifies that this was already done.

The only difficulty in the four Gospel accounts is an exceptional situation of a great Sabbath (Jn 19:31). The day before the Sabbath was called the "Preparation" as stated in the text of Mark 15:42, and the eve of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15 to 21 Nisan), coinciding with the Passover (14 Nisan), was also called the "Preparation". The context helps to understand which preparation was involved: *Now it was preparation of the Passover (...) Then the Jews, since it was Preparation, in order that the bodies might not remain upon the torture stakes on the Sabbath, for the day of that Sabbath was a great one (...) There, then, on account of the preparation of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the memorial tomb was nearby* (Jn 19:14,31,42). The "preparation" which coincided with the Passover (14 Nisan) referred to the preparation of the Sabbath on Saturday (15 Nisan) and not the preparation of the Passover itself, which had taken place the previous day (13 Nisan). The reconstruction of the Passover celebrated by Jesus clearly shows that the preparation of the Passover took place just before Nisan 14 and consequently that the paschal lamb had been slaughtered and prepared before sunset (beginning of Nisan 14), not after.

Jewish calendar	Hours		Event in 33 CE	Julian calendar	Reference
Thursday 13 Nisan	18 - 21	Evening 1	Evening begins after sunset (18:00)		
	21 - 24				
	24 - 6	Midnight		Thursday 2 April	
	6 - 12	Morning	Morning begins after sunrise (6:00)	Ex 18:13	
	12 - 18	Noon Afternoon	Preparation of the Passover at the going down of the sun (midday) until sunset	De 16:6-7 De 23:11	Mr 14:12-16
Friday 14 Nisan	18 - 21	Evening 2	The 11 apostles ate the Evening meal.	Ex 12:6-7	Mr 14:17-25
	21 - 24		Jesus arrested and tried by the Sanhedrin	Ex 12:29	Mr 14:26-71
	24 - 6	Midnight	Peter denied Jesus, a cock crowed a 2 nd time	Friday 3 April	Mr 14:72
	6 - 9	Morning	Jesus tried by Pilate then by Herod		Mr 15:1-5
	9 - 12		Trial of Pilate		Mr15:6-19
	12 - 15	Night 1	Unusual darkness. Jesus died at 15:00 when the "Passover" is offered in the Temple	Am 8:9 Joh 18:28	Mr 15:20-41
	15 - 18	Day 1	Entombment of Jesus. Preparation of the	Ac 2:20	Mr 15:42-47
Saturday 15 Nisan	18 - 24	Evening 3	Great Sabbath		Joh 19:31
	24 - 6	Night 2		Saturday 4 April	
	6 - 12	Day 2	Pilate made the grave secure until the 3 rd day		Mt 27:62-66
Sunday 16 Nisan	12 - 18				
	18 - 24	Evening			
	24 - 6	Night 3		Sunday 5 April	Joh 20:1
	6 - 12	Day 3	Resurrection at the beginning of the morning		Mr 16:1-2
	12 - 18				

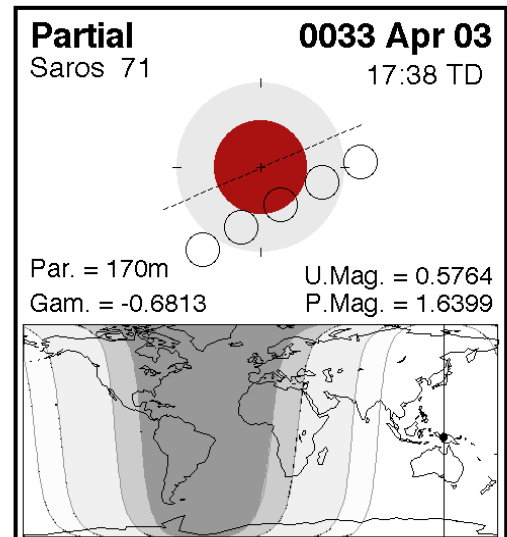
One can see that the Passover performed by Jesus strictly complied with all the biblical commands and fulfilled all the biblical prophecies. The Gospels are very accurate regarding the schedule of the first Christian Passover. Jesus' disciples prepared the Jewish Passover on Nisan 13 (Thursday 2 April 12:00-18:00); Jesus ate the Last Supper²⁸⁷ on 14 Nisan, just after sunset (Thursday 2 April 18:00-20:00), then immediately at dawn (Friday 3 April 6:00) Jesus was led to Pilate: *It was now early in the day. But they themselves did not enter into the governor's palace, that they might not get defiled but might eat the Passover* (John 18:28), which was

²⁸⁷ Jesus had to eat the Passover because it is written: Jesus answered *It is the one to whom I give the piece of bread that I dip in the dish [in which there was the roasted lamb]*. And when he had dipped the piece of bread he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot (Jn 13:26).

the "sacrifice of peace" eaten in the temple on 14 Nisan at 15:00 after the prayer (Ac 3:1). Jesus died on 14 Nisan at the 9th hour (Friday 3 April 15:00), at the end of a miraculous "night" 3 hours long according to Amos 8:9-10: *And it must occur in that day, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, that I will make the sun go down at high noon, and I will cause darkness for the land on a bright day. And I will turn your festivals into mourning and all your songs into a dirge, and I will bring up upon all hips sackcloth and upon every head baldness; and I will make the situation like the mourning for an only [son], and the end result of it as a bitter day.*

So when Jesus died the sun was darkened (Mark 15:33) and the moon turned into blood as it is explained in a text quoted just 50 days after Jesus' death: *And I will give portents in heaven above and signs on earth below, blood and fire and smoke mist; the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and illustrious day of Jehovah arrives [in 70 CE]* (Ac 2:1,19-20). The Roman historian Quintus Curtius wrote (c. 50 CE): *when the moon is eclipsed it loses the brightness of its disk and then a kind of veil of blood appears* (Histories IV:10). There actually was a partial eclipse of the moon Friday 3 April 33 CE²⁸⁸, it began about 15:40 and was visible in Jerusalem from 17:50 to 18:30²⁸⁹; Jesus was resurrected very early on the 1st day of the week (Sunday 5 April 6:00). Thus, Jesus was in the heart of the earth 3 days and 3 nights (Mt 12:40), a period of time of exactly 39 hours²⁹⁰.

Another text has often been misunderstood: *It was now early in the day. But they themselves did not enter into the governor's palace, that they might not get defiled but might eat the Passover* (John 18:28), suggesting that Jesus and his disciples had celebrated it with a day in advance. Actually, the Talmud (Pesakhim 6:3) states that the Passover included the paschal lamb, eaten on 14 Nisan just after sunset (Nb 28:4,16) and a "sacrifice of peace" (Lv 3:1) offered after the prayer at 15:00 (Ac 3:1), which was also called "Passover". It is this sacrifice (not required by the Mosaic law) that concerns the text. As the Passover was celebrated at home and the sacrifice of peace was celebrated in the Temple, it is the latter which came primarily to designate the festival itself, which explains the apparent anachronism observed in the trial of Jesus reported by the Talmud: *On the eve of the [temple] Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.'* But since nothing was brought forward in his favour *he was hanged on the eve of the [temple] Passover!* — *Ulla retorted: Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not an enticer, concerning whom Scripture says, Neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him (Dt 13:6-9)? With Yeshu however it was different, for he was connected with the government. Our Rabbis taught: Yeshu had five disciples, Matthai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni and Todah*²⁹¹ (B. Sanhedrin 43a). This condemnation of Jesus (involving stoning) refers to the trial for blasphemy by the Sanhedrin, which occurred indeed on the eve of the temple Passover, not the trial for lese majesty in front of Pilate involving crucifixion. Consequently, the so-called "contradictions" in the Passover schedule can be explained through ambiguous meanings of



²⁸⁸ J.P. PARISOT, F. SUAGHER - Calendriers et chronologie Paris 1996 Éd. Masson pp. 164-166.

²⁸⁹ <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEcat5/LE0001-0100.html>

²⁹⁰ Night 1 was on Friday Nisan 14 from 0 pm to 3 pm (miraculous night); Day 1 on Friday Nisan 14 from 3 pm to 6 pm; Night 2 on Saturday Nisan 15 from 6 pm to 6 am; Day 2 on Nisan 15 from 6 am to 6 pm; Night 3 on Nisan 16 from 6 pm to 6 am; Day 3 on Nisan 16 from 6 am to 6 pm.

²⁹¹ Matthai (Matthew), Nakai (Nicodemus?), Nezer (Nazarene), Buni (?) and Todah (Thaddaeus), compared to Matthew 10:2-5.

some Jewish wording. For example, very early the eve of Passover in the evening of 13 Nisan to make the preparation was considered as a part of the Passover itself on 14 Nisan (Jos 5:10-12). However the eve of Passover began legally only after noon [12:00], according to the Mishna, not before (Pesakhim 5:3). In addition, the whole period covering the Passover on 14 Nisan followed by the festival of Unleavened Bread (from 15 to 21 Nisan) was being called the festival of Passover (Ezk 45:21) that's why the Talmud says (B. Pesakhim 5a) that 14 Nisan is called the 1st day of the festival (instead of 15 Nisan) and according to the Mishna (Pesakhim 9:5), the [festival of] the Passover" lasts 7 days (instead of 8 days). This lengthy analysis of a controversial text illustrates a key point for historians: to understand a past event they must rely solely on a reading of historical documents in their context and not on later scholarly guesses coming from theologians whatever their religion (including atheists). For scientific historians there is no "salvation" outside texts and above all: chronology is the only scientific way of checking.

To avoid any misunderstanding, one must notice that the Last Supper (Christian festival) occurred just after the Passover (Jewish festival) and not during it which is why the Gospels give very few details about the Jewish festival itself called [Pesach] Seder. Because of this lack of information some scholars claim that, before the Last Supper, the true Passover had not occurred. They rely on two arguments: 1) we read in the Mishna that Gamaliel II (the greatest rabbi of the post-destruction era during the late 80s CE), customarily said: *Whoever does not mention [expatiate upon] these 3 things on Passover does not discharge one's duty (...): the Passover offering [lamb], unleavened bread, and bitter herbs* (Pesahim 10:5) however these 3 things are not mentioned in the Gospels and 2) it would have made more theological sense for Jesus to say something like "this lamb is my body" rather than "this bread is my body". For this reason, Scot McKnight²⁹² contends that it is incomprehensible that Jesus, as well as the Synoptic writers, would have failed to mention the lamb if it had been present. Since the Synoptic accounts mention neither the paschal lamb nor the bitter herbs, the argument goes, the Last Supper could not have been a Passover meal. The explanation for this apparent paradox is simple: the Jewish Passover occurred because it was a requirement of the law of Moses that Jesus scrupulously observed (Mt 5:17), consequently he ate the paschal lamb (Lk 22:15), but he explained that this festival from the old covenant was to be replaced by a new covenant (Jr 31:31) fulfilled by the Last Supper with bread and wine (Mt 26:26-28).

In spite of the fact that the Passover is described briefly in the Gospels, several details prove that it was eaten by Jesus: *The disciples set out and went to the city and found everything as he had told them, and prepared the Passover [mainly for roasting the lamb, which needed 3 hours at least]. When evening came [18:00] he arrived with the Twelve. And while they were at table eating, Jesus said: In truth I tell you, one of you is about to betray me, one of you eating with me. They were distressed and said to him, one after another: Not me, surely? He said to them: It is one of the Twelve, one who is dipping into the same dish with me. Yes, the Son of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will, but alas for that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Better for that man if he had never been born. And as they were eating he took bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them. Take it, he said, this is my body* (Mk 14:16-22). One could ask why Jesus, who was the Lamb of God (Jn 1:36) prophesied in the Scriptures (Ac 8:32; Jn 19:36), compared his body with unleavened bread²⁹³ rather than the paschal lamb (1Co 5:7) and preferred using the 4th and

²⁹² S. MCKNIGHT - Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory Waco 2005, Ed. Baylor University Press, p. 270.

²⁹³ Jesus had given the following explanation one year earlier (in 32 CE): *In all truth I tell you, everyone who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world. Then the Jews started arguing among themselves: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus replied to them: In*

last cup of wine (Pesachim 10:1), which was not required by the Law of Moses. According to the context, it seems that Jesus used a new symbolism about bread²⁹⁴.

DATING THE LAST PASSOVER OF JESUS: YEAR, MONTH AND DAY

Depuydt asserts that the oldest sources setting Jesus' death comes from Tertullian (155-222) who dated it during the consulates of Rubellius Geminus and Rufius (sic) Geminus (in 29 CE), however the earliest source is the Greek historian Phlegon of Tralles who completed in 140 CE his chronology of the most important events dated by Olympiads and he dated Jesus' death in 33 CE. Matthew mentions, for example, both an earthquake and surprising darkness (Mt 27:45-54), and not a solar eclipse during the death of Jesus from noon to 3 p.m., the hour of prayer according to Acts 3:1 (these 3 hours are far beyond the duration of a solar eclipse). Several authors report this exceptional darkening. Thallus, a Samaritan historian (30-100?), says in the third book of his Histories, quoted by Julius Africanus²⁹⁵ (c. 220 CE): *A most terrible darkness fell over all the world, the rocks were torn apart by an earthquake, and many places both in Judea and the rest of the world were thrown down*. Phlegon of Tralles gives a specific date, reported by Eusebius: *In the 4th year, however, of Olympiad 202, an eclipse of the sun happened, greater and more excellent than any that had happened before it; at the 6th hour [15:00], day turned into dark night, so that the stars were seen in the sky, and an earthquake in Bithynia toppled many buildings of the city of Nicea*²⁹⁶. The 4th year of the 202nd Olympiad was from July 32 to June 33 CE, which confirms the date of 3 April 33 CE. This information was considered reliable at the time because Origen (248 CE) quoted it to refute Celsus (Against Celsus II:14,33,59), a Greek philosopher very critical of Christianity but familiar with history. Eusebius²⁹⁷ also states in his quotation from Phlegon that Jesus began his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius and he died 3 years later in the year 18. He gives a more accurate duration of *not quite 4 years* in another of his books (Church History I:10:2). Jerome, who published the chronicle of Eusebius, regarded it as reliable. According to Irenaeus, some heretics propagated (177 CE) a period of only 1 year for the ministry of

all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person. As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also draw life from me. This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever. This is what he taught at Capernaum in the synagogue. After hearing it, many of his followers said: This is intolerable language (Jn 6:47-63). This teaching about the eating of bread in order to get everlasting life was given about one year after the discourse in 31 CE regarding resurrection for eternal life (Jn 5:21-28) but the instruction about the blood seems in contradiction with the Mosaic Law hence the scandal. The Law of Moses had a clause, if the blood was being well used it was a sign of life, misused it was becoming a sign of death and the restriction was not to consume it under death penalty (Lv 17:12-14).

²⁹⁴ All the Israelites, including foreign residents, had to eat the lamb to stay alive (Nb 9:13), similarly the perfect body of Jesus was intended to take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29) and give eternal life. Jesus compared his flesh to the bread (Mt 26:26, Lk 22:19; 1Co 11:24) which was offered to everyone (Jn 6:50-52). Whoever was eating the bread was associated with the altar (1Co 10:17-18) and thus was benefiting from the blood of sprinkling (1P 1:2) that purifies (1Jn 1:7) and thus gave the right to eternal life (legally and not in a magical way as in the legend of the Grail) because it "whitens" sin (Rv 7:14). Animal blood covered (legally) sin without being able to remove it (Heb 10:4), while the perfect human blood of Jesus covered and removed sin (Heb 9:19-25). Consequently, the parallel is perfect. Jesus after comparing his flesh with bread from heaven that gives life (Jn 6:31-52) developed a new point about the role of his blood, because his disciples had to drink it in order to have life in themselves (Jn 6:53). This was paradoxical because since Noah it was prohibited to absorb blood (Gn 9:3), besides the ban was given again to Christians (Ac 15:19-29). However, this law concerned only literal blood, but symbolically drinking blood would have been possible (1Ch 11:19), even if this action was irrelevant because if the animal blood was being considered pure (without sin) it was not the equivalent of human blood, anyway no human blood was pure and without sin (Ps 51:5). However, as the blood of Jesus is pure (1P 1:19) it takes away the sins and leads to eternal life by sprinkling. It is the legal value of the blood of Jesus that is important, not the fact of a literal sprinkling of blood as in the pre-Christian cults of Mithra and Cybele.

²⁹⁵ JULIUS AFRICANUS - Chronographia

Turnhout 1966 Ed. Brepols (Migne) Patrologiae Graecae t. X p. 91.

²⁹⁶ EUSÈBE – Chronicorum

in: *Patrologiae Graecae* t. XIX (Paris 1857 Ed. Migne) p. 535.

²⁹⁷ R. HELM – Eusebius Werke

Berlin 1956 Ed. Akademie-Verlag Berlin pp. 174-175.

Jesus (Against Heresies II:22:5) instead of 3.5 years deducted from the 4 Passovers quoted in the gospels (Jn 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 12:1). The feast of the Jews mentioned in John 5:1 (taking place in spring according to its place in the timeline) likely means the festival of Nikanor which occurred on 13 Adar (Jewish Antiquities XII:412; 2Maccabees XV:36), as other better known festivals like the Passover (March/April) or the Feast of dedication (late December) are always mentioned by name in the text of John. The four gospels describe several events that can be located in time (holidays, seasons, specific periods). Thus the calendrical data frame the ministry of Jesus between two specific dates: it began in 29 CE and ended in 33 CE. The parallel of the previous data enables the following chronological reconstruction (datable benchmarks are highlighted):

CE			Event situated in time	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	
29	15	1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII					
		4	I	Beginning of John the Baptist's ministry (in the 15 th year of Tiberius).	3:1-12	1:1-18	3:1-18	1:6-28
		5	II					
		6	III					
		7	IV					
		8	V	Baptism of Jesus (in the 15 th year of Tiberius).	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-38	1:32-34
	[16]	9	VI	Jesus, born in 2 BCE is aged about 30 years in 29 CE.				
		10	VII	Beginning of Jesus' ministry				
		11	VIII					
		12	IX					
30		1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII					
		4	I	Shrine (<i>naos</i>) built for 46 years. 1 st Passover.				2:13-25
		5	II	John the Baptist imprisoned.	4:12	1:14	3:19,20	4:1-3
		6	III	Jesus on the road to Galilee 4 months before harvest (month VII) "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."	4:17	1:15	4:14,15	4:44,45
		7	IV					
		8	V					
	[17]	9	VI					
		10	VII					
		11	VIII					
		12	IX					
31		1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII	Banquet with tax collectors, just before (2 nd) Passover.	9:9-17	2:13-22	5:27-39	5:1
		4	I					
		5	II	Disciples tear off some ears (wheat harvest).	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
		6	III					
		7	IV					
		8	V					
	[18]	9	VI					
		10	VII	Death of Sejanus. Imperial policy becomes pro-Jewish.				
		11	VIII	Jesus calms a storm (between August and December).	8:18-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
		12	IX					
32		1	X					
		2	XI	Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist.	14:1-12	6:14-29	9:7-9	
		3	XII	5000 men fed just before the (3 rd) Passover.	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-13
		4	I					
		5	II					
		6	III					
		7	IV	Olympiad 202:4 (Phlegon of Tralles)				
		8	V					
	[19]	9	VI					
		10	VII	Teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles (10 Tishri).				7:11-52
		11	VIII	The harvest is great and cultured for 3 years.			10:2 13:7	
		12	IX	Feast of Dedication (25 Kislev).				10:1-39
33		1	X					
		2	XI					
		3	XII	Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.	21:1-17	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:1,12-19
		4	I	Passover meal on Friday 14 Nisan. Judas was dismissed	26:20,21	14:17,18	22:14-18	Ac 2:1,20
		5	II	and establishment of the Last Supper.	26:21-25	14:18-21	22:21-23	13:21-30
		6	III	Pentecost, reminder of a lunar eclipse (Acts 2:1,20)				
		7	IV	Paul becomes a Christian, 17 years (= 3 + 14) before his coming into Jerusalem in 50 CE (Gal 1:15-18, 2:1)				
		8	V					
		9	VI					

Two elements provided by the Gospels can confirm the dating by astronomy (3 April 33 CE). The day of Passover could coincide with any day of the week, but the next day, corresponding to the first day of the feast of unleavened breads (15 Nisan) was to be a Sabbath (Lv 23:5-7). If this Sabbath (15 Nisan) coincided with the usual Sabbath on Saturday, it was called a "great Sabbath". As Jesus was resurrected on the 1st day of the week of the Jewish system (Jn 19:31; 20:1), on Sunday, he died on Friday 14 Nisan. It is possible to calculate what was the day of the week corresponding to 14 Nisan. Thus the only year for which 14 Nisan falls on a Friday²⁹⁸ during the period from 27 to 35 CE is the year 33 CE. Depuydt proposes Friday 15 April 29 CE assuming an error of one day on the observation of the 1st crescent, but this is unlikely because one would have to admit that the 1st crescent was seen one day too early, but a new moon is not visible. The day corresponding to 14 Nisan over the 26-36 CE period is as follows:

year	14 Nisan in Julian calendar	Lunar eclipse	Event	
26	Friday 22 March	-		
27	Wednesday 9 April	-		
28	Monday 29 March	-		
29	Saturday 16 April	-	Jesus is baptized	John 1:28-32
30	Wednesday 5 April	-	1 st Passover	John 2:13
31	Monday 26 March	-	2 nd Passover	[John 5:1]
32	Monday 14 April	(not visible in Jerusalem)	3 rd Passover	John 6:4
33	Friday 3 April	OK	4 th Passover	John 12:1
34	Monday 22 March	-		
35	Monday 11 April	-		
36	Friday 30 March	-		

A second confirmation of 33 CE comes from the book of Acts describing two celestial phenomena that occurred at Pentecost and just after Jesus' death: *This is what was said through the prophet Joel (...) I shall pour out some of my spirit upon every sort of flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy (...) The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and illustrious day of Jehovah arrives*²⁹⁹ (Ac 2:1,16-20). Generally, during a lunar eclipse it appears blood-red, which is the most natural explanation of the text of Acts. The Roman historian Quintus Curtius suggests, for example, a lunar eclipse, in terms that illuminate how this phenomenon was perceived at the time (c. 50 CE): *Alexander made in this place, a halt of two days, and the next, gave the order to start. But near the eve of the day, the moon was eclipsing, the brightness of its disk began to disappear, and then a kind of veil of blood came sullyng its light: worried already about the approaches of a so terrible accident, the Macedonians were imbued with a deep religious feeling, and fear at the same time. This was against the wishes of the gods, they said, that drew them to the ends of the earth, the rivers were already unaffordable and the stars did not pay more than their former clarity and everywhere they met wastelands, deserts everywhere: and why so much blood? to satisfy the vanity of one man! He disdained his homeland, he disowned his father Philip, and in the pride of his thoughts, aspired to heaven! Sedition would burst, when Alexander, still inaccessible to fear, command chiefs and principal officers of his army to assemble in his tent body and at the same time the Egyptian priests, whom he considered very skilful in knowledge of the sky and stars, to express their opinion. Those knew well that, in the course of time, a series marked by revolutions is accomplished, and that the moon is eclipsed when it passes under the earth, or it is hidden by the sun, but what calculation revealed, they careful avoid sharing with vulgar. At hearing them, the sun is the heavenly body of the Greeks, the moon for the Persians: also, whenever it vanishes, it is to the Persians a portent of ruin and desolation, and they cite to examples of ancient kings of this empire, in which the moon by eclipsing, testified that they were fighting with opponent*

²⁹⁸ <http://www.nr.com/julian.html> <http://pagesperso-orange.fr/pgj/julien.htm>

²⁹⁹ The last part of this quote (Joel 3:3-5, Bible of Jerusalem) was announcing the destruction of the temple (Daniel 9:26).

gods. Nothing so powerfully governs the minds of the multitude that superstition carried, cruel, fickle as any other occasion, when vain ideas of religion dominate, it obeys the priests much better than its leaders. Also, the response of the Egyptians, just published in the army, revived the drooping spirits of hope and confidence (Histories of Alexander the Great IV:10). Curtius gives an accurate description of the total eclipse dated 13/VI year 5 of Darius III (20 September 331 BCE) by a Babylonian astronomical tablet (BM 36761), but the alleged Egyptian source of his explanations is actually a truncated quotation from Herodotus (Histories VII:37) because it states that the Persians also sacrificed to the sun and the moon (Histories I:131). Quintus Curtius himself recognized the point: *It was a traditional use among the Persians, not turn on after sunrise, when the day was shining in all its brilliance. The starting signal given by the trumpet, left the tent of the king over the tent, loud enough for everyone could see it, shone like the sun embedded in the crystal (...) then came a chariot dedicated to Jupiter, drawn by white horses, and followed by a courier of an extraordinary size, which is called the messenger of the sun: golden wands and white garments distinguished the conductors of these horses* (Histories of Alexander the Great III:3). When Curtius explains that a lunar eclipse with a veil of blood³⁰⁰ cannot be a harbinger of death he expresses the ideas of his time in cultivated circles but also indicates that these eclipses were seen as prescient in popular circles. In the 1st century Josephus shared this view: *do not you disturb yourselves at the quaking of inanimate creatures, nor do you imagine that this earthquake is a sign of another calamity; for such affections of the elements are according to the course of nature, nor does it import any thing further to men, than what mischief it does immediately of itself* (Jewish War I:377). The evangelist Luke, who was a doctor, had to share this scientific view about lunar eclipses. According to the biblical text the sun was overshadowed for 3 hours from 12:00 up to 15:00 (sometimes abnormal darkness is caused by thick clouds made of dust or ash) afterwards there was a partial eclipse of the moon, which began towards 15:40 and was visible in Jerusalem from 17:50 to 18:30 (Friday 3 April 33). It is also, according to astronomical calculations³⁰¹, the only one matching on Friday³⁰² between 26 and 36 CE (period of Pilate's legation in Judea):

Tiberius reign	year	14 Nisan: Julian calendar	Lunar eclipse	Event
15/16	29	Saturday 16 April	-	<i>Baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:1-23)</i>
16/17	30	Wednesday 5 April	-	
17/18	31	Monday 26 March	-	
18/19	32	Monday 14 April	(no visible in Jerusalem)	<i>death of John the Baptist</i>
19/20	33	Friday 3 April	OK	<i>death of Jesus</i>
20/21	34	Monday 22 March	-	<i>death of Herod Philip</i>
21/22	35	Monday 11 April	-	

John the Baptist's death occurred in 32 CE because, according to Josephus, shortly after his murder by Herod Antipas, a "divine vengeance" would have resulted: destruction of his army by Aretas, king of Petra, and the death of his brother Herod Philip in the 20th year of Tiberius (33/34) after 37 years of reign (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:106-119). In addition Jesus' ministry began in 29 CE as a discussion placed on the 1st Passover in 30 CE says: *The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem (...) the Jews replied: It has taken 46 years to build this sanctuary [naos] (Jn 2:13-20). The Greek word naos means the sanctuary of the Temple and not the Temple itself [ieron]. Moreover Josephus (Jewish Antiquities XX:219) states that the Temple [ieron] was not yet completed at the time of the procurator Albinus (62-64 CE). Concerning the sanctuary, he writes: When Herod completed the 17th year of*

³⁰⁰ Only total eclipses are dark red like blood, partial eclipses are darkened, but the term was being used for both types of eclipse.

³⁰¹ <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEcat5/LE0001-0100.html>

The maximum eclipse is at 14:47 UT and its beginning is set 86 minutes earlier, dated in Jerusalem at 15:41 (14:47 – 86 + 2:20).

³⁰² J.P. PARISOT, F. SUAGHER - Calendriers et chronologie Paris 1996 Éd. Masson pp. 164-166.

his reign, Caesar came in Syria (...) It was at this time, in the 18th year of his reign, after the events mentioned above, that Herod undertook an extraordinary work: the reconstructing of the temple of God at his own expense (...) the sanctuary [naos] itself was built by the priests in 1 year and 6 months (Jewish Antiquities XV:354,380,421). Cassius Dio placed the journey of Augustus in Syria during the spring (February/ March) when Marcus Publius Silius and Apuleius were consuls in 20 BCE (Roman History LIV:7:4-6), which actually corresponds to the end of the 18th year of Herod (21/20 BCE). Thus, the building of the Temple [ieron] began in April 20 BCE and the building of the sanctuary [naos] began in October 19 BCE and was completed in March 17 BCE because it lasted 1 year and 6 months. For religious reasons, the construction of the sanctuary was performed during the 20th and 21st year of Herod, which were sabbatical and jubilee years. The period of 46 years ended so around April 30 CE³⁰³.

Paul's conversion to Christianity, shortly after Jesus' death (1Co 15:4-8), had to have occurred in 33 CE. He explains that he spent 3 years in Arabia before going up to Jerusalem after his encounter with the risen Jesus (Gal 1:15-18) and 14 years later he went again to Jerusalem with Barnabas (Gal 2:1). As this second trip is dated in 50 CE with the expulsion of Jews from Rome mentioned at this meeting (Ac 15:1-2; 18:1-2), Paul's conversion has occurred between July and October of the year 33 (= 50 - [3+14]). According to Suetonius: *Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (The Live of Claudius XXV:4). Paulus Orosius reads: In the 9th year of his reign [in 50 CE], Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome (A History, against the Pagans VII:6) and Cassius Dio: [in 50 CE] As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city, he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings (Roman History LX:6,8).*

Some texts, such as Mark 15:25, are blown out of proportion to claim chronological inconsistencies³⁰⁴. According to this text: *it was now the 3rd hour when they impaled him* when it is stated a little further: *When it became the 6th hour a darkness fell over the whole land until the 9th hour. And at the 9th hour Jesus called out with a loud voice (Mark 15:33-34). Jesus was nailed at the 6th hour [12:00], not the 3rd hour [9:00], and then died at the 9th hour [15:00], the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1). Mark's text therefore refers to the 3rd hour of the trial before Pilate [9:00-12:00], which started around 9:00 after his return from Herod, not the 3rd hour of the day [9:00], to emphasize the duration of the harsh treatment inflicted to Jesus in verse 15 (Jesus was tortured through Roman flogging)³⁰⁵. Furthermore we learn in verse 21 that Simon of Cyrene came from the field (late morning) when he was requisitioned to help Jesus carry his gallows to his place of torment. Darkness which begin at noon coinciding with the killing of Jesus can be found in the text of Amos 8:9: *it must occur in that day, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, that I will make the sun go down at high noon, and I will cause darkness for the land on a bright day.* This precision allows us to understand the amazing reckoning of Matthew 12:40 giving the length of the funeral stay of Jesus: *For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish 3 days and 3 nights, so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth 3 days and 3 nights.* As Jesus died on Friday at 15:00 and rose on Sunday around 6:00 he only stayed 39 hours in death, not 72 hours (= 3x24h), but there is actually a total of 3 days and 3 nights³⁰⁶.*

³⁰³ If the 46 years were counted from the construction of the Temple, not the sanctuary, they would be completed by October 29 CE.

³⁰⁴ R.E. BROWN -The death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the grave: a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels (Yale 1994 Ed. Doubleday), p. 846.

³⁰⁵ The usual instrument was a short whip (*flagrum* or *flagellum*) with several leather straps of unequal length, plaited or not, which were set at intervals of small metal balls or splinters of bone sheep especially sharp.

³⁰⁶ Night 1: Friday 14 Nisan from 12h to 15h (miraculous night); Day 1: Friday 14 Nisan from 15h to 18h; Night 2: Saturday 15 Nisan from 18h to 6h; Day 2: Saturday 15 Nisan from 6h to 18h; Night 3: Sunday 16 Nisan from 18h to 6h; Day 3: 16 Nisan from 6h to 18h.

Brown³⁰⁷ spent a long excursus on the dating of Jesus' death; he explains why the final date of Friday 3 April 33 CE that should have been imposed was however rejected: *If we exclude 27 not only weak astronomically but also as too early for Jesus' death in the light of almost all the Gospel indications about his life and ministry listed above, that leaves two possibilities for the 14th of Nisan as a Thursday/Friday, namely (translated into the Julian calendar), April 7, 30 or April 3, 33. In general there has been a tendency to reject 33 as implying too old a Jesus and too long a ministry, since he would have been almost 40 when he died and have had a public ministry of some 4 years. If he died in 30, he would have been about 36 and have had a ministry of somewhat less than two years. Neither date fulfils every details in the Gospel evidence about Jesus' birth and ministry, but since many of those details are theologically intended and approximate, I see no problem about either. In some ways the political situation in 33 (after the fall of Sejanus in Rome in Oct. 31) would explain better Pilate's vulnerability to the pressure of the populace, but that is too uncertain an argument to create a preference.* The date 33 CE is mainly rejected because of the expected date of birth in 7 BCE, which is false! Error causes error. The second reason for some to reject the historical data of the biblical text is, in the words of Brown, that: *many of these details are approximate and theologically referred*, in particular concerning the scandalous trial of Jesus. In fact, evidence for dating the time of Jesus' birth (Monday 29 September 2 BCE see: *Dating the Death of Herod*) and those describing the trial are very precise, contrary to the disillusioned assertion of Brown. Similarly, his remark about Sejanus is removed too quickly. In fact, the veiled threat from the Jewish authorities to appeal to Caesar against Pilate (Jn 19:12) well supported that date, because they were likely to be understood. Yet, according to Philo of Alexandria, after the death of Sejanus in October 31 CE, Tiberius asked provincial governors to be considerate to the Jews, because the charges against them in the past [before 32 CE] were false (Legation to Gaius 159-161). This remark implies situating the trial of Jesus after 32 CE.

Some commentators propose to situate Jesus' death in 30 CE because, according to a text of the Talmud, the Temple of Jerusalem was disapproved (by God) from this date: *Our Rabbis taught: During the last 40 years before the destruction of the Temple [in 70 CE] the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Sanctuary would open by themselves, until R. Johanan b. Zakkai rebuked them, saying: Sanctuary, Sanctuary, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself? I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Ido has already prophesied concerning thee: Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars (Yoma 39b).* This text does not mention the death of the Messiah, though the Gospels confirm the rejection of the temple from this date: *Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those selling cattle and sheep and doves and the money brokers in their seats. So, after making a whip of ropes, he drove all those with the sheep and cattle out of the temple, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he said to those selling the doves: Take these things away from here! Stop making the house of my Father a house of merchandise! His disciples called to mind that it is written: The zeal for your house will eat me up. Therefore, in answer, the Jews said to him: What sign have you to show us, since you are doing these things? In answer Jesus said to them: Break down this sanctuary [naos], and in 3 days I will raise it up. Therefore the Jews said: This sanctuary [naos] was built in 46 years, and will you raise it up in 3 days? But he was talking about the sanctuary [naos] of his body (Jn 2:13-21).* There is clearly a misunderstanding about the identification of the "sanctuary" or "Most Holy". According to the Christian interpretation, the sanctuary (Most Holy for the Jews) became incarnate in Jesus³⁰⁸ from his baptism in 29 CE and therefore the destruction of this "sanctuary" lasted 3 days (from 14 to 16 Nisan 33). The temple [*ieron*] of Jerusalem,

³⁰⁷ R.E. BROWN -The death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the grave: a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels (Yale 1994 Ed. Doubleday), pp. 1350-1376.

³⁰⁸ After 33 CE the true sanctuary [*naos*], with the ark of the covenant (missing in 609 BCE), moved in heaven (Rv 11:19).

including the former sanctuary [*naos*] deprecated, would be permanently destroyed in 70.

Luke's text gives more details about Jesus' baptism because it was an important event from a chronological point of view: *In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (...) Now as the people were in expectation and all were reasoning in their hearts about John: May he perhaps be the Christ? (...) Jesus himself, when he commenced [his work], was about 30 years old* (Lk 3:1,15,23). So, Jesus appeared as the Messiah³⁰⁹ at his baptism in the 15th year of Tiberius (19 August 28 to 18 August 29 CE) when he was about 30 years old. As he was born on 29 September 2 BCE, he was exactly 30 on 29 September 29 CE, which involves linking his baptism to the end of the 15th year of Tiberius around August 29 CE. Luke indicates that at his time the people were waiting for the Messiah³¹⁰. The historian Josephus also explains: *Now it is fitting to relate certain things about this man (Daniel) which one may greatly wonder at hearing, namely that all things happened to him in a marvellously fortunate way as to one of the greatest prophets and during his lifetime he received honour and esteem from kings and people, and, since his death, his memory lives on eternally. For the books which he wrote and left behind are still read by us even now, and we are convinced by them that Daniel spoke with God, for he was not only wont to prophesy future things, as did the other prophets, but he also fixed the time at which these would come to pass. And, whereas the other prophets foretold disasters and were for that reason in disfavour with kings and people, Daniel was a prophet of good tidings to them, so that through the auspiciousness of his predictions he attracted the goodwill of all, while from their realization he gained credit among the multitude for his truthfulness and at the same time won their esteem for his divine power. And he left behind writings in which he has made plain to us the accuracy and faithfulness to truth of his prophecies (...) And there would arise from their number a certain king who would make war on the Jewish nation and their laws, deprive them of the form of government based on these laws, spoil the temple and prevent the sacrifices from being offered for 3 years. And these misfortunes our nation did in fact come to experience under Antiochus Epiphanes, just as Daniel many years before saw and wrote that they would happen. In the same manner Daniel also wrote about the empire of the Romans and that Jerusalem would be taken by them and the temple laid waste [in 70 CE]. All these things, as God revealed them to him, he left behind in his writings, so that those who read them and observe how they have come to pass must wonder at Daniel's having been so honoured by God, and learn from these facts how mistaken are the Epicureans, who exclude Providence from human life and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs* (Jewish Antiquities X:266-276).

RECONSTRUCTING THE LAST PASSOVER OF JESUS

The trial before the Sanhedrin then before Pilate, at the last Passover of Jesus, is the major element that attracts most criticism. Illegal trial for some, inconsistent or impossible for others. These criticisms are generally intended to deny the historicity of the trial and by rebound historicity of the Gospel story. The literature on this famous trial abounds. Brown's book which is devoted solely to the death of Jesus has, for example, over 1600 pages! However, the goal of historian is not to examine all controversies, or to understand the intentions of various players but only to know whether a chronological reconstruction of the trial involves inconsistencies, contradictions or improbabilities. Indeed, during a criminal investigation, such a reconstruction is usually the only way for judges to verify the authenticity of evidence and therefore of being able to accuse or exonerate. Some elements of the trial seem contradictory regarding the motivation of condemnation and procedure followed by the various authorities involved, but a crucial observation is needed: if the early Christians, who were all former Jews strongly denounced the deceit the Sanhedrin they never accused it of acting illegally, which would have been a key argument in disputes with

³⁰⁹ The word Messiah means "anointed" in Hebrew and was translated into Greek by Christ.

³¹⁰ A. PAUL - Le concept de prophétie biblique Flavius Josèphe et Daniel
in: *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* Tome 63 Paris 1975 pp. 367-384.

their former coreligionists, as Brown notes: *Acts 23:3 charges that the trial of Paul was illegal; but although the Gospel writers indicate that the Jewish authorities were dishonest and callous, they never state that in trying and condemning Jesus the authorities were acting illegally according either to Roman law or the Law of Moses. The evangelists never call attention to even one of the conflicts with mishnaic procedures that I have indicated above. The charge, were it made, should have become a major factor in anti-Jewish polemic*³¹¹. In fact a knowledge of the context of that time explains this paradox and a chronological reconstruction enables one to fix the major phases of Jesus' trial.

Jesus' trial was held in Jerusalem under the leadership of Caiaphas (18-37), the high priest appointed by Valerius Gratus and Pontius Pilate appointed Prefect of Judea (26-36) by Tiberius Caesar. The different jurisdictions (Jewish and Roman) at that time and in this region (Judea) were the following³¹²:

Legate of the East	Governor of Syria	Prefect of Judea	period	High Priest (Judea)
	Marcus Titius	[Herod the Great]	-12 -10	Simon ben Boethus
	Caius Sentius Saturninus	[Herod the Great]	-10 -6	Simon ben Boethus
(Tiberius)	Publius Quinctilius Varus	[Herod the Great]	-6 -5	Matthias ben Theophilus
(Tiberius)	Publius Quinctilius Varus	[Herod the Great]	-5 -3	Joazar ben Boethus?
(Tiberius Caesar)	Publius Sulpicius Quirinius	[Herod the Great]	-3 -1	Joazar ben Boethus?
Caius Caesar	Publius Quinctilius Varus	[Archelaus]	-1 2	Eleazar ben Boethus
Caius Caesar	[Caius Caesar]	[Archelaus]	2 4	Eleazar ben Boethus
	Lucius Volusius Saturninus	[Archelaus]	4 6	Jeshua ben Sie
	Publius Sulpicius Quirinius	Coponius	6 9	Ananus ben Seth
	Publius Sulpicius Quirinius?	Marcus Ambibulus	9 12	Ananus ben Seth
	Q. Caecilius Metellus Silanus	Annus Rufus	12 15	Ananus ben Seth
	Q. Caecilius Metellus Silanus	Valerius Gratus	15 16	Ishmael ben Phiabus
	Q. Caecilius Metellus Silanus	Valerius Gratus	16 17	Eleazar ben Ananus
Germanicus Caesar	Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso	Valerius Gratus	17 18	Simon ben Camithus
Germanicus Caesar	Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso	Valerius Gratus	18 19	Joseph Caiaphas
	Cnaeus Sentius Saturninus	Valerius Gratus	19 21	Joseph Caiaphas
	[Lucius Aelius Lamia]	Valerius Gratus	21 26	Joseph Caiaphas
[Sejanus]	[Lucius Aelius Lamia]	Pontius Pilate	26 30	Joseph Caiaphas
[Sejanus]	[Lucius Aelius Lamia] /	Pontius Pilate	30 32	Joseph Caiaphas
Lucius Vitellius?	Lucius Pomponius Flaccus	Pontius Pilate	32 35	Joseph Caiaphas
Lucius Vitellius	Lucius Vitellius	Pontius Pilate	35 36	Joseph Caiaphas
	Lucius Vitellius	Marcellus	36 37	Joseph Caiaphas
	Lucius Vitellius	Marullus	37 39	Theophilus ben Ananus
	Publius Petronius	Marullus	39 41	Theophilus ben Ananus

In theory, Roman law was quite simple since it was based on two main principles: 1) the governor of an imperial province received full authority in the form of an *imperium* that the emperor delegated him, in setting him limits, to be his personal representative in his province and 2) the Roman Senate recognized the law of the conquered peoples (for pragmatic reasons of lack of staff) but reserved criminal jurisdiction (mainly because of the presence of Roman citizens). In practice, the administrative and legal relationships between the different authorities in a place was complicated for the following reasons:

- The governors of smaller provinces like Judea (from 6 CE) were primarily designated, till Claude (before 41 CE) by their police function of prefect (viewed as more prestigious) rather than their financial function of procurator, but in fact they were combining the two

³¹¹ R.E. BROWN -The death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the grave: a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels, Yale 1994 Ed. Doubleday p. 359 note 69.

³¹² J.P. LÉMONON - Ponce Pilate

Paris 2007 Éd. De l'Atelier pp. 263-265.

E. SCHÜRER - The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ Vol. I 1987 Edinburgh Ed. Matthew Black F.B.A. pp. 243-266, 357-398.

functions. The prefect had administrative power by the exercise of a civil and criminal jurisdiction and the procurator was representing financial and fiscal interests of the emperor. So Pilate was a procurator-prefect, not only a prefect.

- Governors were formally accountable only to the emperor but two situations were exceptions. For strategic reasons, in a large area like the East, the emperor could appoint a special legate by providing him with an *imperium* associated with written instructions (*mandata*). In this exceptional situation the governors of Syria and Judea had to cooperate with the imperial legate of the East, according to Tacitus (Annals XV:25). However, divergent interpretations of the instructions from the emperor could lead to conflicts such as that between Germanicus Caesar Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso and Valerius Gratus (Annals II:43). Similarly, Lucius Vitellius as Eastern legate (Annals VI:32) was able to revoke Pilate (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:88-89). A second situation could be an exception, that of the power vacuum. Tiberius, for example, retired to the island of Capri (from 27 CE) and left the managing of the affairs to Sejanus, the praetorian prefect³¹³ who became a co-regent, according to Velleius Paterculus (Roman History II:127). In 33 CE, Pilate could have been legally questioned either by Vitellius, legate of the East or by Macron, the new praetorian prefect (Sejanus was executed for treason on 18 October 31 CE).
- A province was normally headed by a governor but the emperor could appoint a governor while asking him to stay in Rome or to join his province while maintaining the former with a different mission (Annals I:80, VI:27).
- Proconsuls were theoretically colleagues of the emperor and could, as such, intervene with the governors of their area, especially in case of legal problems³¹⁴.

The most complex case was that of Judea since there were two overlapping jurisdictions: the ones of prefect and high priest. The situation was as follows (33 CE):

- Pomponius Flaccus, governor of Syria, resided in Antioch and had four legions of 5000 to 6000 soldiers each: *VI Ferrata*, *X Fretensis*, *III Gallica*, *XII Fulminata* (after 18 CE). He controlled the cities of Azot, Jamnia and Phasaëlis allocated by Herod to his sister Salome (Jewish Antiquities XVII:189), which were then attached to the province of Syria.
- Herod Philip, tetrarch of Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, Gaulanitis and Iturea resided in Caesarea Philippi and had a troop of soldiers used as policemen or customs officers. These soldiers could also be requisitioned by governors in case of war and integrated as auxiliary troops alongside the legions, until at least 47 CE because after that date the Jews were exempted (Jewish Antiquities XIV:202-204).



³¹³ Y. PERRIN, T. BAUZOU – De la Cité à l'Empire : histoire de Rome Paris 2004 Éd. Ellipses p. 295.

³¹⁴ F. HURLET – Le proconsul et le prince d'Auguste à Dioclétien Paris 2006 Éd. Ausonius pp. 309-314.

- Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, resided in Tiberias. As Herod Philip, he had also a troop of (Jewish) soldiers that he used, for example, as an escort during his trip to Jerusalem (Lk 23:7-11).
- Pilate, Prefect of Judea, ordinarily resided in Caesarea and had 5 cohorts (500 to 600 soldiers each) and a squadron of cavalry (*Ala I Gemina Sebastenorum*) to keep order in his province (Jewish Antiquities XIX:365). These soldiers were either Romans or some Samaritans recruited at Sebaste (Jewish War II:52). The text of Acts (Ac 10:1; 21:31-32, 27:1) probably refers to the *Secunda Italica Civium Romanorum* and the *Prima Augusta* which was stationed in Jerusalem.
- Caiaphas the high priest in Jerusalem had Temple police led by captains (Lk 22:4, Ac 5:21-26) and a troop of soldiers used as policemen (Lk 3:14) for criminal cases or as customs officers for tax matters. The word "soldiers" was used to denote both the Roman soldiers and Jewish policemen. The temple guards were under the direction of a captain (Jewish War VI:294; Jewish Antiquities XX:131,208). The Greek word *strategos* "Captain" is the translation of the Hebrew word *sagan* appearing in the Old Testament (Ezr 9:2, Ne 2:16).
- Annas, a former high priest (6-15), resided in Jerusalem and was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin as honorary high priest. He probably met Jesus when the latter, aged 12, had gone to the temple to celebrate the Passover (Lk 2:41-46). The coexistence of several high priests, which was exceptional before our common era (1Ki 2:27,35), became unusually common from 6 until 66 CE (Jewish War II:243).

When these characters met in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, they were all under the authority of Pilate: King Herod Antipas, for example, was only there as a private person. However, the Jews were remaining under the moral authority of the high priest, including those in the diaspora. The most complex situation (which has caused much ink) was that of a religious offence because the Roman criminal law was not very explicit in this area³¹⁵. This particular case of a religious crime raises two questions: did the Sanhedrin have the authority by Rome to condemn to death and then the right to execute it? Brown, after examining in detail this complex issue, led to this conclusion: *The Romans permitted the Jews to execute for certain clear religious offenses, e.g., for violating the prohibitions against circulating in certain quarters of the Temple, and perhaps for adultery. Beyond this specified religious sphere the Jewish authorities were supposed to hand over cases to the Romans, who would decide whether or not to pass and execute a death sentence*³¹⁶. On what basis is this conclusion?

CRIMINAL LAW IN JUDEA OVER THE LEGATION OF PILATE (26-36)

When Archelaus ethnarch of Judea was deposed by Quirinius in 6 CE his province came under the authority of Coponius, first prefect of Judea, who received full authority (*imperium*) including the right to impose the death penalty (Jewish War II:117,167; Jewish Antiquities XVIII:1-2). Under the Herodian kingdom the Sanhedrin had this right (Jewish Antiquities XIV:177; XV:173) and this religious court was a feature of Jewish kingdoms (Against Apion II:184-188), the judiciary of the high priest having been endorsed by Rome from 142 BCE (1M 15:16-21), as Josephus and Philo reminded. They also state that this special religious court was being seen as a privilege (Jewish Antiquities XVI:174; Legatio ad Caium 307-308). According to the Jerusalem Talmud³¹⁷: *it is taught that 40 years before the destruction of the Temple, the judgments of capital punishment were removed [to the Jews] and in the days of*

³¹⁵ With the exception of the law on illegal cults (*superstitio illicita*), but Jewish religion was recognized by Rome as lawful.

³¹⁶ R.E. BROWN -The death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the grave: a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels (Yale 1994 Ed. Doubleday), p. 371.

³¹⁷ J. BONSIKVEN - Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siècles (Roma 1985 Ed. Pontificio Istituto Biblico p. 503).

Shimeon ben Shetach their judgments in pecuniary matters were removed (Sanhedrin 18a). These two important events took place under Roman jurisdiction³¹⁸: the first one occurred in 30 CE since the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE and the second about 65/64 at the beginning of the Roman administration in Syria, which started with the quaestor pro-praetor Marcus Aemilius Scaurus (65-62). In addition we know that Simeon ben Shetach (c. 120-40 BCE) was a Pharisee scholar and Nasi (Prince) of the Sanhedrin during the reigns of Alexander Jannæus (103-76) and his successor, Queen Alexandra Salome (76-67), who was Simeon's sister (B. Berakhot 48a). Thus the end of the pecuniary independence of the Jews was around 65/64. The Talmud does not give the reason for the disappearance of the death penalty in 30 CE, which had been previously granted to the Sanhedrin, and does not indicate whether it concerned all civil crimes (murder, adultery, infanticide) and religious (sacrilege, blasphemy) or only civil crimes.

The loss of executing capital punishment by the Sanhedrin in 30 CE therefore occurred during the legation of Pilate (26-36). Several clues suggest that this surprising change was the result of Jesus' attack against the money changers in the Temple at the beginning of his ministry (Jn 2:13-17) in April 30 CE because the Annas owning family was corrupt and the intervention of Jesus revealed a large scale scandal which had to have pushed Pilate to restrict the judicial powers of the Sanhedrin³¹⁹. Josephus, for example, tells how Ananias (Annas son of Annas) around 62 CE bribed the procurator of Judea, Albinus, with money raised by extortion on the threshing floors: *Now as soon as Albinus was come to the city of Jerusalem, he used all his endeavors and care that the country might be kept in peace, and this by destroying many of the Sicarii. But as for the high priest, Ananias he increased in glory every day, and this to a great degree, and had obtained the favour and esteem of the citizens in a signal manner; for he was a great boarder up of money: he therefore cultivated the friendship of Albinus, and of the high priest, by making them presents; he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of the people, and went to the thrashing-floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give these tithes to them. So the other high priests acted in the like manner, as did those his servants, without any one being able to prohibit them; so that [some of the] priests, that of old were wont to be supported with those tithes, died for want of food* (Jewish Antiquities XX:204-207). Similarly, *Midrash Sifre* §105³²⁰ on Deuteronomy 14:22 reports that the produce stalls of the "Sons of Hanan" were destroyed around 67 CE because their owners failed to tithe; they may have been involved in overpricing the requisites for sacrifice at the Temple. Rabbinic documents criticize (perhaps with prejudice) the Sadducee high priests of the Roman era, but there seems to be a special animosity toward the house of Annas as greedy and repressive. The priests of the house of Hanin were criticized because of their secret conclaves (Pesahim 57a; Tosephta Menahot 13.21). Surely not all this evidence is accurate; nor are all agreed that the various Jewish references to Hanin or Hanan pertain to Annas and his descendants; but some of the negative evaluation seems to be historical³²¹. According another tradition from the Talmud, the Sanhedrin had to be moved or expelled from the *Lishkat ha-Gazit* 40 years before the Temple was destroyed (in 70 CE) to the Bazaars (Sanhedrin 41a; Shabbat 15a; Aboda Zara 8b). Some would associate these Bazaars (Hanut) with the high priestly family of Annas

³¹⁸ J.P. LÉMONON - Ponce Pilate

Paris 2007 Éd. De l'Atelier pp. 76-81.

³¹⁹ R.E. BROWN -The death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the grave: a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels (Yale 1994 Ed. Doubleday), pp. 350, 408-409.

³²⁰ Also the *baraita* or ancient tradition in Baba Mesi'a 88a.

³²¹ As far as Christians are concerned, is it accidental that Jesus, Stephen (the first martyr), and James the brother of Jesus were all put to death during the tenure of priests of the house of Annas? Even though only John gives Annas a role in the death of Jesus, there is no persuasive reason to doubt that memory, especially since no discernible theological reason would have caused the Johannine tradition to introduce this figure.

(Hananya); there is a dispute whether the Bazaars were on the Mount of Olives or on the Temple Mount. Further confusion is caused by the Talmud (Rosh Hashana 31a), which has a subsequent move of the Sanhedrin in the opposite direction, from the Bazaars to Jerusalem. In short, we cannot be sure where the Sanhedrin usually met at the time of Jesus' death, but a place adjacent to rather than in the Temple may be more correct. Quite probably anachronistic for Jesus' time would be the rule found (Sanhedrin 41a; Aboda Zara 8b), which would consider illegal a sentence of death passed outside the *Lishkat ha-Gazit*.

These facts, even portrayed through Pharisee prejudices, explain the following logical sequence: when Jesus revealed openly a financial extortion orchestrated by Annas (Jr 7:11; Jn 2:16), a former high priest; the revelation of the scandal prompted Pilate to intervene to calm the looted Jews in placing the judicial powers of the Sanhedrin under his control; following this incident, Annas must have kept a grudge against Jesus; Pilate, in order to appease the robbed Jews, had to implement the custom to release a Jewish prisoner for the Passover. Although Pilate, from 30 CE, controlled the civilian criminal court (including executions), he left the religious jurisdiction under the responsibility of the Sanhedrin for two reasons: the Romans had no legal competence to assess Jewish religious crimes, such as sacrilege or blasphemy, and it was not necessary to remove such powers as it would have unnecessarily angered pious Jews and certainly sparked a revolt. The jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin³²² corresponded to that of a religious Supreme Court and therefore extended to all Jews (Ac 9:2; 22:5; 26:12), well beyond Judea³²³. Religious crimes for incurring capital punishment were few, mainly blasphemy and sacrilege. Blasphemy was to curse God by using his name, a crime codified in Moses' law: in that case the culprit should be stoned to death outside the camp (Lv 24:14-16). This procedure was, for example, unfairly applied to execute Naboth (1Ki 21:13-14). Sacrilege was in fact the desecration of the Temple utensils (Nb 4:15). For example, in the quotation from a letter of Agrippa I (41-44) to Caius, Philo explains that entry into the Holy of Holies by a Jew, even if he was a priest as well as a high priest when he was not expressly authorized, was a crime punishable by death without appeal (Legatio ad Caium 306-307). Josephus relates that a Roman soldier who had torn and thrown into a fire the Holy Law (c. 50 CE), was sentenced to death because of this desecration by procurator Cumanus on the request of the Jews (Jewish War II:229-231). Besides Josephus puts these words into the mouth of emperor Titus: *Have not you [Jews], vile wretches that you are, by our permission, put up this partition-wall before your sanctuary? Have not you been allowed to put up the pillars thereto belonging, at due distances, and on it to engrave in Greek, and in your own letters, this prohibition, that no foreigner should go beyond that wall. Have not we given you leave to kill such as go beyond it, though he were a Roman?* (Jewish War VI:125-126). *Thus was the first enclosure. In the midst of which, and not far from it, was the second, to be gone up to by a few steps: this was encompassed by a stone wall for a partition, with an inscription, which forbade any foreigner to go in under pain of death* (Jewish Antiquities XV:417). The text of Josephus mentions here an exceptional right to capital punishment and not a right to lynching as some claim, because the Jews were extremely legalistic (the Gospel texts largely confirm this).

During the Roman occupation (until 70 CE), the Sanhedrin had the legal right to put to death for a religious crime: *I even persecuted this Way to the death and sent women as well as men to prison in chains as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify. I even received letters from them to the brothers in Damascus, which I took with me when I set off to bring prisoners back from there to Jerusalem for punishment (...) As for me, I once thought it was my duty to use every means to oppose the*

³²² E. SCHÜRER - The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem in: The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ Vol. II (Edinburgh, 1986) pp. 199-226.

J. MASSONNET - Sanhédrin in: Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément (Paris, 1991, Ed. Letouzey & Ané) pp. 1357-1413.

³²³ After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE the Sanhedrin ceased to exist in its previous form.

name of Jesus the Nazarene. This I did in Jerusalem; I myself threw many of God's holy people into prison, acting on authority from the chief priests, and when they were being sentenced to death I cast my vote against them (Ac 22:4-5; 26:9-10). The Sanhedrin therefore could both condemn to death for a religious crime but also carry out the sentence as is clear from the dialogue between Pilate and the Sanhedrin at the trial of Jesus: *So Pilate came outside to them and said: What charge do you bring against this man? They replied: If he were not a criminal, we should not have handed him over to you. Pilate said: Take him yourselves, and try him by your own Law* [Pilate therefore considered that it was a religious crime and reminds the Jews that they could condemn him]. *The Jews answered: We are not allowed to put anyone to death* [Pilate had no need of the Jews for explaining him the law, but by this remark he understood that it was a civil crime which was therefore under his jurisdiction]. *When they saw him, the chief priests and the guards shouted: Crucify him! Crucify him! Pilate said: Take him yourselves and crucify him: I find no case against him* [Pilate again refuses to rank this crime in civil register as the Jews wished, but in the case of a religious crime he considered that it was for them to judge and execute. This proves that Pilate recognized their right to put to death for this crime]. *The Jews replied: We have a Law, and according to that Law he ought to be put to death, because he has claimed to be Son of God* [the Jews finally recognized that it was indeed a religious crime but by revealing the extraordinary nature of the "crime", they played on the superstitious side of the Roman governor and referred also to the Roman law on illegal cults which had allowed, for example, to put to death Socrates]. *When Pilate heard them say this his fears increased* (Jn 18:29-31; 19:6-8). It is noteworthy that the Jews have tried on several occasions to use Roman law on illegal cults (*superstitio illicita*) to make sentence to death some Judeo-Christians: *But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a concerted attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying: We accuse this man of persuading people to worship God in a way that breaks the Law* [illicit cult]. *Before Paul could open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews: Listen, you Jews. If this were a misdemeanour or a crime* [civilian crime], *it would be in order for me to listen to your plea; but if it is only quibbles about words and names, and about your own Law* [religious crime], *then you must deal with it yourselves —I have no intention of making legal decisions about these things. Then he began to hustle them out of the court (...)* *This man had been seized by the Jews and would have been murdered by them; but I came on the scene with my troops and got him away, having discovered that he was a Roman citizen. Wanting to find out what charge they were making against him, I brought him before their Sanhedrin. I found that the accusation concerned disputed points of their Law* [religious crime], *but that there was no charge deserving death or imprisonment. Acting on information that there was a conspiracy against the man, I hasten to send him to you, and have notified his accusers that they must state their case against him in your presence (...)* *while I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and elders of the Jews laid information against him, demanding his condemnation. But I told them that Romans are not in the habit of surrendering any man, until the accused confronts his accusers and is given an opportunity to defend himself against the charge. So they came here with me, and I wasted no time but took my seat on the tribunal the very next day and had the man brought in. When confronted with him, his accusers did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected* [civilian crimes]; *but they had some argument or other with him about their own religion and about a dead man called Jesus whom Paul alleged to be alive. Not feeling qualified to deal with questions of this sort, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried there on this issue* (Ac 18:12-16; 23:27-30; 25:15-20.).

The grounds to legally kill Jesus, as well as the first Jewish Christians, were limited in number and are summarized hereafter: *Paul's defence was this: I have committed no offence whatever against either Jewish law* [crime of blasphemy], *or the Temple* [crime of desecration], *or Caesar* [crime of lese majeste] (Ac 25:8). The charge of *crimen laesae majestatis* was officially brought against Jesus even though Pilate had initially considered that it was inappropriate (Lk 23:13,14). The law called *Lex Julia majestatis*, enacted in 48 BCE and revised in 18 BCE, considered as a crime any activity against the sovereignty of Rome. This very serious charge was frequently used

in the reign of Tiberius (14-37), according to Tacitus (Annals II:50, III:38). The crime of blasphemy was even more subtle. Strictly speaking, blasphemy was to "curse God by naming" according to Leviticus 24:16, which was in fact very rare. The name of God [YHWH] was still known in the first century, since Josephus (37-100) wrote: *A mitre also of fine linen encompassed his head, which was tied by a blue ribbon, about which there was another golden crown, in which was engraven the sacred name [of God]: it consists of four vowels [IEUA/IOUA]* (Jewish War V:235). This name, however, was rarely pronounced because Philo (15 BCE-50 CE) stated in his book on the life of Moses: *a golden leaf was wrought like a crown, having four sacred characters engraved on it [YHWH]³²⁴ which may only be mentioned or heard by holy men having their ears and their tongues purified by wisdom, and by no one else at all in any place whatever. And this holy prophet Moses calls the name, a name of four letters (...) above this cidaris [miter] is a golden leaf, on which an engraving of four letters was impressed; by which letters they say that the name of the living God is indicated, since it is not possible that anything that it in existence, should exist without God being invoked* (On the Life of Moses II:114-115,132).

Pronunciation of God's name was lawful until the middle of the 2nd century of our era; after this date, Rabbi Abba Shaul stated that *the one who pronounces the Name according to its letters* would have no share in the world to come (Sanhedrin 101a; 10:1). The phrase "to pronounce the name according to its letters" means to pronounce the name as it is written or by the sound of its letters, which is different to spelling the name according to its letters. Indeed, it was allowed to spell the name YHWH according to its letters as the Talmud itself does, that is to say in Hebrew Yod, He, Waw, He; however, it was forbidden to pronounce it according to these letters. The Hebrew name Y-H-W-D-H, for example, is pronounced I-H-U-D-A (Judah) according to its letters and it is spelled Y, H, W, D, H; similarly, the name Y-H-W-H is pronounced I-H-U-A (Jova)³²⁵ and it is spelled Y, H, W, H. In fact, the Jews separated the biblical blasphemy "insult God by naming" into two consecutive actions: "insult God" by blasphemous words (sayings of apostates, for example) and "naming God." To prevent the witnesses of a blasphemy in this type of trial become themselves blasphemers by reporting offensive or blasphemous words and using God's name, they had to replace it by a standardized phrase like "Yose strikes Yose" (Yose is a name of four letters used to replace God's name Yova), according to the Talmud (Sanhedrin 7:5; 56a)³²⁶. The trial of Stephen is a good illustration of this process.

The procedure for Stephen's trial, described in Chapter 6 of the book of Acts, was similar to that of Jesus' trial. Firstly, Stephen was accused of "blasphemous sayings." He is then brought before the Sanhedrin for trial (Ac 6:11-12). The "blasphemous sayings" were actually apostasy (Ac 6:13-14), which was the pretext usually held against a potential blasphemer (Ac 21:21). It was really an official trial, not a lynching, because Paul was present at that trial (Ac 7:58-8:1) as legal commissioner of the Sanhedrin (Ac 26:9-10). Stephen, if he had been condemned as apostate, risked either to be jailed (Ac 8:3), flogged (Ac 22:19-20) or excommunicated (Jn 9:22), but he did not risk the death penalty. To refute the charge of apostasy that weighed on him, Stephen recalled that he still adhered to the teachings of the Jewish faith, citing, among others, the famous episode of the burning bush, which contains the revelation of God's name (Ac 7:30-33) that led him to use it several

³²⁴ God's name is frequently called the Tetragrammaton meaning "four letters" in Greek.

³²⁵ Valerius Maximus wrote in 30 CE that the praetor Cornelius Hispalus had expelled the Jews (in 139 BCE) who had tried to bribe Romans by worshiping Sabazi [Sabaoth] Iouei. Augustin of Hippo also believed that the Jews had worshiped the god Ioue in the past (*De consensu evangelistarum*). Philo of Byblos, transcribed Ieüô the name of God in his *Phoenician History* (c. 100-120).

³²⁶ The blasphemer is punished only if he utters [the divine] name. R. Joshua b. Karha said: the whole day [of the trial] the witnesses are examined by means of a substitute for the Divine Name, thus, "may Yose smite Yose". When the trial was finished, the accused was not executed on this evidence, but all persons were removed [from court], and the chief witness was told, state literally (בפירוש) what you heard. Thereupon he did so, [using the Divine Name]. The judges then arose and rent their garments, which rent was not to be resewn.

times (Ac 7:31,33,49). The fact of using the divine name was not wrong in itself, but its use in a trial for blasphemy before the final verdict was changing the accusation of "blasphemous sayings" into "blasphemy", according to rabbinic procedure (Sanhedrin 7:5), which automatically resulted in execution by stoning, and that is indeed what happened (Ac 7:58). Some believed that Stephen had blasphemed when he mentioned the "Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Ac 7:56), but this does not correspond to the Jewish definition of blasphemy. In addition, the prohibition of quoting Jesus already existed (Ac 4:18; 5:28) and the penalty in this case was only flogging (Ac 5:40), not the death sentence. This penalty was often applied to Christians of Jewish origin (Ac 22:19) but not to other Christians, considered as pagan by the Sanhedrin.

Some believe that the stoning of Stephen was a lynching (such as the one described in Luke 4:29) because the witnesses screamed and put their hands over their ears before stoning him (Ac 7:58), but it is forgotten that members of the Sanhedrin, especially Paul who wanted to be blameless (Ph 3:6), were all very legalistic and would not have allowed such an offence. The trial ended by the depositing of their torn clothes at the feet of Paul by the witnesses (Ac 7:58), indicating that the witnesses had confirmed the conviction of blasphemy by tearing their clothes as required by tradition (Is 36:22). The fact that the witnesses were angry at trial proves only that they were violent (Ac 8:3) and that they were highly annoyed by the sharp words of Stephen (Ac 7:51-54). In the 1st century, anger was not illegal (Ep 4:26), but only unrecommended (Jm 1:19-20). The definition of religious crimes required an interpretation of the Torah which was preventing Roman magistrates from taking part in it. They regarded all that as a mere quarrel over words and names (Ac 18:15). To overcome this difficulty, the Jews thus transformed their accusations of blasphemy or apostasy, not admissible by Roman law, into charge of introducing illegal worship (Ac 16:21, 17:18, 18:13) the only Roman law dealing with religious crime. The Sanhedrin could condemn to death Jewish criminals (#5), as was the case of the two evildoers executed with Jesus (Lk 23:33-40), but it had to wait for the coming of a Governor in order to enforce the sentence by Roman authorities:

#	Crime:	Penalty incurred:	Competent authority:
1	Murder of a Roman.	Death penalty.	Governor
2	Murder of a Jew by a Roman.	Death penalty.	Governor
3	Unlawful religion of a Roman.	Banishment or death penalty.	Governor
4	Sedition against the Roman authorities.	Death penalty.	Governor
5	Crime committed by a Jew like: murder, homosexuality, bestiality, idolatry, witchcraft (Sanhedrin 7:4).	Death penalty.	Sanhedrin for the judgment but Governor for the execution after 30 CE.
6	Sedition against the Jewish authorities.	Flogging / excommunication	Sanhedrin
7	Desecration of the Temple.	Death penalty.	Sanhedrin
8	Blasphemous sayings (apostasy).	Flogging / excommunication	Sanhedrin
9	Blasphemy.	Death penalty.	Sanhedrin

Regarding the crime of sedition, as well as blasphemy or apostasy, it is clear that this crime gave a large room for interpretation³²⁷. Any disorder could indeed be seen as a revolt (Ac 19:40). When a Jew was also a Roman citizen the law enforcement became a real headache because it was necessary to define under which courts, Jewish or Roman, the case should be considered and according to a crime, which was itself subject to interpretation by magistrates. In this regard, Paul's case is instructive. He was first accused of apostasy by the Jews (Ac 21:21, # 8) then of desecration of the Temple (Ac 21:28, # 7), an act interpreted as sedition against the Roman authorities (Ac 21:38, # 4), then again of apostasy (Ac 22:22-

³²⁷ A.Y. COLLINS - The Charge of Blasphemy in Mark 14.64
in: *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26:4 (2004) pp. 381-401.

25, # 8). Realizing that he was condemned beforehand in a trial before the Sanhedrin, Paul invoked his Roman citizenship to be judged by the governor (Ac 22:26-29), which created a dilemma because the religious motive which had been mentioned had no value under Roman jurisdiction (Ac 23:28-30). To get out of this legal mess, Paul appealed to Caesar as he had the right (Ac 25:11-12), knowing that his conviction was becoming impossible (Ac 25:27; 26:32). Jesus' trial was a complex case since both Jewish and Roman authorities were involved (like Paul's case) depending on the conviction motives (sedition, blasphemy, crime of lese majesty), which themselves evolved several times between the beginning and the end of the trial. Consequently an accurate chronological reconstruction of this famous trial is paramount. It is noteworthy to know that the division of time into four watches of 3 hours (Mk 6:48) is of Roman origin and differs from the three ancient watches of 4 hours (Jg 7:19) of Israelite origin³²⁸.

CHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF JESUS' TRIAL

Actually the trigger for Jesus' trial took place on Monday 10 Nisan 33 CE when Jesus overturned the tables of the merchants out of denouncing their corruption because this event caused an insatiable thirst for vengeance from the chief priests (Mk 11:15-18). The next day Jesus also denounced the mercantile greed of scribes (Mk 12:38-40), who became associated then with the high priests in order to find a way to kill him, however, they did not wish to do during the Passover, which was close, because of the popularity of Jesus (Mk 14:1-2). The day and place of the incident caused by Jesus owes nothing to chance.

First of all Jesus knew perfectly the prophecies about his death and its schedule (Mt 17:22-23), consequently he chose to start the process on 10 Nisan because the paschal lamb for the Passover had to be chosen exactly that day (Ex 12:3). Jesus had denounced the corruption of the priests working in the temple of Jerusalem, especially the family of the high priest Annas, at the beginning of his ministry in Nisan 30 CE. This revelation had caused a huge scandal that forced Pilate to restrict the judicial powers of the Sanhedrin. Jesus knew that the Sanhedrin would not tolerate a new questioning and he also knew that Judah Iscariot was going to betray him (Jn 13:18-19) because he was a thief (Jn 12:6) and he loved money more than the truth (Mt 6:24, 19:21), like the high priest Annas. Judas Iscariot therefore probably felt targeted by the attacks of Jesus against the merchants of the Temple and that's why he denounced him to the high priest in the hope that the latter would change Jesus' views on the issue of money. When Judas Iscariot realized that the real purpose of the chief priests was not to discipline Jesus but to put him to death, he hanged himself (Mt 27:1-5). The Sanhedrin did not want to arrest Jesus during the Passover because of a potential tumult, but the unexpected contribution of Judas must have accelerated their project: *Judas the traitor knew the place also, since Jesus had often met his disciples there, so Judas brought the cohort to this place together with guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, all with lanterns and torches and weapons. Knowing everything that was to happen to him, Jesus came forward and said: Who are you looking for? They answered: Jesus the Nazarene. He said: I am he. Now Judas the traitor was standing among them. When Jesus said to them: I am he, they moved back and fell on the ground. He asked them a second time: Who are you looking for? They said, Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus replied: I have told you that I am he. If I am the one you are looking for, let these others go. This was to fulfil the words he had spoken: Not one of those you gave me have I lost. Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter: Put your sword back in its scabbard; am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me? The cohort and its tribune and the Jewish guards seized Jesus and bound him. They took him first to Annas, because*

³²⁸ 4 watches of 3 hours: 18:00-21:00, 21:00-24:00, 24:00-3:00, 3:00-6:00; 3 watches of 4 hours: 18:00-22:00, 22:00-2:00, 2:00-6:00.

Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year (Jn 18:2-13). Mainly thanks to Mark's narrative it is possible to reconstruct precisely the last days of Jesus' life (in 33 CE):

Calendar	Hourly	Major events of the trial	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
8 Nisan	12 - 18	<i>Jesus arrives at Bethany</i>				12:1-11
Sunday	6 - 12					
9 Nisan	12 - 18	<i>Christ triumphal entry into Jerusalem</i>	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
Monday	6 - 12	<i>Early trip into Jerusalem.</i>		11:12-14		
10 Nisan	12 - 18	<i>Second temple cleansing.</i>	21:12-17	11:15-19	19:45-48	12:20-50
Tuesday	6 - 12	<i>Jesus teaches in the temple and condemns Pharisees.</i>	21:18-	11:20-	20:1-	
11 Nisan	12 - 18	<i>On mount of Olives Jesus foretells Jerusalem's fall.</i>	24:1-26:1	13:1-37	21:5-38	
Wednesday	15 - 18	<i>Annas and Caiaphas looking for a way to condemn Jesus to death, but not during the Passover.</i>	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	
12 Nisan						
Thursday	18 - 24	<i>Judas offers Annas and Caiaphas deliver Jesus to them.</i>	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
13 Nisan	24 - 6	<i>Thursday 2 April 33 CE begins after 24:00.</i>				
	6 - 12					
	12 - 15	<i>Preparation of the Passover. The roasting of the lamb (Ex</i>	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
	15 - 18	<i>12:8) lasted from 15:00 to 18:00 (evening).</i>	26:20-21	14:17-21	22:14	
Friday	18 - 22	<i>Passover meal, then Judas dismissed, institution of Last Supper. Move to the Mount of Olives.</i>	26:21-33 26:34-46	14:22-25 14:26-41	22:15-30 22:30-46	13:1-18:1
14 Nisan	22 - 24	<i>Jesus is arrested by the police of the Temple and brought to Annas, the former high priest, for an investigation into his teaching, then to Caiaphas' home, the high priest in title.</i>	26:47-56 26:57-65	14:42-52 14:53-60	22:47-53 22:54	18:2-11 18:12-23 18:24
	24 - 3	<i>Friday 3 April. The Sanhedrin looks for false testimonies, but there are discrepancies. Caiaphas offers the Sanhedrin the charge of blasphemy, which does not prevail.</i>	26:65-68	14:61-65		
	3 - 6	<i>Peter denies Jesus three times. Second cockcrow.</i>	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:55-65	18:15-27
	6 - 9	<i>The Sanhedrin takes council to put Jesus to death, then delivers him to Pilate (Judas hangs himself then smashes by falling). Inquiry of Pilate who then sends Jesus to Herod Antipas, after mocking he sends Jesus to Pilate.</i>	27:1-10	15:1-5	22:66-71 23:1-11	18:28-32
	9 - 12	<i>Trial of Pilate: inquiry about the kingship of Jesus. Pilate offers an acquittal which is denied. To save Jesus, Pilate offers the release of Barabbas, a murderer, but the latter is accepted. To release Jesus he has him flogged, but the Jews accuse him of being an accomplice and thus against Caesar. Pilate washes his hands and agrees to condemn Jesus on the grounds of lese majesty ("King of the Jews").</i>	27:11-23 27:24-31	15:6-19	23:13-23 23:24-43	18:33-40 19:1-22
	12 - 15	<i>Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus until the place of execution. Some drugged wine is offered to Jesus for anesthetizing but he refused. Abnormal darkness. To refresh him someone offered sour wine to Jesus who accepted. Death of Jesus.</i>	27:32-45	15:20-41	23:44-49	19:23-30
	15 - 18	<i>Peace Offering of the official Passover at 15:00. Joseph from Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin and secret follower of Jesus asks Pilate, who accepts, the body of Jesus to put it in his grave. Lunar eclipse of blood.</i>	27:46-56 27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56 Ac. 2:20	19:31-41
Saturday	18 - 24	<i>Great Sabbath (Sabbath coinciding with the first day of</i>				(19:31)
15 Nisan	Night 2	<i>Unleavened Bread).</i>				
	24 - 6	<i>Saturday 4 April.</i>				
	6 - 12	<i>At the request of Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate has guarded the grave by soldiers until the 3rd day (Sunday).</i>	27:62-66			
	12 - 18					
Sunday	18 - 24					
16 Nisan	Night 3					
	24 - 6	<i>Sunday 5 April.</i>				
	6 - 9	<i>Resurrection at the beginning of the 1st day of the week, an angel appears to women. Annas and Caiaphas are informed but they pay the guards in order to say that the body was stolen while they were sleeping.</i>	28:1-15	16:1-8	24:1-14	20:1-18
	9 - 12				24:15-32	
	12 - 18	<i>Subsequent appearances of Jesus</i>	28:16-20		24:33-49	20:19-31

The arrest of Jesus shows two key points: the instigator of the arrest was the former high priest Annas (not Caiaphas) and the reason for arresting Jesus was sedition against the governing bodies of Judea (Jn 11:48) as proves the use of a military cohort (between 500 to 600 soldiers). Jesus had anticipated this serious charge and it is for this reason that he was able to respond to Pilate: *if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews* (Jn 18:36). Indeed many believed that he could be an earthly king (Jn 6:15), even his disciples (Mt 19:11, Ac 1:6). To avoid any ambiguity about this significant matter Jesus explained to his disciples just before being arrested: *When I sent you out without purse or haversack or sandals, were you short of anything? No, nothing: they said. He said to them,; But now if you have a purse, take it, and the same with a haversack; if you have no sword, sell your cloak and buy one, because I tell you these words of scripture are destined to be fulfilled in me: He was counted as one of the rebellious. Yes, what it says about me is even now reaching its fulfilment. They said: Lord, here are two swords. He said to them: That is enough!* (Lk 22:35-38). According to the principle of legitimate self-defence, the Jews could use a sword because of brigandage (Jewish Antiquities XIV:63; XVIII:319-323), but the presence of these 2 swords (for 12 persons!) was primarily intended to illustrate the principle of Christian neutrality in armed struggles (2Co 10:4) and not the principle of self-defence, a key point that the apostle Peter (John 18:11) did not well understood: *And suddenly, one of the followers of Jesus grasped his sword and drew it; he struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear. Jesus then said: Put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, who would promptly send more than twelve legions of angels to my defence?* (Mt 26:52). This clear refusal to use weapons would allow Jesus to refute the charge of sedition.

During the arrest of Jesus, Judas led the troop of soldiers only as scout or guide because there was a military tribune called *chiliarch*, literally "Head of 1000", at their head (Jn 18:12). This tribune was Jewish because if he had been Roman, the chief priests would have asked permission from the Roman Prefect to lead the police operation. However Pilate was unaware of Jesus' existence at that time, as evidenced by his questions the next morning and his initial refusal to deal with this case (Lk 23:3-7, Jn 18:29). Consequently, the tribune and his troop had been made available to the Sanhedrin by King Herod Antipas (Mk 6:27), because the Temple police associated with the arrest of Jesus were probably made up of only 200 people (1Ch 9:22-30). Military terms used to designate soldiers were the same during the first century, either they were Jewish or Roman (Jewish Antiquities XVII:215). The number of soldiers to arrest Jesus seems high, between 500 and 600, but the Jewish authorities feared probably meeting strong opposition from the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem, estimated at least to 120 people at that time (Ac 1:15). Jesus was initially led to Annas' home for questioning about his [seditious] teaching (Jn 18:12-19-24). This first step was not a trial but a preliminary investigation.

The first hearing (about sedition) was unsuccessful, then Jesus was led to Caiaphas for an official questioning before the Sanhedrin: *The men who had arrested Jesus led him off to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. Peter followed him at a distance right to the high priest's palace, and he went in and sat down with the attendants to see what the end would be. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus, however false, on which they might have him executed. But they could not find any, though several lying witnesses came forward. Eventually two came forward and made a statement: This man said "I have power to destroy the Temple of God and in three days build it up." The high priest then rose and said to him: Have you no answer to that? What is this evidence these men are bringing against you? But Jesus was silent* (Mt 26:57-63). The charge was relying on a possible desecration of the Temple (punishable by the death penalty according to Numbers 4:15), but given that the mentioned witnesses were

contradicting, it remained worthless, unless the accused admitted it. Caiaphas then proposed a new charge on the allegedly blasphemous words like "Christ, Son of God": *And the high priest said to him: I put you on oath by the living God to tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered him: It is you who say it. But, I tell you that from this time onward you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven*³²⁹. *Then the high priest tore his clothes and said: He has blasphemed. What need of witnesses have we now? There! You have just heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion? They answered: He deserves to die* (Mt 26:63-66). Jesus had already refuted this accusation the Jews considered blasphemous (Jn 10:31-36), if it was approved by the Sanhedrin he risked excommunication (Jn 9:22). The purpose of Caiaphas was to find a ground of charges involving the death penalty, so he was expecting that Jesus would use God's name in his defence that, according to rabbinic interpretation of the time, would have transformed the "blasphemous words (apostasy)" into "blasphemy", a crime punishable by stoning to death (Lv 24:16). According to the Jewish procedure, Caiaphas only used surrogates for the divine name such as: the "Blessed" or the "living God", to avoid being himself an accomplice of the blasphemy. The rest of the trial might suggest that the trap from the high priest had worked: *Then the high priest tore his clothes and said: He has blasphemed. What need of witnesses have we now? There! You have just heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion? They answered: He deserves to die* (Mt 26:64-66) but, contrary to appearances, the trap failed because although Jesus did acknowledge being God's son, he did not use God's name but only a surrogate (the Power). According to rabbinic interpretation, he had blasphemed against men claiming his divine sonship, but he had not blasphemed against God. This interpretation of blasphemy was controversial as is clear from the explanation of Philo: *a new commandment was enacted, which had never before been thought worthy of being reduced to writing; but unexpected innovations cause new laws to be devised for the repression of their evils. At all events, the following law was immediately introduced: Whoever curses God shall be guilty of sin, and whoever names the name of the Lord shall die (...) in order that no one of the disciples of Moses may ever become accustomed at all to treat the appellation of God with disrespect; for that name is always most deserving to obtain the victory, and is especially worthy of love. But if any one were, I will not say to blaspheme against the Lord of gods and men, but were even to dare to utter his name unseasonably, he must endure the punishment of death (...) Therefore these men must not be thought worthy of pardon who out of volubility of tongue have spoken unseasonably, and being too free of their words have repeated carelessly the most holy and divine name of God* (On the Life of Moses II:203-208).

If the trap laid on Jesus by the Sanhedrin failed, it would be reused successfully against Stephen and many Jewish Christians whom Paul would force to blaspheme, according to Acts 26:10-11. The last known case was that of James, the brother of Jesus, stoned in 62 CE (Jewish Antiquities XX:200). By tearing his clothes, the high priest wanted to force the judgment of blasphemy, but the question "What is your opinion?" shows that his opinion was debatable. In Stephen's case, the text of Acts indicates that the witnesses had torn their clothes, thus validating the charge of blasphemy, while the members of the Sanhedrin in the case of Jesus merely replied "He deserves to die" and not "He must be

³²⁹ Jesus was not speaking about a sign to come because he had said before: *The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to put him to the test they asked if he would show them a sign from heaven (...) It is an evil and unfaithful generation asking for a sign, and the only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah* (Mt 16:1,4). Jesus' prophecy actually occurred when Stephen was murdered by the Sanhedrin: *Having turned the people against him as well as the elders and scribes, they took Stephen by surprise, and arrested him and brought him before the Sanhedrin (...) The members of the Sanhedrin all looked intently at Stephen, and his face appeared to them like the face of an angel (...) You stubborn people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears. You are always resisting the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. Can you name a single prophet your ancestors never persecuted? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Upright One, and now you have become his betrayers, his murderers. In spite of being given the Law through angels, you have not kept it. They were infuriated when they heard this, and ground their teeth at him. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. Look! I can see heaven thrown open, he said, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. All the members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they made a concerted rush at him, thrust him out of the city and stoned him* (Acts 6:12-15; 7:51-58).

stoned", which was the usual penalty for this type of crime. In addition, according to the Gospels, at least two members of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus and Joseph from Arimathea³³⁰, disagreed with the high priest (Jn 19:38-40). Consequently Jesus was not stoned. The report of the trial in the Babylonian Talmud, although partial, enlightens this unsuccessful charge: *For 40 days before the execution took place [the conviction of Jesus was so premeditated], a herald went forth and cried: He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy [thus Jesus was condemned as an apostate and should be stoned if he had been a blasphemer]. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf. But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the [temple] Passover [Jesus was actually sentenced on 14 Nisan around 9:00 and executed at 12:00, shortly before the peace offering in the Temple also called "Passover sacrifice", which was starting at 15:00] —Ulla (one of the leading Halakhic amoraim around 300 CE) retorted: Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defence could be made? Was he not an enticer, concerning whom Scripture says, Neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him (Dt 13:6-9)? With Yeschu however it was different, for he was connected with the government [it is Pilate who officially condemned Jesus, which could suggest a sedition against the Roman Empire] (Sanhedrin 43a).*

The most controversial aspect in the trial of Jesus was its running during a feast day, in addition during the night, which is absolutely illegal according to the Talmud. This controversy is artificial because, in the Gospels, the Jewish Christians never accused the Jewish authorities of having acted illegally, but rather being hypocrites, which they would not have failed to do against their persecutors so proud to be punctilious about the Law (Mt 23:23-32). Consequently, the trial of Jesus was lawful (according to the Gospels).

The Talmud (of Jerusalem) began to be written from 200 CE and its content mainly reflects the Pharisee views (the views of Sadducees who disappeared after the destruction of the Temple are rarely mentioned). In addition, bans on capital punishments which might occur on the Sabbath or festival were discussed and interpretations were not unanimous³³¹. Assuming that the Talmud has passed the Law as applied in the 1st century, which seems likely, the trial of Jesus did not violate it: *Civil suits are tried by day, and concluded at night. But capital charges must be tried by day and concluded by day. Civil suits can be concluded on the same day, whether for acquittal or condemnation; capital charges may be concluded on the same day with a favourable verdict, but only with the morrow with an unfavourable verdict. Therefore trials are not held on the eve of a Sabbath or festival (Sanhedrin 32a; 4:1).* The trial of Jesus began the night when the pattern of accusation was formally defined (crime of blasphemy) and ended the day "to reprieve" (consequently a favourable verdict!) because Jesus would not be stoned. This trial did not contravene the rabbinic procedure: *When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people met in council to bring about the death of Jesus [it was only their intention because his execution was not yet fixed]. They had him bound and led him away to hand him over to Pilate, the governor (Mt 27:1-2).* Having failed to condemn Jesus for blasphemy, the Jewish authorities decided to reprieve him, but to reach their initial goal of putting him to death the chief priests delivered him to Pilate presenting him as a "king of the Jews" for that he falls under the charge of lese majesty (whoever declaring himself king without the consent of Rome got condemned to the death penalty). However such a crime (sedition) could only be judged by the Governor³³². In addition, this trial could take place only on the Friday before 15:00

³³⁰ Likewise, Gamaliel, a famous Law teacher, probably said to pay attention before to condemn (Acts 5:34-35,38-39).

³³¹ E. MUNK, I. SALZER – La guemara: Sanhédrin. Paris 1974 Éd. C.L.K.H. pp. 162-170.

³³² *Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some of the elders and an advocate named Tertullus, and they laid information against Paul before the governor. Paul was called, and Tertullus opened for the prosecution: Your Excellency, Felix, the unbroken peace we enjoy and the reforms this nation owes to your foresight are matters we accept, always and everywhere, with all gratitude. I do not want to take up too much of your time, but I urge you in your graciousness to give us a brief hearing. We have found this man a perfect pest; he stirs up trouble among Jews the world over and is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. He has even attempted to profane the Temple. We placed him under arrest. At this, Felix, who was fairly well informed about the Way (Ac 24:1-5, 22-27).*

because a decree from Caesar Augustus (Jewish Antiquities XVI:163) stated that the Jews were not to appear in court on the Sabbath (Saturday) or after the 9th hour (15:00) on the day of Preparation (Friday).

The judicial proceedings in Palestine in the 1st century were essentially the same as those followed in Egypt. Philo explains in his *De specialibus legibus* that the Egyptian Jews had their own courts, with a Jewish ethnarch as chief magistrate. They could judge their coreligionists in civil and criminal matters according to their own law. But in crimes against society at large, the accused should be treated according to Roman laws. As for execution, Jewish courts could condemn to death, but they had to seek the approval of the Roman power. On religious charges [blasphemy or sacrilege] that the Romans did not consider critical issues, there was apparently not always Roman reaction when Jews were executing another Jew (Ac 12:1-4). Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin for blasphemous words (the phrase "Son of God" was considered apostasy) but not for blasphemy. There should have incurred excommunication, but as the chief priests wanted to eliminate him, he was amnestied and delivered to the Governor with another charge, that of being "king of the Jews" (a statement to be king without the downstream of Rome was a crime of high treason punishable by death), which was a turning point: *When he found that Jesus had been condemned, then Judas, his betrayer, was filled with remorse and took the 30 silver pieces back to the chief priests and elders saying: I have sinned. I have betrayed innocent blood. They replied: What is that to us? That is your concern. And flinging down the silver pieces in the sanctuary he made off, and went and hanged himself*³³³. *The chief priests picked up the silver pieces and said: It is against the Law to put this into the treasury; it is blood-money. So they discussed the matter and with it bought the potter's field as a graveyard for foreigners, and this is why the field is still called the Field of Blood. The word spoken through the prophet Jeremiah*³³⁴ *was then fulfilled: And they took the 30 silver pieces, the sum at which the precious One was priced by the children of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, just as the Lord directed me (Mt 27:3-10). The condemnation of Jesus had become inevitable from the moment when he was delivered to the governor. Judah then realized that he had helped to kill Jesus (in Hebrew "deliver the blood" means "to kill" (Gn 4:10), and "Field of Blood" is understood as "field of killed one"). The sum of 30 shekels was a compensation for serious injuries made to a slave (Ex 21:32) which was an insignificant price: Then I said to them: If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, withhold them. And they paid my wages, 30 pieces of silver. Then Jehovah said to me: Throw it into the treasury —the magnificent value with which they valued me. So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw it into the treasury at the house of Jehovah (Zc 11:12-13).*

On 14 Nisan, at daybreak, the Sanhedrin transferred Jesus before Pilate (in order to be tried for the Roman crime of *lese majeste*): *They then led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium. It was now morning [around 6:00]*³³⁵. *They did not go into the Praetorium themselves to avoid becoming defiled and unable to eat the Passover. So Pilate came outside to them and said [in Greek]*³³⁶: *What charge do you bring against this man? They replied: If he were not a criminal, we should not have handed him over to you. Pilate said: Take him yourselves, and try him by your own Law. The Jews answered: We are not allowed to put anyone to death. This was to fulfil the words Jesus had spoken indicating the way he was going to die*³³⁷. *So Pilate went back into the Praetorium and called Jesus to him*

³³³ The text of Acts 1:18 says that Judah hanged himself after having dropped his head forward and had burst by his midst, all his intestines were poured out. The hanging is implied in verse 16, as it refers to the text of Psalm 41:9; indeed, the intimate friend of David who betrayed him is Ahithophel and he was hanged himself according to 2 Samuel 17:23.

³³⁴ The prophetic quote actually comes from Zechariah 11:12-13 and Jeremiah 32:6-15. When it is a mixed quote, which is the case here, only the best known prophet is mentioned (here Jeremiah). For example, in Mark 1:2-3 the prophetic quote from Isaiah comes in fact from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.

³³⁵ Seneca the Younger (-4 to 65) indicates that Roman trials did begin at daybreak (*De ira* II:7:3).

³³⁶ A translator "Latin / Aramaic" could have been at hand (Cicero, *In Verrem* II:84; Josephus, *War of the Jews* V:361) but Greek was an international language widely spread in Palestine at that time among educated people (Mt 8:5-13; Ac 21:37).

³³⁷ The text of Matthew 20:19 announced that he would be tied to a stake, a treatment reserved for "accursed" (Dt 21:22-23).

*and asked him: Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus replied: Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others said it to you about me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me; what have you done? Jesus replied: Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. As it is, my kingdom does not belong here. Pilate said: So, then you are a king? Jesus answered: It is you who say that I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice. Truth? said Pilate: What is that? And so saying he went out again to the Jews and said: I find no case against him (Jn 18:28-38). Very legalistic, the high priests feared that there was leaven in the governor's palace (Ac 10:28, Ex 13:6-7), which would have made them ritually unclean and would have prevented them from eating the Passover, not the Passover meal already consumed in the night but the offering of peace offered in the Temple at 15:00. Pilate considering that the case involved a religious crime asked the Sanhedrin to judge Jesus (so he was unaware that this had already been done). By clarifying that they could not put him to death, the chief priests claimed that it was a Roman civil crime and, therefore, only under the jurisdiction of the governor. Pilate then focused on the charge of "illegal King" (*Lex Iulia maiestate*), which was applicable in all rigor only about a Roman citizen, however in case of insurrection, it could also apply to a Jew, as Tacitus says in the case of a seditious Jew named Simon (History V:9).*

As Jesus did not confirm the charge and remained silent, Pilate considered that no confession made the culprit innocent, in accordance with Roman law (Sallust, *Bellum catalinae* 52:36): *Pilate then said to the chief priests and the crowd: I find no case against this man. But they persisted: He is inflaming the people with his teaching all over Judea and all the way from Galilee, where he started, down to here. When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man were a Galilean; and finding that he came under Herod's jurisdiction, he passed him over to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was delighted to see Jesus; he had heard about him and had been wanting for a long time to set eyes on him; moreover, he was hoping to see some miracle worked by him. So he questioned him at some length, but without getting any reply. Meanwhile the chief priests and the scribes were there, vigorously pressing their accusations. Then Herod, together with his guards, treated him with contempt and made fun of him; he put a rich cloak on him and sent him back to Pilate. And though Herod and Pilate had been enemies before, they were reconciled that same day (Lk 23:4-12).* Pilate would have been able to release Jesus, but he carried out a diplomatic calculation. Herod Antipas being on a private visit had no power in Judea, even over a fellow citizen outside his province. The incident recorded in Luke 13:1-2 indicates that Pilate had slaughtered some Galileans, which must have irritated Herod strongly. To recover good relations with this vassal king, Pilate offered him to graciously perform the judgment of a prominent fellow countryman, that he actually liked, as explains Justin (Dialogue 103:4). Having received no confession, Herod Antipas sent back Jesus to Pilate with a coat of scarlet [symbol of royalty], showing that he regarded Jesus as a puppet king. The case of Barabbas³³⁸ ("son of Papa" in Aramaic) proves that Pilate was the sole authority for the execution of capital punishment involving crimes committed by Jews (Lk 23:32,41). Those sentenced to death remained in prison until their execution (Jewish Antiquities XX:215). According to Seneca (On Clemency II:7), a Roman magistrate could give, in some cases, a "remission" to a convict, taking into account extenuating circumstances. Pilate therefore had the right, as Governor, to grant this grace. In addition, in certain situations, governors, including the emperor himself when he wanted to spare a defeated gladiator who fought well, could take into account the opinion of the crowd to give amnesty or reprieve. The custom to release a prisoner was established by

³³⁸ Barabbas was a robber (Jn 18:40) in bonds with seditionists who had committed murder in their sedition (Mk 15:7). He undoubtedly benefited from sedition to commit his murder (Lk 23:19). As he was notorious (Mt 27:16) he could have been a Zealot leader.

Pilate (from 30 CE) to please the people (Mk 15:6), because during the first years of his legation he had committed several blunders because of his ignorance of local customs, as in the case of banners (Jewish War II:169-174; Jewish Antiquities XVIII:55-59), which had led to a heated climate of misunderstanding with the Jews. To curry favour with the crowds, he then introduced this popular custom. The release of Jesus could have succeeded, Pilate being repugnant to feel manipulated by the high priests. However they managed to turn the crowd that had acclaimed Jesus three days previously (Mk 15:10-11). In addition, Pilate's wife who had a premonitory dream even came to find her husband in court³³⁹ during the trial to warn him to spare Jesus (Mt 27:19), which had strengthened the superstitious fear of Pilate. Pilate tried to soften the crowd in order to release Jesus: *Pilate then had Jesus taken away and scourged; and after this, the soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head and dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying: Hail, king of the Jews! and slapping him in the face. Pilate came outside again and said to them: Look, I am going to bring him out to you to let you see that I find no case against him. Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said: Here is the man. When they saw him, the chief priests and the guards shouted: Crucify him! Crucify him! Pilate said: Take him yourselves and crucify him: I find no case against him. The Jews replied: We have a Law, and according to that Law he ought to be put to death, because he has claimed to be Son of God. When Pilate heard them say this his fears increased. Re-entering the Praetorium, he said to Jesus: Where do you come from? But Jesus made no answer. Pilate then said to him: Are you refusing to speak to me? Surely you know I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you? Jesus replied: You would have no power over me at all if it had not been given you from above; that is why the man who handed me over to you has the greater guilt (Jn 19:1-11).* Since the scene took place in the courtroom, the soldiers were Roman. The crown of thorns and the purple robe ironically symbolized royalty. By saying: *Take him yourselves and crucify him*, Pilate acknowledged to the Sanhedrin the right to kill for religious crimes, but when he learnt the exact nature of the crime he was seized with a superstitious fear. Jesus' response was probably with a double meaning because "the one above who has given power" could be the Emperor for Pilate (but God for Jesus) and "the man who handed me" was Caiaphas (but Judah for Jesus).

Apparently the way Pilate managed the trial led to an acquittal that forced the Jews to find a new conviction, especially when Pilate undertook to release Jesus: *From that moment Pilate was anxious to set him free, but the Jews shouted: If you set him free you are no friend of Caesar's; anyone who makes himself king is defying Caesar. Hearing these words, Pilate had Jesus brought out, and seated him on the chair of judgement at a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew Gabbatha [High place]. It was preparation of the [Temple] Passover, about the 6th hour [12:00]. Here is your king, said Pilate to the Jews. But they shouted: Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate said: Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered: We have no king except Caesar (Jn 19:12-15).* The high priests were thus back to the original charge of *lese majeste*. This accusation was concerning in principle only Roman citizens who had challenged the dignity of the emperor but from 30 CE Tiberius became particularly sensitive to betrayal and had considerably tightened the law in order to apply it to any enemy, according to Tacitus (Annals II:50, III:38) and Suetonius (Tiberius §§55,58). Designating the emperor by the name of Caesar became common only under Vespasian (69-79), but the province of Judea had anticipated this custom because the coins minted during the reign of Tiberius³⁴⁰ (14-37) were on behalf of Caesar then on behalf of

³³⁹ Is it possible that Pilate's wife was with him in Jerusalem? Suetonius (Augustus §24) reports that Augustus had not authorized the governors to take their wives with them in their posts and only authorized a visit during winter months. This rigor seems to have relaxed under Tiberius, as the adoptive son of the emperor, Germanicus, took his wife Agrippina in Germany and in the East according to Tacitus (Annals I:40, II:54). In 21 CE, Severus Caecina, a former legate attempted to adopt a policy which was refusing to governors of taking their wives with them in their jurisdiction, but he failed to convince the senate (Annals III:33-34).

³⁴⁰ J. MALTIÉL-GERSTENFELD –260 Years of Ancient Jewish Coins
Tel Aviv 1982 Ed. Kol Printing Service Ltd pp. 180-184.

Tiberius Caesar. The threat of being denounced to Tiberius as an enemy of the Emperor could not be taken lightly by Pilate, especially after 31 CE. In fact, before this date, the Jews had no support from the emperor who had delegated the management of the empire to Sejanus, his co-regent. This executive had been an enemy of the Jews and was most likely a major contributor of troubles they experienced under Tiberius around 28-31 CE. According to Philo, Tiberius asked the provincial governors to have regard for the Jews because the charges against them in the past had proved false (Against Flaccus §§ 1-3; On the Embassy to Caius §§ 159-161). The Emperor had had the weakness to be impressed by a disreputable character. Three indices confirm his role: the Jews began to return into Rome immediately after the killing of Sejanus (October 18, 31 CE) because at the beginning of the reign of Caius, they were quite numerous in this city; the two missteps in Pilate's Judean career (the case of the golden shields and the massacre of the Samaritans) were located after the fall of Sejanus and therefore at a time when there was no more hostility from Rome towards the province of Judea; Finally, Tiberius appeared respectful of national customs.

The incident of the golden shields, which took place around 32 CE, is reported by Philo, it illuminates the behaviour of Pilate towards Jews: *Pilate was one of the emperor's lieutenants, having been appointed governor of Judea. He, not more with the object of doing honour to Tiberius than with that of vexing the multitude, dedicated some gilt shields in the palace of Herod, in the holy city; which had no form nor any other forbidden thing represented on them except some necessary inscription, which mentioned these two facts, the name of the person who had placed them there, and the person in whose honour they were so placed there. But when the multitude heard what had been done, and when the circumstance became notorious, then the people, putting forward the four sons of the king, who were in no respect inferior to the kings themselves, in fortune or in rank, and his other descendants, and those magistrates who were among them at the time, entreated him to alter and to rectify the innovation which he had committed in respect of the shields; and not to make any alteration in their national customs, which had hitherto been preserved without any interruption, without being in the least degree changed by any king of emperor. But when he steadfastly refused this petition (for he was a man of a very inflexible disposition, and very merciless as well as very obstinate), they cried out: Do not cause a sedition; do not make war upon us; do not destroy the peace which exists. The honour of the emperor is not identical with dishonour to the ancient laws; let it not be to you a pretence for heaping insult on our nation. Tiberius is not desirous that any of our laws or customs shall be destroyed. And if you yourself say that he is, show us either some command from him, or some letter, or something of the kind, that we, who have been sent to you as ambassadors, may cease to trouble you, and may address our supplications to your master. But this last sentence exasperated him in the greatest possible degree, as he feared least they might in reality go on an embassy to the emperor, and might impeach him with respect to other particulars of his government, in respect of his corruption, and his acts of insolence, and his rapine, and his habit of insulting people, and his cruelty, and his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never ending, and gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanity. Therefore, being exceedingly angry, and being at all times a man of most ferocious passions, he was in great perplexity, neither venturing to take down what he had once set up, nor wishing to do any thing which could be acceptable to his subjects, and at the same time being sufficiently acquainted with the firmness of Tiberius on these points. And those who were in power in our nation, seeing this, and perceiving that he was inclined to change his mind as to what he had done, but that he was not willing to be thought to do so, wrote a most supplicatory letter to Tiberius. And he, when he had read it, what did he say of Pilate, and what threats did he utter against him! But it is beside our purpose at present to relate to you how very angry he was, although he was not very liable to sudden anger; since the facts speak for themselves; for immediately, without putting any thing off till the next day, he wrote a letter, reproaching and reviling him in the most bitter manner for his act of unprecedented audacity and wickedness, and commanding him immediately to take down the shields and to convey them away from the metropolis of Judea to Caesarea, on the sea which*

had been named *Caesarea Augusta*, after his grandfather, in order that they might be set up in the temple of *Augustus*. And accordingly, they were set up in that edifice. And in this way he provided for two matters: both for the honour due to the emperor, and for the preservation of the ancient customs of the city (On the embassy to Caius §§299-305). Given this context, one can understand why Pilate did not take the words of the Sanhedrin lightly when it threatened him to refer to Tiberius.

Pilate finally condemned Jesus to avoid disturbance of public order and especially to preserve his career. He did post a sign indicating the crime³⁴¹ of lese-majesty [King of the Jews] to preserve an appearance of legality. This rudimentary legality is well reflected in the narrative of Tacitus: *Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed (Annals XV:44).*

Indebted to his patron, Tacitus could not be truly objective on cases involving political authorities of his day, no more, no less, than the media of all times³⁴². However, the absence of evidence was causing discomfort among scrupulous magistrates. Pliny the Younger, when he was governor of Bithynia (111-113 CE), wrote to the Emperor Trajan to express his scruples: *It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offences it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offences, or only the offences associated with the name are to be punished. Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome. Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ—none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do—these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been*

³⁴¹ This procedure was usual, as Cassius Dio reports: *in the case of the second slave, who had deserted his son, he led him through the midst of the Forum with an inscription making known the reason why he was to be put to death, and afterwards crucified him (Roman History LIV:3).*

³⁴² B. LEMPERT –Le retour de l'intolérance. Sectarisme et chasse aux sorcières Paris 2002 Éd. Bayard pp. 7-299.

but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as 25 years [c. 87 CE]. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ. They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food—but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition. I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded (Letters X:96-97). Trajan's response is instructive; it confirms the principle of condemnation upon mere denunciation, so without any proof: You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it—that is, by worshiping our gods—even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution (Letters X:98).

The behaviour of Pilate was therefore consistent with the Roman magistrates of his time. *The chief priests and the elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. So when the governor spoke and asked them: Which of the two do you want me to release for you? they said: Barabbas. Pilate said to them: But in that case, what am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ? They all said: Let him be crucified! He asked: But what harm has he done? But they shouted all the louder: Let him be crucified! Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact a riot was imminent. So he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said: I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your concern. And the people, every one of them, shouted back: Let his blood be on us and on our children! Then he released Barabbas for them. After having Jesus scourged he handed him over to be crucified. Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus with them into the Praetorium and collected the whole cohort round him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet cloak round him, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying: Hail, king of the Jews! And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucifixion. On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, called Simon³⁴³, and enlisted him to carry his cross (Matthew 27:20-32). In the eyes of Roman soldiers Jesus was condemned for a crime of *lese majeste* (as proved by the "Hail, king of the Jews") but Pilate, who had learned the religious motive for the prosecution, wanted to prove his innocence to the crowd of Jews by using its rituals codes that he obviously knew well (bath purification and symbolism of blood).*

Roman crucifixion is poorly known, it is different from the execution for blasphemy implying the stoning of the guilty then the hanging (not nailing) of his corpse to a piece of

³⁴³ Given that Simon is a Jewish name, the man was likely a Hellenistic Jew or a Greek proselyte from Cyrene (Acts 6:9; 11:20).

wood (pole or tree) during one day for reasons of dishonour³⁴⁴. The Roman ordeal generally was to have carried a cross of wood, the *patibulum*, by the condemned to the place of execution where an execution stake, the *stipes crucis*³⁴⁵, was buried vertically. The condemned was then tied and nailed to the cross and he was hoisted on the pole, which formed a T (a vertical pole with a horizontal crossbeam). The title (*titulus*) being placed above the head of the (Roman) condemned. Did Jesus die on a cross? Several factors entitle to doubt of that (the current consensus on the shape of the cross is based solely on a late tradition)³⁴⁶. The execution of Jesus was not scheduled by Pilate, it was decided in the late morning [around 12:00] and applied immediately, which therefore did not leave time for installing the execution stake³⁴⁷. In these circumstances, Jesus had to bring the entire pole and not the crosspiece, which would also explain his difficulty in carrying it (he had been scourged, a cruel treatment that must have weakened him strongly, but the entire timber beam weighed around 100 kg, or approximately 70 kg by dragging it on the ground). According to Plutarch (46-125): *the malefactor who is to be crucified carries his cross with his own body* (On the delay of the divine justice §9) and according to Artemidorus of Daldis (110-180?): *Because the cross is made of wood and nails like the ship and the mast of the ship looks like a cross (...) by dreaming of being crucified in a city, this heralds a magistracy that matches the place where the cross is erected (...) if the dreamer is a malefactor this means bearing the cross because the cross has analogy with death, and the one that must be nailed to the cross, first of all carries it* (Oneirocritika II:53,56). As the Greek word *stauros* "cross" basically refers to a stake or a vertical pole³⁴⁸, the expression: "Crucify him" may linguistically be replaced by "Impale him" or "Put him on a [execution] stake". To further complicate things the shape of Roman crosses was very diverse³⁴⁹. The meaning of the Greek word *stauros* does not therefore illuminate the shape of ancient Latin crosses, moreover, the word "cross" comes from the Latin word *crux* "gibbet", which could also mean "shaft"³⁵⁰. Evangelical authors (Ac 5:30; 10:39; 13:29, Gal 3:13; 1Pe 2:24) frequently use the word *xylon* "wood/ timber beam" (which does not have the shape of a cross!) for designating the "cross", confirming the meaning of "[execution] stake". Similarly, Justin (100-160) compared Christ's cross to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, the staff of Moses, the rod of Jacob, the sceptre of Judah, the handle of Elisha's axe (Dialogue with Trypho §86), none of these comparisons evoking the shape of a cross.

Roman soldiers, by commandeering Simon of Cyrene, appear to have infringed Roman law, but it is likely they wanted that this very weak condemned man could arrive alive in order that the Governor's sentence could be performed: *So at that Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out to the Place of the Skull or, as it is called in Hebrew, Golgotha*³⁵¹, *where they crucified him with two others, one on either side, Jesus being in the middle. Pilate wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross. It was written: Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. So the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate: You should not write "King of the Jews", but that the man said, "I am King of*

³⁴⁴ Jewish Antiquities IV:202; Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Mishna Sanhedrin VI:3.

³⁴⁵ The *patibulum* was a piece of wood of 2 m 30 to 2 m 60 long and around 40 kg. The *stipes crucis* was a piece of wood of 4 m to 4 m 50 long and around 100 kg and the *titulus* "title" was a wooden sign nailed at the top of *patibulum*.

³⁴⁶ G. SAMUELSSON – Crucifixion in Antiquity. An inquiry into the Background of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion (Tübingen 2011 Ed. Mohr Siebeck, University of Gothenburg).

³⁴⁷ As one amnesty was expected among the three sentenced to death, it seems likely that only two execution stakes (instead of three) were set up.

³⁴⁸ W.E. VINE –An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words New York 1985 Ed. Thomas Nelson Publishers p. 138.

³⁴⁹ FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS -The Jewish WarV:451; SÉNECA – De consolatione ad Marciam 20:3.

³⁵⁰ In Latin the meaning of the word *crux* is quite broad at the beginning of our era. The Latin poet P. Papinius Statius (45-96), for example, used this word *cruce* referring to the axle of a chariot (Silvæ IV:3:28), so in the sense of a bar.

³⁵¹ The word could be Aramaic *Gulgaltha* "the Skull" or maybe an Aramaic pronunciation of the Hebrew "*Ha-Golgoletb*".

the Jews". Pilate answered: *What I have written, I have written* (Jn 19:16-22). According to Roman and Jewish customs, the place of execution was located at a short distance from the city (an archaeological study estimated this route to be about 600 meters)³⁵². Apparently there were no minutes of the trial, but Jesus was not a Roman citizen, the title (*titulus*) written by Pilate and summarizing the nature of the offence was sufficient to maintain a minimum of legality. The wording of the inscription was made in the three official languages of Judea. For example, the people of Jerusalem could read in Latin and Greek the edict condemning the entrance of the Temple under the death penalty (The Jewish War VI:125-126). The Hebrew language was the official language of Jewish religious authorities and the inscription could be read in Hebrew: *Yesbu Hanozri Wumelek Hayebudim*³⁵³, an acrostic of the divine name YHWH³⁵⁴, which had particularly upset the chief priests who had (ironically) condemned Jesus for blasphemy! The oral report of the trial was likely preserved by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, two respected members of the Sanhedrin and Christian supporters, as well as by the apostle John who was close to the high priest³⁵⁵ (Jn 18:16).

The execution of Jesus was eventually "sponsored" by the Jewish Authorities but performed by the Roman Authorities: *When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another: Instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who is to have it. In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled: They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes [Ps 22:18]. That is what the soldiers did* (Jn 19:23-24). The four soldiers appointed for execution formed a squad (Ac 12:4), the smallest unit of Roman army. These soldiers had to keep the condemned until his last breath and had the right to divide the spoils of the condemned. Petronius (14-66 CE) says: *the Governor of the Province ordered certain robbers to be crucified in close proximity to the vault where the matron sat bewailing the recent loss of her mate. Next night the soldier who was set to guard the crosses to prevent anyone coming and removing the robbers' bodies to give them burial* (Satyricon §111). Moreover, it was possible to survive crucifixion because among the three friends of Josephus who were crucified (in 70 CE), and that Titus authorized to depend, one survived (Autobiography §§ 420-421). Jesus died at 3 p.m. the hour of prayer (Ac 3:1): *And about the 9th hour [15:00], Jesus cried out in a loud voice: Eli, eli, lama sabachthani? that is: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? When some of those who stood there heard this, they said: The man is calling on Elijah, and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he filled with vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. But the rest of them said: Wait! And see if Elijah will come to save him. But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.* Those who witnessed the death of Jesus were mostly Galileans (Lk 23:27-29) who spoke Aramaic³⁵⁶. The Hebrew expression in Psalms 22:1: *Eli, eli, lama azabtani* is translated into Aramaic by *Elahi, elahi, lema sabaqtani*, which is found transcribed in Greek under the form: *Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani* (Mark 15:34). The confusion between *Elahi* "my God" and *Elijah* is more likely in Aramaic than in Hebrew (*Eli*). The drink of Roman soldiers used to quench their thirst was made of water with vinegar (called *posca*). Plutarch wrote that Cato the Elder used to drink water during his campaigns, but occasionally, when he was very thirsty, he asked for some vinegared wine (Life of Cato I:7).

³⁵² L. PIROT –La Sainte Bible tome X (Paris 1935 Éd. Letouzey et Ané), pp. 466-469.

³⁵³ S. BEN-CHORIN –Bruder Jesu. Der Nazarener in Jüdischer Sicht Munich 1977 Ed. Deutscher Taschenbuch p. 180.

³⁵⁴ This does not seem to be a coincidence because we find the same acrostic in Esther 7:7 describing the hanging of Haman, originally scheduled for Mordecai, which foreshadowed the final hanging of the "original serpent" intended for Jesus (Jn 3:14).

³⁵⁵ According to Polycarp (69-155), John was a priest very close to the high priest (History of the Church V:24:3). Similarly, the most excellent Theophilus who was a friend of Luke (Lk 1:3, Ac 1:1) and whose granddaughter named Joanna like a Christian woman (Lk 8:3; 24:10), could have been the former high priest who served from 37 to 41 CE.

³⁵⁶ Even in Jerusalem the Aramaic word *Akel-dama* "Field of Blood" was used (Ac 1:19) instead of *Sedeh-badam* its Hebrew counterpart.

When Jesus died [15:00] several strange events occurred: *Then Jesus loudly cried out once again and gave up his life. Suddenly, the curtain in the temple was split³⁵⁷ in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split open. The tombs were opened, and the bodies of many [several]³⁵⁸ holy people who had died came back to life. They came out of the tombs after he had come back to life³⁵⁹, and they went into the holy city where they appeared to many [several] people. An army officer and those watching Jesus with him saw the earthquake and the other things happening. They were terrified and said: Certainly, this was the Son of God! Many [several] women were there watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee and had always supported him. Among them were Mary from Magdala, Mary (the mother of James and Joseph), and the mother of Zebedee's sons (Mt 25:50-56, GOD'S WORD Translation). Many translators had difficulties with the literal meaning of the wording because they did not understand the goal of this resurrection³⁶⁰. Thus, according to some translations, the corpse of several saints would have been expelled from the tombs, then entered the city of Jerusalem (like zombies!), but in the whole New Testament "the holy ones" are always Jesus' disciples³⁶¹ (Ac 9:13; Rm 1:7; 1Co 14:23; Heb 13:24) and when a dead "who had fallen asleep was raised up", it always by means a resurrection (Jn 11:11-13). These extraordinary events were not symbolic but real because Thallus, a Samaritan historian (30-100?), says in the third book of his Histories: *A most terrible darkness fell over all the world, the rocks were torn apart by an earthquake, and many places both in Judea and the rest of the world were thrown down*³⁶². According to Phlegon of Tralles (c. 137 CE): *In the 4th year, however, of Olympiad 202 [33 CE], an eclipse of the sun happened, greater and more excellent than any that had happened before it; at the 6th hour [15:00], day turned into dark night, so that the stars were seen in the sky, and an earthquake in Bithynia toppled many buildings of the city of Nicea*³⁶³. The purpose of these miraculous signs was to show that an extraordinary event had occurred in Jerusalem (just after Jesus' death) and another event was going to follow soon (Jesus' resurrection). The holy ones who had died, mentioned in the New Testament, were the disciples to whom Jesus promised to reign with him in the heavens (Mt 5:3-10), but given that they had to be born from holy spirit (Jn 3:3-8), poured out 50 days after Jesus' death (Ac 2:1-4), they (a small number) had to be resurrected in order to benefit from his promise (Heb 6:17).*

The preparation of Sabbath (on Saturday) was held on Friday. Some prominent Jews, presumably a delegation from the Sanhedrin asked to finish the condemned by humanity and also not to desecrate the Sabbath: *It was the Day of Preparation, and to avoid the bodies' remaining on the cross during the Sabbath —since that Sabbath was a day of special solemnity— the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water*³⁶⁴ (...) *After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus —though a secret one because he was afraid of the Jews— asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission, so they came and took it away. Nicodemus came as well —the*

³⁵⁷ Ironically, because the curtain was torn all the priests who were in the Temple at that time (Ac 3:1) had been able to see the holy of holies, an act that was deserving death penalty (Nb 4:18-20).

³⁵⁸ Most versions translated the Greek word *polus* "abundant/ numerous" into "many", but the immediate context involves rather "several (this word does not exist in Greek or in Hebrew)" than "many" because "many women" were actually "three women".

³⁵⁹ The "he" could refer to Jesus (however other translations prefer an indefinite phrase: "after the coming back to life"), in that case the inaction of those resurrected ones (on Saturday) would be due to the Sabbath rest (Luke 23:56).

³⁶⁰ L. PIROT –La Sainte Bible tome IX
Paris 1935 Éd. Letouzey et Ané pp. 376-377.

³⁶¹ John's disciples, including John (Mt 11:11), were not involved, because they were not baptized in the Holy Spirit (Ac 19:1-7).

³⁶² JULIUS AFRICANUS - Chronographia

Turnhout 1966 Ed. Brepols (Migne) Patrologia Graecae t. X p. 91.

³⁶³ EUSÈBE – Chronicon

in: *Patrologia Graecae* t. XIX (Paris 1857 Ed. Migne) p. 535.

³⁶⁴ This unusual pleural effusion appears to have been caused by intense stress (Lk 22:44).

same one who had first come to Jesus at night-time— and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about 100 pounds³⁶⁵ [33 kg]. They took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, following the Jewish burial custom. At the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in this garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried. Since it was the Jewish Day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there (Jn 19:31-42). The operation consisting of fracturing legs (called *crurifragium*) was causing immediate death by suffocation because the condemned could not rely on his feet in order to breathe. Roman law recognized that the bodies of those who had suffered the death penalty should not be denied their relatives (according to Ulpian) or anyone else requested to give them a proper burial (according to Julius Paulus), except in cases of treason. According to Tacitus, the crime of *lese majeste* prevented the providing a sepulchre to convicts at the time of Tiberius (Annals VI:29) but this law was only applied to Roman citizens (Jesus was a Jew of the province of Judea) and Tiberius, after the death of Sejanus, had asked the governors to respect local customs (the Jews had to bury their dead). Philo describes a crackdown in 37/38 under Flaccus, prefect of Egypt at the time: *It is the custom to punish no one, even of those who have been lawfully condemned, until the famous festival and assembly, in honour of the birth-day of the illustrious emperor, has passed. But he committed this violation of the laws at the very season of this festival, and punished men who had done no wrong; though certainly, if he ever determined to punish them, he ought to have done so at a subsequent time; but he hastened, and would admit of no delay, by reason of his eagerness to please the multitude who was opposed to them, thinking that in this way he should be able, more easily, to gain them over to the objects which he had in view. I have known instances before now of men who had been crucified when this festival and holiday was at hand, being taken down and given up to their relations, in order to receive the honours of sepulture, and to enjoy such observances as are due to the dead; for it used to be considered, that even the dead ought to derive some enjoyment from the natal festival of a good emperor, and also that the sacred character of the festival ought to be regarded. But this man did not order men who had already perished on crosses to be taken down, but he commanded living men to be crucified, men to whom the very time itself gave, if not entire forgiveness, still, at all events, a brief and temporary respite from punishment; and he did this after they had been beaten by scourgings in the middle of the theatre; and after he had tortured them with fire and sword; and the spectacle of their sufferings was divided; for the first part of the exhibition lasted from the morning to the 3rd or 4th hour [9:00 or 10:00], in which the Jews were scourged, were hung up, were tortured on the wheel, were condemned, and were dragged to execution through the middle of the orchestra (Against Flaccus §§81-85). According to Philo, it was abnormal to leave the bodies of executed people on the gallows and not to bury them, implying that the situation was different before 37/38, the period of anti-Jewish persecution in Egypt.*

Jewish tradition is constant: a dead man had to obtain a burial even if the circumstances were unfavourable, as stated in the Talmud of Jerusalem: *The high priest nor the Nazirite may not defile himself with the death of their loved ones, but they can make it for a meritorious act. If they are travelling and meet a dead that it would meritorious to bury, according to Rabbi Eliezer, the high priest may defile himself, but not the Nazirite, while other teachers say the opposite (Nazir 7:1). Even the sentenced to death were deserving burial: Whoever allows to spend the night to a dead (without burying him) violates a prohibition (Dt 21:23); but he does not violate the honour expected to a dead by making bring him a coffin and a shroud. The condemned are not buried in the tomb of their fathers; but two cemeteries were at the disposal for the court: one for those killed and strangled, the other for the stoned and burned (Sanhedrin 6:5). The delegation of the Sanhedrin, whom Joseph of Arimathea was part of (he requested Pilate to shorten the suffering of the condemned and give them a*

³⁶⁵ The total weight seems exaggerated because myrrh and aloes were some very expensive perfumes (Mt 2:11) but this member of Sanhedrin was rich and could afford such things. For example, when Gamaliel the Elder died (c. 50 CE) 80 minas [45 kg] were burnt (Aboda Zara 11a) and when Herod died his coffin was followed by 500 servants carrying spices (Jewish Antiquities XVII:199).

proper burial), behaved in agreement with Jewish law. The text in Acts 13:27-28 confirms that it was this official delegation that put the body of Jesus in a tomb, in addition, the precision implies that Jesus, who had not been buried in the cemetery of the Sanhedrin assigned for killed ones, was innocent from a religious point of view. The text of Mark 15:43 adds that Joseph of Arimathea had courage because, by offering his own tomb to bury Jesus (Mt 27:57-61), he had disavowed his colleagues who could then have excommunicated him for disagreeing with the judgment (Sanhedrin 3:7, Jn 24:42).

The women who had followed Jesus did not cooperate with the members of the delegation for his burial because they did not know that Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin (like Nicodemus), was a disciple of Jesus in secret: *And now a member of the Council arrived, a good and upright man named Joseph. He had not consented to what the others had planned and carried out. He came from Arimathea, a Jewish town, and he lived in the hope of seeing the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He then took it down, wrapped it in a shroud and put it in a tomb which was hewn in stone and which had never held a body. It was Preparation day and the Sabbath was beginning to grow light [18:00]. Meanwhile the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus were following behind. They took note of the tomb and how the body had been laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments³⁶⁶. And on the Sabbath day [Saturday] they rested, as the Law required (Lk 23:50-56).* It is surprising that Pilate accepted the request of Joseph of Arimathea, because Jesus was formally sentenced for the crime of lese majesty, his implicit moral support might make him an accomplice. But as he knew that the official accusation was only a pretence, he did not risk anything in satisfying the demand from the Sanhedrin, especially since he could legitimately assume that this strange choice would be a source of tension among its members.

To avoid the flaunting of their dissensions openly and thus indirectly encouraging Jesus' followers, the Sanhedrin requested Pilate to guard the tomb by invoking as official reason "the need to deter Jesus' supporters to recover the body in order to achieve fraudulently the prophecy about his resurrection" and thus prevent any sedition. In fact, by the presence of Roman soldiers, the Sanhedrin wanted to make believe that Jesus was a criminal according to Roman law. *Next day [Saturday], that is, when Preparation Day [Friday] was over, the chief priests and the Pharisees went in a body to Pilate and said to him: Your Excellency, we recall that this impostor said, while he was still alive, "After 3 days I shall rise again". Therefore give the order to have the sepulchre kept secure until the 3rd day [Sunday], for fear his disciples come and steal him away and tell the people: He has risen from the dead. This last piece of fraud would be worse than what went before. Pilate said to them: You may have your guard; go and make all as secure as you know how. So they went and made the sepulchre secure, putting seals on the stone and mounting a guard (Mt 27:62-66).* The first "deception" was referring to the usurped title, according to Roman law, of "King of the Jews" (but also to having said "Messiah, Son of God" to the Sanhedrin). Pilate's response shows that he did not want to run a police operation in favour of the Jews, however the Sanhedrin had to remind him that it could not make Jewish policemen work on the Sabbath, forcing Pilate to delegate some of his soldiers (a squad) for such a custody, as can be verified later in the narrative: *After the Sabbath, and towards dawn on the 1st day of the week [Sunday], Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And suddenly there was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke; and he said to the women: There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples: He has risen from the*

³⁶⁶ Some of these women were rich because one of them had a perfume bottle worth 300 denarii (Mark 14:3-5), one year's salary.

dead and now he is going ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him. Look! I have told you. Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. And suddenly, coming to meet them, was Jesus. Greetings, he said. And the women came up to him and, clasping his feet, they did him homage. Then Jesus said to them: Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me. Now while they were on their way, some of the guards went off into the city to tell the chief priests all that had happened. These held a meeting with the elders and, after some discussion, handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions: This is what you must say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep". And should the governor [Pilate] come to hear of this, we undertake to put things right with him ourselves and to see that you do not get into trouble. So they took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews (Mt 28:1-15). The women came to the tomb bringing the spices needed for burial, because they did not know that Jesus was buried according to the standards and even in a royal manner according to the quantities used. The guards were indeed Roman soldiers because they were accountable to the governor after informing the high priests. If they had been Jewish soldiers (Lk 3:14) they would not have had to account to the governor³⁶⁷. For having lost their prisoner, they risked the death penalty (Ac 16:27; Jewish War V:482). The proposal of the Sanhedrin must have reassured them, especially since it was supported by a large sum of money. Pilate's clemency would be assured because the sponsor of the mission was the Sanhedrin itself and Roman governors could negotiate this kind of negligence, as Tacitus reports: *The sentinels sought to excuse their own scandalous neglect by the disgraceful conduct of the general, alleging that they had been ordered to be silent, that they might not disturb his rest, and that, from omitting the watchwords and the usual challenges, they had themselves fallen asleep* (The Histories V:22).

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Just before Jesus' death, the Bible reads: *The Master says: My time is near. It is at your house that I am keeping Passover with my disciples (...) The Son of man is going to his fate, as the scriptures say he will* (Mt 26:19,24). Just before Jesus had said: *And then the end will come. So when you see the appalling abomination, of which the prophet Daniel spoke, set up in the holy place (let the reader understand)* (Mt 24:14-15). Daniel's prophecy says: *Therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 70 weeks [of years] are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies. And you should know and have the insight [that] from the going forth of [the] word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah [the] Leader, there will be 7 weeks [of years], and 62 weeks [of years]. She will return and be actually rebuilt, with a public square and moat, but in the straits of the times. And after the 62 weeks [of years] Messiah will be cut off, with nothing for himself. And the city and the holy place the people of a leader that is coming will bring to their ruin. And the end of it will be by the flood. And until [the] end there will be war; what is decided upon is desolations. And he must keep [the] covenant in force for the many for 1 week [of years]; and at the half of the week [of years] he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease. And upon the wing of disgusting things there will be the one causing desolation; and until an extermination, the very thing decided upon will go pouring out also upon the one lying desolate* (Dn 9:23-27). It is possible that this highly controversial text has undergone some changes from the Jewish copyists, as evidenced by the pro-Maccabean translation of the Septuagint³⁶⁸. However, the Jewish translation of Theodotion (c. 175 CE) written in an anti-Christian context is still very close

³⁶⁷ However these Jewish soldiers could be requisitioned by governors in case of war and integrated as auxiliary troops alongside the legions (Jewish Antiquities XIV:202-204).

³⁶⁸ S. PACE JEANSONNE - The Old Greek Translation of Daniel 7-12
Washington 1988 Ed The Catholic Biblical Association of America pp. 29,125

to the Masoretic Text, it reads: *Therefore consider the matter, understand the vision. 70 weeks have been determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, for sin to be ended, and to seal up transgressions, and to blot out the iniquities, and to make atonement for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy. And thou shalt know and understand, that from the going forth of the command for the answer and for the building of Jerusalem until Christ the prince [there shall be] 7 weeks, and 62 weeks; and then [the time] shall return, and the street shall be built, and the wall, and the times shall be exhausted. And after the 62 weeks, the anointed one shall be destroyed, and there is no judgment in him: and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary with the prince that is coming: they shall be cut off with a flood, and to the end of the war which is rapidly completed he shall appoint [the city] to desolations. And 1 week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink-offering shall be taken away: and on the temple [shall be] the abomination of desolations; and at the end of time an end shall be put to the desolation.* Paradoxically, the accurate Jewish translation of Theodotion (a revised Septuagint) is even more favourable to Christian interpretation than the Masoretic text which provides the basis for current translations. These remarks may remove some erroneous propositions and focus on what is really the problem in the identification of the Messiah.

OFFICIAL NARRATIVE: IS IT HISTORY OR PROPAGANDA?

Many people accept to believe in propaganda: *because they would not accept the love of the truth and so be saved. And therefore God sends on them a power that deludes people so that they believe what is false, and so that those who do not believe the truth and take their pleasure in wickedness may all be condemned* (2Th 2:10-12). The truth is nevertheless easy to find, by means of chronology as Herodotus explained. Indeed official truth, based on myths and propaganda, is used to glorify or protect political or religious Authorities as the apostle John explains: *many even of the rulers actually put faith in him [Jesus], but because of the Pharisees they would not confess [him], in order not to be expelled from the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men [and their lies] more than even the glory of God* (Jn 12:42-43), in addition, the discovery of the truth is biased because: *The time is sure to come when people will not accept sound teaching, but their ears will be itching for anything new and they will collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then they will shut their ears to the truth and will turn to myths* (2Tm 4:3-4). However, thanks to chronology, the backbone of history, it is possible to separate truth from falsehood and to test everything (1Th 5:21). For example we know that: *the prophets who prophesied about the undeserved kindness meant for you made a diligent inquiry and a careful search. They kept on investigating what particular time or what season the spirit within them was indicating concerning Christ* (1Pe 1:10-11). In this area, the last days of Jesus' life are privileged because, according to the Gospels, Jesus died exactly on 3 April 33 CE at 15:00, after a miraculous night which lasted 3 hours (Mk 15:33-37) and just before a lunar eclipse (Ac 2:1,19-20) which began at 15:40. These chronological details are absolutely stunning.

The purpose of propaganda is to magnify some characters or some of their deeds, consequently the secondary technical details, considered to be without interest, are usually ignored. On the contrary, the Gospels give many insignificant details whose authenticity can be verified. For example, we are accurately informed of the different clothes that Jesus wore during the last hours of his life. During his trial before Pilate, the soldiers clothed Jesus with a purple outer garment (Jn 19:2). When Jesus was put on the execution stake, the Roman soldiers removed his clothes, including his inner garment which was without a seam, being woven from the top throughout its length (Jn 19:23), consequently Jesus was naked when he died, that is to say only with his undergarment (Jn 21:7). Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in a clean fine linen (*sindon*) and deposited it in his personal

brand new tomb (Mt 27:57-60). According to Jewish ritual burial (Ac 13:27-29), Nicodemus washed the body (Ac 9:37), then tied it with bandages (*othoniois*) by coating it with spices (Jn 19:38-42) and placed a sweat cloth (*soundariô*) which had been upon his face (Jn 11:44). Sunday morning at 6:00, Peter and John entered the tomb, which was empty, and saw only the bandages and the sweat cloth upon his head (Jn 20:1-8). The sweat cloth (*soundariô*), a kind of towel (Lk 19:20), cannot match that of Turin. Only the shroud (*sindoni*), a linen cloth, could match. This linen cloth that served as garment (Mk 14:51), was a kind of poncho, it was not used for burial, but only to carry the body of Jesus to the tomb and for obvious practical reasons: to avoid being in contact with a bloodied corpse, and decency: the dead man was in underwear. Since this linen cloth was in contact with the dead, it became unclean and had to be washed (Lk 11:38-44). Conclusion: the Shroud of Turin does not match the description of the shroud in the Gospel on several points: it was not in the grave moreover it could not be "impregnated (inexplicably)" from the bloodied body of Jesus because it was washed (because of its ritual impurity) and above all it could not be "impregnated" from his face. Finally, that a funeral article could serve as a relic was unthinkable for the early Christians (Jude 9) who were of Jewish origin (Deuteronomy 34:6). Thus the Shroud of Turin is based on propaganda.

The trial of Jesus is representative of how the authorities of a country legally use techniques of misinformation to eliminate a character considered subversive and disturbing public order. According to the report from the Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a), Jesus was condemned to death because he had practiced sorcery (Ex 22:18) and because he had misled Israel by his apostate teachings (Dt 13:6-9). Legally the facts appear defined because Jesus was likened to an insurgent and a heretic. The Gospels denounce the hypocrisy of the official version because the accusation of witchcraft is a matter of interpretation, in addition, how does one know if the miracles performed by a prophet come from God (Mt 12:24-27) and whether he is a true or a false prophet? The accusation of apostasy is subject to the same difficulties: true or false teaching? In sum, as noted Pilate in a disillusioned manner: What is truth? The question boils down to: Jesus, was he really an impostor or a heretic? A prominent Catholic theologian summarizes the alternative at the beginning of his study on the accusation: *The sentencing to death [of Jesus] is the consequence of the blasphemy. His execution will be assigned to the Romans. Since, the reasons for division between Jews and Christians revolve around this accusation*³⁶⁹. The question is well raised, but his response (in a hermetic jargon), 400 pages later, is unacceptable for a historian: *Faith is the heuristic key parameter for understanding the apocalyptic of what could have been the "blasphemy of Jesus" (sic).*

The key to a scientific investigation, whether historical or judicial, is an accurate chronological reconstruction, sole criterion of "truth". In fact, in the first century, there was [minor] blasphemy coming from "blasphemous words" (ie words that flout the glory of God, which lead to excommunication) and [major] blasphemy (cursing God by naming him by his own name, which causes stoning). Jesus was not accused of [major] blasphemy because he wisely avoided naming God during his trial, but of [minor] blasphemy by claiming to be the Son of God sitting on his right. We know little about the first century Jewish concepts about the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God³⁷⁰, but according to the Talmud, it was a [minor] blasphemy to assert to be placed in a throne at the right hand of God since it is written about thrones mentioned in Daniel 7:9: *The Holy One, blessed be He, does nothing without consulting His Heavenly Court, for it is written, The matter is by the decree of the*

³⁶⁹ J. BERNARD –Le blasphème de Jésus
Paris 2007 Éd. Parole et Silence pp. 5, 401.

³⁷⁰ P. GRELOT –L'espérance juive à l'heure de Jésus
Paris 1994 Éd. Desclée pp. 200-205.

*watchers, and the sentence by the word of the Holy Ones. Now, that is satisfactory for all [the other verses], but how explain till thrones were placed? —One [throne] was for Him and one for David. Even as it has been taught: One was for Him [the Son of man] and one for David: this is R. Akiba's view. R. Jose protested to him: Akiba, how long will thou profane the Shechinah [God's Glory]? (Sanhedrin 38b). Akiba was not stoned (mandatory sanction for a major blasphemy) but severely rebuked (mercy was possible for a minor blasphemy). The claims of Jesus to be seated at the right hand of God therefore were considered blasphemous but the question of the high priest: What is your opinion? (Mt 26:66) also shows that his interpretation was questionable (major or minor blasphemy). This final accusation of blasphemy was rejected by the Sanhedrin because Jesus was not stoned, but his claim to be seated at the right hand of God was considered blasphemous and equated with apostasy. According to the Mosaic Law, some cases of apostasy (like idolatry) could cause a death sentence (Dt 13:6-11) and it was this subtle exegesis which allowed the Sanhedrin to "pardon" legally Jesus (according to Jewish law) then to deliver him to Roman authorities in order to be executed. Religious grounds of apostasy and minor blasphemy being transformed into political grounds (crime of *lese majeste* according to Roman law). To the Sanhedrin, the ruling regime for the Jews, Jesus was a heretic to eliminate, as was also the case with other prominent figures of Christianity like the Apostle Paul (Ac 24:5).*

At all times, hunters of witches, heretics or cults have used established power. Defenders of the established order generally seek to inflect it by pushing it on an authoritarian slope³⁷¹. The process is always the same: manipulation of crowds through the dissemination of terrifying but false information: *Jesus heals by Beelzebub*, spreading unfounded rumours: *Jesus wants to destroy the Temple and causes people to not pay taxes, the disciples stole his body to make believe in his resurrection*; use of an amalgam: *Jesus was among evildoers during his execution and Jesus was associated with prostitutes* and so on.

The chronology and biography of Jesus can be established with great accuracy but despite tangible and verifiable evidence they remain challenged. The reasons for that contestation actually appear from the outset. When the apostle Paul made known Jesus to the philosophers of Athens, the text of Acts states: *in the market place he debated every day with anyone whom he met. Even a few Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with him. Some said: What can this parrot mean? And, because he was preaching about Jesus and Resurrection, others said: He seems to be a propagandist for some outlandish gods. They got him to accompany them to the Areopagus, where they said to him: Can we know what this new doctrine is that you are teaching? Some of the things you say seemed startling to us and we would like to find out what they mean. The one amusement the Athenians and the foreigners living there seem to have is to discuss and listen to the latest ideas. So Paul stood before the whole council of the Areopagus and made this speech (...) God has publicly proved this by raising him from the dead. At this mention of rising from the dead, some of them burst out laughing; others said: We would like to hear you talk about this another time (Ac 17:17-22, 31-32; Kuen). Paul, perceived as a "loony" by philosophers (Ac 26:24), therefore was not really listened to. Celsus even wrote (c. 178 CE) a pamphlet entitled "Against the Christians" to denigrate the life of Jesus. Indeed, the possibility of a resurrection bothered these philosophers used to the concept of immortality of the soul developed by Plato. Moreover, the very notion of a sole God was perceived by them as an intolerance towards other deities. This refusal came from a prejudice, which Paul tried to overcome citing the Phenomena of Aratus (c. 270 BCE) and the Hymn to Zeus of Cleanthes (331-233): "since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist", as indeed some of your own writers have said "We are all his children".*

³⁷¹ B. LEMPERT –Le retour de l'intolérance. Sectarisme et chasse aux sorcières Paris 2002 Éd. Bayard p. 135.

In fact, the criticisms about the biography of Jesus appeared very early and were mostly focused on his particular affiliation. Celsus claimed, for example, that Jesus was not born from the Holy Spirit, but more rationally, from an adulterous relationship of Mary with a soldier named Panther (from the late 1st century the Jerusalem Talmud Shabbat 14d; Aboda Zara 40d mentions the Christian called Yeshu as a son of Pandera³⁷²). Today critics want to be subtler and claim that the two genealogies of Jesus from Matthew and Luke contradict each other. These criticisms are not serious³⁷³ because Jesus introduced himself several times as "*son of David* (Mt 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; Lk 20:41)". Well it is evident that if this messianic claim was baseless, it would never have been taken seriously, neither by the Sanhedrin, nor by the early Christians of Jewish origin who could easily check the veracity of this relationship in the archives of the Temple (before its destruction in 70). Jesus' parentage is clearly explained in the biblical text: he is described as the son of God, natural son of Mary and legal son of his adoptive father, Joseph. Women never appear directly in the Biblical heritage, natural genealogy given by Luke, "Jesus, son [of Mary, the daughter] of Heli, son of Matthat" was presented in the conventional form involving Jesus being related to Heli. Furthermore, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are simplified, they do not mention any sons or brothers or wives from a levirate marriage or remarriage³⁷⁴ as can be seen by comparing with that of the Book of Chronicles

Matthew 1:11-13	1 Chronicles 3:15-19
Josiah fathered [Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim fathered] Jeconiah and his brothers. After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel [and Pedaiah], Shealtiel [by Pedaiah] fathered Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel fathered Abiud,	Sons of Josiah: Johanan, the first-born, Jehoiakim 2 nd (...) The sons of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. Sons of Jeconiah the captive: Shealtiel his son, then Malchiram, Pedaiah (...) Sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel and Shimei (...) Sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah
Matthew 1:15,16 (<i>legal father affiliation according to Matthew 1:1</i>).	Luke 3:23,24 (<i>natural mother affiliation according to Luke 1:35</i>).
Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob; and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus	Jesus was about 30 years old, being the son, as it was thought, of Joseph [the husband of Mary and consequently] son of Heli, son of Matthat, son of Levi,

If simple logical arguments did not convince Greek philosophers, Jewish historians, like Josephus, then Christian, like Eusebius, would use powerful chronological arguments. As Herodotus had already demonstrated 2450 years ago, chronology is the backbone of history, however its use needs long and extensive research. One might therefore wonder why no historian tries to propose a thesis on chronology while the need remains acute. A book of Plutarch, written specifically against the "Father of history", gives the reasons for this paradox. Herodotus in his investigation had discredited historians who had preceded him, ranking them in the unenviable position of mythologists. The use of chronology became the new criterion of truth for conscientious historians like Thucydides; however most historians continue to prefer to "philosophize", relying on recognized authorities³⁷⁵ rather than performing tedious chronological researches. The criticisms appearing in the book of Plutarch entitled "On the malice of Herodotus" speaks volumes about the real

³⁷² This name first appears in the form Pandera, then Panthera "Panther", perhaps a deformation of Pandora, the first woman who was source of all evil according to Greek mythology, in the same way as *evangelion* "gospel" was distorted into *awen gilayon* "roll of forgery" in the Talmud (Sabbath 116a).

³⁷³ In the 1st century some Christians wanted to establish full genealogies, but this work was endless according to 1 Timothy 1:4.

³⁷⁴ In some apocryphal Mary's father is called Joiachim [= Eliachim?].

³⁷⁵ G. BERNARD, J.-P. DESCHODT – Mythes et polémiques de l'histoire Paris 2008 Éd. Studyrama.

reasons for these attacks; we read: *The style of Herodotus, as being simple, free, and easily suiting itself to its subject, has deceived many; but more, a persuasion of his dispositions being equally sincere. For it is not only (as Plato says) an extreme injustice, to make a show of being just when one is not so; but it is also the highest malignity, to pretend to simplicity and mildness and be in the mean time really most malicious. Now since he principally exerts his malice against the Boeotians and Corinthians, though without sparing any other, I think myself obliged to defend our ancestors and the truth against this part of his writings, since those who would detect all his other lies and fictions would have need of many books. But, as Sophocles has it, the face of persuasion is prevalent, especially when delivered in good language, and such as has power to conceal both the other absurdities and the ill nature of the writer. King Philip told the Greeks who revolted from him to Titus Quinctius, that they had got a more polished, but a longer-lasting yoke. So the malice of Herodotus is indeed more polite and delicate than that of Theopompus, yet it pinches closer, and makes a more severe impression, —not unlike to those winds which, blowing secretly through narrow chinks, are sharper than those that are more diffused. Now it seems to me very convenient to delineate, as it were, in a rough draught, those signs and marks that distinguish a malicious narration from a candid and unbiased one, applying afterwards every point we shall examine to such as appertain to them. First then, whoever in relating a story shall use the most odious terms when gentler expressions might do as well, is not to be esteemed impartial, but an enjoyer of his own fancy, in putting the worst construction on things; as if any one, instead of saying Nicias is too much given to superstition, should call him fanatic, or should accuse Cleon of presumption and madness rather than of inconsiderateness in speech. Secondly, when a writer, catching hold of a fault which has no reference to his story, shall draw it into the relation of such affairs as need it not, extending his narrative with circumlocutions, only that he may insert a man's misfortune, offence, or discommendable action, it is manifest that he delights in speaking evil. Therefore Thucydides would not clearly relate the faults of Cleon, which were very numerous; and as for Hyperbolus the orator, having touched at him in a word and called him an ill man, he let him go. Philistus also passed over all those outrages committed by Dionysius on the barbarians which had no connection with the Grecian affairs. For the excursions and digressions of history are principally allowed for fables and antiquities, and sometimes also for encomiums. But he who makes reproaches and detractions an addition to his discourse seems to incur the tragedian's curse on the "collector of men's calamities." Now the opposite to this is known to every one, as the omitting to relate some good and laudable action, which, though it may seem not to be reprehensible, yet is then done maliciously when the omission happens in a place that is pertinent to the history. For to praise unwillingly is so far from being more civil than to dispraise willingly, that it is perhaps rather more uncivil. The fourth sign of a partial disposition in writing of history I take to be this: When a matter is related in two or more several manners, and the historian shall embrace the worst (...) although he places also the Egyptian Hercules amongst the Gods of the second rank, and Bacchus amongst those of the third, as having had some beginning of their being and not being eternal, and yet he pronounces those to be Gods; but to the Greek Bacchus and Hercules, as having been mortal and being now half-gods, he thinks we ought to perform anniversary solemnities, but not to sacrifice to them as to Gods. The same also he said of Pan, overthrowing the most venerable and purest sacrifices of the Greeks by the proud vanities and mythologies of the Egyptians (...) Now of the seven sages, whom he calls Sophisters, he affirms Thales to have been a barbarian, descended of the Phoenicians. Speaking ill also of the Gods under the person of Solon, he has these words: You, O Croesus, ask me concerning human affairs, who know that every one of the Deities is envious and tumultuous. Thus attributing to Solon what himself thinks of the Gods, he joins malice to blasphemy (...) Now what does Herodotus, when he comes to this? Instead of Pittacus's valiant act, he tells us the fight of Alcaeus the poet, who throwing away his arms ran out of the battle; by thus not writing of honourable deeds and not passing over such as are dishonourable, he gives his testimony to those who say, that from one and the same malice proceed both envy and a rejoicing at other men's harms (...) if, lastly, Herodotus only knows the truth, and all others that give any account of the Greeks have been deceived by the fame of those glorious actions, as the effect of an admirable prowess? But he is an acute writer, his style is*

pleasant, there is a certain grace, force, and elegancy in his narrations; and he has, like a musician, pronounced his discourse, though not knowingly, still clearly and elegantly. These things delight, please, and affect all men. But as in roses we must beware of the venomous flies called cantharides; so must we take heed of the calumnies and envy lying hid under smooth and well-couched phrases and expressions, lest we imprudently entertain absurd and false opinions of the most excellent and greatest cities and men of Greece. Actually, mainstream historians support official history (exceptions are few).

To summarize, Plutarch, who was a prominent Greek historian in the pay of the Roman power, blamed Herodotus for his violating the honour of the ancestors of Greece by giving credit to the vain and ridiculous fables of the Egyptians and loving too much barbarians, criticizing too much the Greek gods and not speaking enough in an advantageous manner of his nation, and so disavowing all other writers who had, them, the support of public opinion. What is intriguing in these criticisms is that they are still perpetuated against scientific biographies (based on absolute dates) by most historians today (official historians). The lack of scientific culture is a major handicap to appreciating the rigorous aspect of chronology. Again the criticisms of Plutarch in his "On the malice of Herodotus" illustrate this major deficiency: *He is farther manifestly convinced of belying the Lacedaemonians, when he says that, whilst they expected the full moon, they failed of giving their assistance to the Athenians at Marathon. For they not only made a thousand other excursions and fights at the beginning of the month, without staying for the full moon; but wanted so little of being present at this very battle, which was fought the 6th day of the month Boedromion, that at their coming they found the dead still lying in the field. And yet he has written thus of the full moon: It was impossible for them to do these things at that present, being unwilling to break the law; for it was the 9th of the month, and they said, they could not go forth on the 9th day, the orb of the moon being not yet full. And therefore they stayed for the full moon [Herodotus VI:106]. But you, O Herodotus, transfer the full moon from the middle to the beginning of the month, and at the same time confound the heavens, days, and all things; and yet you do claim to be the historian of Greece!* Plutarch displays his ignorance³⁷⁶! Indeed, according to Herodotus, the Lacedaemonians of Sparta, who were camping on the 9th day of the month, had to go to Marathon (in 490 BCE) after the full moon [occurring on the 15th of the month]. However, he also says (Histories VI:106-107; VII:206) that the Spartans were held by the feasts of Carneia [from 7 to 15 of Carneios]. Assuming that the Greek calendars started at the new moon, Herodotus' data are very consistent. The calendars of Sparta and Athens were likely beginning (at that time) at the 1st new moon after the summer solstice³⁷⁷ (28 June). Consequently, Carneios being the 2nd month in Sparta it therefore began on 27 July (in 490 BCE) and the month of Boedromion being the 3rd month in Athens it began on 26 August. If the Lacedaemonians had left Sparta at the full moon of the 15 of Carneios [on 10 August] they must have arrived in Marathon about 14 days later³⁷⁸ [on 25 August]. The 6th day of Boedromion [on 31 August] marking the celebration of the battle occurs 6 days after the previous date, which is acceptable given the uncertainties on the dates and the diversity of Greek calendars at that time. The proof of this lack of rigor is given by Plutarch himself: *This battle [Marathon] occurred on the 4th day of Boedromion [on 29 August], according to how to count the Athenians; and following the Boeotians, the 27th day of Panemos [on 22 August]* (Life of Aristide XIX:8-9). Consequently, the criticisms of Plutarch, a prominent historian of the Roman power, against Herodotus "the Father of History [by means of chronology]" shows rather

³⁷⁶ D.W. OLSON – The Moon and the Marathon in: Sky & Telescope Septembre 2004 pp. 34-41.

³⁷⁷ E.J. BICKERMAN - Chronology of the Ancient World London 1980 Ed. Thames and Hudson pp. 27-40.

³⁷⁸ Sparta and Marathon are separated by a distance of 240 km. According to the Greek historian Arrian, Alexander's army was able to cover the distance between Persepolis and Susa (around 500 km) in 29 days, with an average speed of 17 km / day. If this value is used, it would have taken about 14 days to the Lacedaemonian army to reach Marathon.

his own incompetence. In the same manner, most historians who are collaborating for national authorities, dislike chronology because they dislike truth.

Establishing an accurate biography is not an easy task. Erasmus, the "Prince of the Humanists" said: *Whatever the fool has in his heart he betrays it in his face: or what is more evident, discovers it by his words: while the wise man, as Euripides observes, carries a double tongue; the one to speak what may be said, the other what ought to be; the one what truth, the other what the times require* (Praise of Folly XXXVI). The historical truth always comes from heaven (of **astronomers**).

CURRICULUM VITAE OF JESUS

In the decree *breviarium totius imperii* published in Rome on **Monday 12 May 2 BCE**, **Caesar Augustus** announced his registration called the "inventory of the world": *This census—the first—took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria [3-2 BCE] and everyone [in Judea] went to his own town to be registered* (Lk 2:1-2).

- Born in Bethlehem on Monday 29 September 2 BCE.
- Departure for Egypt to avoid the slaughter of new-borns which took place on Thursday 25 December 2 BCE when Jesus was 3 months old, like Moses (Ac 7:20-21).
- **Herod the Great** reigned 37 years and died, on 2 Shebat according to Megillat Taanit 23a, after a day the Jews observed as a fast (on 10 Tebeth according to 2Ki 25:1, Zc 8:19) and just before a **lunar eclipse** (Jewish Antiquities XVII:166-167,213). There was a full lunar eclipse seen in Jerusalem on **9/10 January 1 BCE**. In 1 BCE, 10 Tebeth was 5 January and 2 Shebat was 26 January. After Herod's death, return to Nazareth (March 1 BCE).
- **Judas the Galilean** rebelled during the second registration (Ac 5:37) of Quirinius in 7 CE (Jewish War II:117-118,433).
- In **12 CE** at the age of 12.5 years he met **High Priest Annas (6-15)** in the Temple.
- Baptized in Jordan, on **Monday 1 August 29 CE**, becoming the Messiah in the **15th year of Tiberius Caesar (August 28-August 29)** at the **age of 29 years and 10 months** (Lk 3:1,23).
- Beginning of his ministry, on Tuesday 27 September 29 CE, at the age of 30 (Nb 4:3). He announced the "release of captives" (Is 61:1) in the synagogue of Nazareth on Saturday 1 October 29 CE (Lk 4:16-21).
- The merchants of the Temple were driven out during the 1st Passover of his Ministry, April 30 CE, and he announced that the sanctuary (Most Holy), although built for 46 years, would be destroyed (Jn 2:20) before the end of his generation (Mt 24:34) in 80 CE according to Psalms 90:10.
- Beginning of a Jubilee year in 33 CE on 1st Nisan, Saturday 21 March 33 CE, in order to fulfil a release to the captives (Lk 4:18-21).
- The merchants of the Temple were driven out again in the 4th Passover of his ministry, on Monday 30 March 33 CE, which triggered hostilities against Jesus.
- The Last Supper was instituted at the beginning of Friday 14 Nisan (Thursday 2 April 33 CE from 18:00) prior to his trial before **Caiaphas (18-37) then Pilate (26-36)**.
- Death in Jerusalem, on **Friday 3 April 33 CE** at 15:00, at the age of 33 years and 6 months just before a **lunar eclipse** described as "**red blood into moon**" (Ac 2:20).

A demanding reader could legitimately ask why I am still a PhD candidate and not an academic with a PhD degree, and why my article has not been published in a scholarly review with a peer reading committee. The answer is as follows:

I completed a thesis in Archaeology and History of Ancient Worlds³⁷⁹ in order to get a PhD (Doctorate) at the University of Lyon II (Maison de l'Orient)³⁸⁰. I had a research director and a jury of six³⁸¹ ready to review my dissertation in December 2007. However, four months before I had to make the defence of my work, Pierre Villard, my research director, and all six jurors received a letter informing them I was a Jehovah's Witness³⁸². After they received the letter, they refused to grant me the PhD. However my research director accepted to sign a transfer request so I could move to another school to get my PhD. Consequently, I transferred my PhD to the INALCO, a university in Paris, but the President of Doctoral School, Magdalena Novotna, refused on 7 July 2009 to accept me as a transfer despite the fact that I received the agreement of Daniel Bodi, my new research director at the INALCO, and two of my former jurors for recording, Francis Joannès³⁸³ and André Lemaire³⁸⁴, who had agreed to serve on my new jury, I was not accepted.

The CAP LC European Coordination for Freedom of Conscience, an association created in order to counter discrimination in France concerning the right to freedom of conscience and belief and to alert the public to acts and speech violating human rights or which are a threat to fundamental liberties, reported my case³⁸⁵ in its report 2010 and sent it³⁸⁶ to Congress of the United States³⁸⁷ on October 28, 2011. Unfortunately nothing changed.

Finally, I filed a complaint of religious discrimination because Daniel Bodi, my research director, sent me an email dated 14 September 2009 in which he clearly wrote that INALCO refused me, solely because I was considered as a "fundamentalist". However, on 10 February 2011 the Tribunal Administratif de Paris (Dossier n°: 0918003/7-3) refused to validate my complaint of religious discrimination because the word "fundamentalist" is not mentioned in French laws! It is noteworthy that on 7 July 2012 (Request n°8916/05)³⁸⁸ the European Court of Human Rights unanimously condemned France for religious discrimination against Jehovah's Witnesses. Unfortunately nothing changed for me. Still worse I am now blacklisted in the academic world because I dared to file a complaint against a prestigious university.

³⁷⁹ <http://opac.mom.fr/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=487510>

³⁸⁰ <http://www.theses.fr/sujets/?q=Gertoux+Gérard>

³⁸¹ <http://mom.academia.edu/GerardGERTOUX/CurriculumVitae>

³⁸² Procès Verbal 2009/1011 daté du 25 mai 2009, BSU de Riom (Clermont Ferrand)

³⁸³ Professor at the Université Paris 1 -Panthéon Sorbonne, Research Director at the Unité Archéologie et Sciences de l'Antiquité.

³⁸⁴ Research Director at the École pratique des hautes études, member of the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres.

³⁸⁵ <http://www.freedomofconscience.eu/discrimination-of-minority-belief-groups-in-france/>

³⁸⁶ <http://www.aicongress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/France-Executive-Summary-October17.2011.pdf>

³⁸⁷ <http://www.coordiap.com/Document/letter%20of%20Congress%20US.pdf>

³⁸⁸ <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-112025#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-112025%22%5D%7D>

Regarding my skills as astronomer member of the International Association for Assyriologists (from September 2013):

Dr. Hermann Hunger
Professor of Assyriology (retired)
University of Vienna
Spitalgasse 2
1090 Wien
Austria

7. Mai 2015

To whom it may concern:

I have read the manuscript „Basic astronomy for historians to get a chronology“ of Gerard Gertoux and found it a well-informed and informative introduction to this complicated subject. It clearly explains what is required from a historian who wants to establish the chronology of historical events.

The author shows by examples how different chronologies can be evaluated or refuted. He also explains the astronomical phenomena that can be used for dating events, and the pitfalls in using ancient calendars. For some cases, he offers new conclusions or refutes chronologies proposed by other scholars.

The manuscript forces the reader to be very attentive, but this attention is well worth it.

Hermann Hunger

Regarding my skills as historian: author of *The Name of God Y.eH.oW.aH Which is Pronounced as it is Written I_Eh_oU_Ah: Its Story* (University Press of America, 2002): *This detailed treatment of the Name is useful for those who are interested in the history of its translation of the centuries*, Won W. Lee in: *Religious Studies Review* Vol. 29:3 (2003) p. 285, published by Council of Societies for the Study of Religion (Valparaiso University).

I would like to thank my friend Norman Cleworth for his corrections.