

A 2022 Look at Holy Week

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Let's start at the beginning. What year was it? 😊

In the early Middle Ages, the most important calculation and thus one of the main motivations for the European study of mathematics, was the problem of when to celebrate Easter.

The First Council of Nicaea, in A.D. 325, decided Easter would fall on the Sunday following the full moon that follows the spring equinox.

Computus (Latin for computation) was the procedure for calculating this date, and the computations were set forth in documents known as Easter tables.

It was on one such table that, in A.D. 525, a monk named Dionysius Exiguus (sometimes called Dennis the Small) of Scythia Minor introduced the A.D. system, counting the years since the birth of Christ.

Dionysius never said how he determined the date of Jesus's birth, but he may have used surviving writings from early Christians such as Clement of Alexandria or Eusebius of Caesarea to help estimate the date.

Dionysius set A.D. 1 as the year of Jesus Christ's birth, but was off in his estimation by a few years, with modern estimates placing Christ's birth at around 4 B.C.¹

So, when did Jesus's Holy Week take place? And does it matter?

Dr. Eugenia Constantinou noted several crucial dates taken out of Scripture which help us give a very close, if not exact date for Jesus's crucifixion.

Since the Bible tells us John the Baptist began his ministry during the 15th years of Tiberius, we know he began to preach in August of AD 28 or AD 29. That means Jesus's three years of ministry, begun maybe a year after John's, probably ended about AD 33."²

Jesus lived in Israel at a precise point in time. He is the ONLY God for whom we have factual historic details about his life.

In addition, the Gospel stories don't focus on only the positive as the hagiography of

traditional rulers generally do. They're straight-forward accounts and viewed as reliable by most historians outside of those with personal animosity toward Christianity, or, often, modern Christian writers who bend over backwards to "consider all the evidence."

Also, the Gospel writers included important negative information like Peter denying Jesus's divinity and Judas betraying Jesus.³

How about the month and day?

The Crucifixion took place on 14 Nisan. Passover was the next day (starting at sunset on 14 Nisan; in AD 30 and 33).⁴

What was the "inciting incident" that began the week?

Lazarus being raised from the dead. Some liturgical churches call the day before Palm Sunday, "Lazarus Saturday."

My post: [Why Raise Lazarus from the Dead?](#)

The story is found in [John 11](#).

Bethany is only two miles outside of Jerusalem. Lazarus, along with his devout sisters Mary and Martha, were respected by not just their friends Jesus and his disciples, but also by Jews in Jerusalem. When he died, religious rites went into effect, including the "rule" that a mourning family member had to stay home the first week and could only leave the house to visit the dead family member's tomb. That is why the Jews in attendance believed Mary was running to Lazarus' tomb when she abruptly left the house on news Jesus had arrived—four days "late."

Jewish tradition also believed the deceased's soul "lingered" for three days after death.

By the fourth day, it went to Sheol. Also, by four days, the body had decomposed sufficiently to smell.

Jesus certainly knew all this, but what did he say when informed of Lazarus' death?

“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of god may be glorified through it.”

We know ([Matthew 16](#)), Jesus's time on earth was ending. He knew⁵ and predicted this visit to Jerusalem (which he visited at least three times a year for his entire life in Israel) would be his final trip.

The cross loomed and Jesus tried to prepare his followers for what was coming. He, of course, knew this visit to Lazarus would end the Sanhedrin's patience with him, leading to his crucifixion.

Once he arrived and Mary and other Jews greeted him, he called Lazarus to come from the grave.

What did the witnesses do in response?

The sisters ran to their brother, hugged him, and removed his burial garments.

The “observing” Jews ran to Jerusalem to report on the astounding event.

What was the response of the Jewish authorities—particularly that of High Priest Caiaphas?

Time to kill him. (And Lazarus, too!)

Palm Sunday

Who were the people welcoming Jesus on Palm Sunday?

What was the personal significance of them throwing their cloaks on the ground before Jesus on the donkey?

The authorities?

“And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

”But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”” (Luke 19:39-40 NKJV)

WHY were the Pharisees so upset?

Constantinou noted it was the only time Jesus was publicly recognized as Messiah.

A hierarchy of society existed at that time. The religious leaders, high priest, and Sanhedrin were wealthy, respected, and admired.

Everyone else, including “regular” priests who did the physical sacrificial labors at the Temple, was beneath them.

But the people waving palm branches knew what Jesus did for them (in contrast to the religious leaders.). They viewed him as coming to rid them of the Romans, but more, too, as a savior for the underdog. Never before had anyone healed them from ailments like leprosy, epilepsy, demons, deafness, blindness, or crippled limbs. He’d raised people from the dead, calmed the seas, and pointed them back to God. These actions were exactly what they expected of the Messiah.⁶

The Sanhedrin (with the exception of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea) did not want to believe Jesus was the Messiah.

Besides, how could Jesus even be called a rabbi? He never attended any rabbinical school, he cited God as his reference point, he violated countless laws of purity—ate with sinners and tax collectors, had women followers—and dared to tell people their sins were forgiven.

They believed Jesus to be a blasphemer and a false prophet leading people astray.

No wonder the “common” people were so excited when their Messiah—riding on a donkey as prophesied—entered Jerusalem. A new kingdom was coming!

Here’s a link to a chart listing [356 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus](#).⁷

What’s the deal with the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin?

The **scribes** were the “lawyers” of Judaism and had memorized all the laws “added” to the original Laws of Moses in the Torah.

The scribes should have recognized the fulfillment of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies—and many may have been troubled by what they saw and heard about Jesus.

Some evidence suggests many scribes and priests became Christians after Jesus’s death.

During these years, the “regular priests” involved in the hard physical labor of the sacrifices were poor, downtrodden, and frequently robbed by the High Priest and Sanhedrin.

Priests were supposed to receive part of the sacrifices and the hides of the lambs slaughtered—to maintain their families since they didn’t farm or have other avenues of earning an income. Unfortunately, those in power frequently shorted them on their share of the meat, and robbed them of the hides by force. Some priests actually starved to death.

The system was corrupt.

The **Sadducees** were a conservative group associated with the upper class and the Temple. Most of the chief priests (not necessarily the High Priest) were Sadducees. They had their own interpretation of the Law, accepted only the Torah, and weren’t obsessed with all the jots and tittles of the Law of Moses. They famously didn’t believe in the Resurrection, so were

taken aback when Jesus used the Torah to show the truth of the Resurrection in [Matthew 22:24](#).

The **Pharisees**, the largest group, emphasized the oral rules added to the Law of Moses (the first five books of the Bible). The huge number of excess rules are sometimes called the “ceremonial law” and Pharisees believed God called Jews to a life of righteousness and holiness before the entire world.

Their rules enslaved the Jews in an unceasing list of ceremonial laws in which they could fail God—thus needing to make a sacrifice and improve the temple treasury. 😞

My post: [Am I a Pharisee?](#)

The Roman rulers chose the **High Priest**—Caiaphas worked with them for a long time by making sure they received financial kickbacks and that peace continued on the Temple Mount.

They kept the High Priest’s official priestly garments under their control when not in use.

According to Josephus:

The Jews were forced to request the vestments from the Romans in advance of any feasts so the vestments could be ritually cleansed after being defiled by idolators. This practice began in AD 6 and lasted until AD 37.

Constantinou commented that such a requirement insulted their faith in unimaginable ways—they had to depend on filthy pig-eating Gentiles to manage the religious garments needed to worship God and wear for the high Holy Day sacrifice.⁸

The **Sanhedrin** consisted of 70 powerful religious authorities (Both Pharisees and Sadducees) and wealthy members of the Jerusalem community. They were interested in keeping their power, even if that meant working with the much-hated Romans.

Monday of Holy Week

On the first “business” day of Holy Week, Jesus went straight to the Temple. Visitors jammed the city.

The Temple—the largest temple complex in the world—was a huge revenue source. Jews traveled to the Temple three times a year for major holidays. The Temple’s treasury contained so much money, they stopped counting it.

(This was at a time when banks did not exist. Temples were considered trustworthy because no one wanted to get into trouble with any gods. They became a place to leave additional personal funds after you finished paying to buy the sacrificial lambs, etc. needed to sufficiently worship God in Jerusalem at the Temple.)

The Temple was the economic, political, and religious center of the nation and most people living in the city derived their livelihood, either directly or indirectly, from its presence. Any threat—and Jesus was a threat with his teachings—concerned everyone, including the Roman rulers.

Jews believed the Temple signified God’s presence on earth.⁹

Remember how agitated people became when Jesus talked about destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days? Rabbinic tradition considered his words a sufficient threat to warrant the death penalty.¹⁰

Once Jesus arrived at the Temple Mount Monday morning,

“The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?”

“And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of

babes and nursing infants/ You have perfected praise’?” ([Matthew 21:14-17](#))

Displaying his healing powers on Temple grounds pointed to the inability of the high priest and his associates to do the same.

Jesus then turned to the vendors and money changers.

According to Constantinou, rabbinic sources mention money changers on the Temple grounds using dishonest scales and cheating the worshippers—who only could buy their sacrificial animals from the Temple-approved vendors. No one should exploit those who traveled such distances to worship God.¹¹

Tuesday

On his way to Jerusalem Tuesday morning, Jesus cursed the fig tree.

Why?

The prophets God used a fig tree to represent Israel in the Old Testament. This usage of the fig tree as representative of Israel is being employed here by Jesus and is also heavily implied in the arrangement of the text. The fig tree bookends the cleansing of the temple indicating a connection between the events.

If I have boiled down my relationship with Christ to a list of do’s and don’ts, then I am that fig tree with no fruit. This was the case in [Malachi’s](#) day when the priest of God offered that which was convenient or easy, without any “heart.”

Let us take the warning to heart and bear fruit. [Jesus tells us God](#) is most glorified when we bear fruit.¹²

Jesus condemned the Temple rituals, prayers, and sacrifices when done without true love for God and mercy. In other words, style over substance.

Authorities awaited Jesus at the Temple that morning. They wanted to know by whose authority he cleared the Temple?

If you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?”

“And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.”

So, they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.”

“And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.” ([Matthew 21: 24-27](#))

He spent the rest of the day telling parables—[notably of the two sons and of the tenants](#).

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard these parables, they recognized he spoke about them. (What a surprise—repentant sinners were more acceptable to God than self-righteous religious authorities).

Jesus went on to talk about being the Cornerstone which the builders rejected.

Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one it will crush it. ([Matthew 21: 42-43](#))

The Jewish leaders seethed, but because they feared the crowds—the same ones who welcomed Jesus on Sunday morning and believed Jesus to be a prophet at least and maybe the Messiah—they couldn’t arrest him, yet.

Obviously, they needed to plot how to get rid of him.

Wednesday

While Jesus spent the day in Bethany with his disciples,¹³ Jewish authorities spent Wednesday looking for Judas.

Judas carried the money for Jesus and his band of disciples. The disciples themselves believed he “sold out” Jesus to the Jewish authorities for money.

Didn't Jesus know?

Or did it not matter to Jesus?

Jesus loved Judas, and just as he did with the Jews with whom he interacted at the Temple Mount—including the Sanhedrin members—he kept trying to reach Judas all the way until the end.

(And why wouldn't he? Didn't he restore the ear of the servant after Peter cut it off?)

Did it have to be Judas who betrayed Jesus? Was Judas responsible for Jesus's death?

No. The High Priest already had made his decision. Judas' betrayal merely made it easier to find Jesus at the right time.¹⁴

People had been trying to kill Jesus since his ministry began. (For example, his hometown synagogue trying to push him off a cliff. Here's a list of [eight times people tried to kill him.](#))¹⁵

Constantinou noted Jesus's last interaction with Judas was on Thursday at the Last Supper. Jesus handed Judas a piece of bread out of friendship. Judas had free will all the way to the end. His greed overruled his love for Jesus.

This was a tragedy.

It's perhaps worth noting that Judas realized his mistake, and he tried to cancel the transaction. Jewish tradition held a sale could be cancelled by a seller within one year by the seller. Rabbi Hillel the Elder ruled that the seller could come to the Temple and leave the purchase money there. That would legally rescind the sale. (See [Zechariah 11:13](#) for the prophecy).

When Judas tried to return the 30 pieces of silver, the chief priests refused to take back

the money. Judas had no other way of dealing with his guilt and threw the money into the Temple itself. It was his only option for undoing what he'd done.

Meanwhile, the hypocritical Pharisees who paid Judas for the information to streamline their murder of a “rival,” sanctimoniously purchased a potter’s field with the funds—rather than return them to the Temple treasury.

Chrysostom:

If they had cast it [the 30 pieces of silver] into the treasury, it would not have been so clearly discovered; but now having bought a piece of ground, they made it all manifest even to subsequent generations.¹⁶

It’s perhaps worth noting Judas regretted what he had done. The chief priests never did.

Thursday

On Thursday of Holy Week Jews would have been preparing for their Passover meal—having made arrangements to sacrifice a lamb the next day at noon, they would have been cleaning their houses to ensure they’d removed all the leaven.

Jesus and his disciples also prepared for the Passover meal, sending Judas and others to make arrangements.

Thursday’s dinner in the Upper Room was *not* the Passover meal—unbeknownst to the disciples, it was Jesus’s farewell dinner. In his humility and to demonstrate he was their servant; Jesus washed the feet of the disciples.

After Judas left on his betrayal errand, Jesus spoke final words to his disciples.

He even prayed for you and me. ([John 17:20](#))¹⁷

After the meal, they went up to the Mount of Olives to pray.¹⁸

Jesus was fully man. He knew what was coming. He needed to spend this time in prayer, and to gain encouragement because he was so sorrowful and under a great amount of stress.

His Father loved him—and [sent an angel to encourage him](#).

Constantinou reminded readers that Jesus anticipated overwhelming physical suffering as well as emotional suffering while separated from God. He was not braver than we are, he did not get a “pass” for being divine. He was just like us except he never sinned.¹⁹

Members of the High Priest’s Temple guard and Judas arrived—and a kiss betrayed the Creator of the Universe.

Let the (illegal) trials begin

Just about everything that happened to Jesus after he fell into the hands of the Temple guards was illegal. [Here’s a list of ten reasons why](#)²⁰:

- Jesus was arrested illegally.
- It was a private proceeding at night.
- The Sanhedrin illegally proceeded to hold Jesus’s trial before sunrise.
- The Sanhedrin tried a capital offense on the eve of the Sabbath and a Holy day.
- They concluded the trial in one day.
- The indictments were false or unproven.
- Those who might have voted against condemnation were not there.
- They pronounced the sentence in a place forbidden by law.
- Most Sanhedrin members were legally disqualified to try Jesus.
- They switched the charged from blasphemy to treason for Pilate.

Despite all the false testimony, it took a long time to find any two stories that matched.

About Jesus's testimony

What does Jesus's reply "You have said so," mean?

Note the way his questioners asked their question. Based on other times Jesus used the same statement, his response meant, "You spoke the truth."²¹

Pontius Pilate

Pontius Pilate ended up involved because the Sanhedrin wanted to be rid of Jesus forever.

The Romans gave the Jews plenty of leeway in dealing with Roman law. They were, however, concerned with monitoring the Passover crowds and keeping the peace. That was their main focus. If the Jewish high priests killed a Jew, they wouldn't intervene nor cause a problem about legality.

But the Sanhedrin didn't want a quiet death or even a stoning. They hated Jesus so much they wanted him crucified publicly, shamefully, disgracefully, and thoroughly discredited. They did not want anyone to think Jesus was anything but a false prophet cursed by God.

A public, miserable, terrible crucifixion was the only way to [prove Jesus was a false prophet](#) and therefore could *not* be the Messiah.

Note: in their hypocrisy, the chief priests met Pilate outside of his palace, so they might not be defiled and thus unable to participate in Passover festivities.

Jesus, however, went inside Pilate's praetorium. The priests did not hear the exchange.

What I found interesting about the Pilate scenario was he didn't know who Jesus was—

his was an honest question. The Roman rulers in Jerusalem would not have paid attention to a humble rabbi without political ambitions. They didn't witness his miracles and probably wouldn't have believe them anyway. They didn't care if the Jewish authorities called Jesus a blasphemer, Jewish authorities handled their own religious situations. Jesus was Jewish and beneath their radar unless he stirred up trouble. They did pay attention on Palm Sunday when a mob gathered to welcome him, but whether the event came to Pilate's attention is unknown.

Jesus paid his taxes, cared for the poor, and posed no threat to Rome. Right?

Besides, Pilate's wife had a dream and he wouldn't want to cross her.

Pilate saw no problem with Jesus and with a busy day ahead of him, released him to Herod.

Except the Jewish authorities wanted blood.

Herod knew about Jesus—but he was in charge of Galilee and the murderer of Jesus's cousin John the Baptist. Herod was delighted to have Jesus appear before him.

Jesus, of course, refused to demonstrate any tricks, frustrating Herod. Still, Herod didn't put Jesus to death either. Constantinou suggested three reasons:

- Innocence. Unlike his cousin, Jesus wasn't a threat. All he did was heal people.
- John the Baptist. The people liked Jesus and were angry about what happened to his cousin.
- Herod simply wanted to be entertained. Since Jesus refused to say or do anything, Herod may have assumed he was a fraud.

Herod returned Jesus to Pilate, though this time [arrayed in expensive clothes](#)—including a purple robe.

Back to Pilate

The busy Roman was irritated when Herod returned the prisoner, but also convinced Jesus was innocent. Since Pilate wanted to be done with the whole affair, he tried scourging him.

Constantinou noted Pilate's reluctance to grant the high priest's requests to crucify Jesus. He preferred to scourge prisoners—which was extremely painful and awful as well. Jesus might come away physically maimed, but scourging would spare his life.”²²

Surely, mocking Jesus and hurting him in such a brutal way would get the high priests off his back?

Alas, no.

The physical brutality was terrible and resulted in a major loss of blood and an ugly crown of thorns—which was just as cruel as [scourge](#) beatings with rope, metal balls, bones, and metal spikes.

When even the bloody, broken Jesus failed to satisfy the Jewish authorities, Pilate volunteered to release a prisoner to them in honor of Passover. He had two prisoners they could choose from: Jesus or a well-known and brutal criminal Barabbas.²³ (Whose name meant “Son of the Father.”)

They chose the criminal—because, again, they sought vengeance and public death.

Constantinou explained three reasons why Pilate wanted to release Jesus:

- Jesus wasn't a threat to order; he wasn't fomenting rebellion
- He hadn't committed any crime
- Pilate was superstitious. Jesus might be a god.

The crowd, undoubtedly brought in by the Jewish authorities, screamed for Jesus's death,

even calling down a curse upon themselves. (“[His blood be upon us and our children.](#)”)

Above all, Pilate needed to keep order. He washed his hands on Jesus and condemned him to death by crucifixion to appease the Jewish authorities.

And so began the agonizing walk to Golgotha.

The Cross

Jesus was crucified on 14 Nisan, the Day of Preparation.

Crucifixion was a nasty, demeaning, ugly, graphic, torturous way to die.

It was not a Jewish penalty, though occasionally used. The main reason, from the Mishnah: “Only a blasphemer and one who worships an idol are ‘hung.’” For Jews, it pointed to God cursing and utterly rejecting the person who committed the crime.

That was why the Sanhedrin demanded Jesus be put to death by crucifixion.

Jews, however, had provisions granted by the Romans in cases of crucifixion. Unlike other condemned, Jews were allowed to wear a loin cloth, were taken off the cross by sundown, and were released for burial.

Other than that, the nastier and more horrific the death, the better.

You can see in the text where mockers made fun of Jesus on the cross, and that included at least one of the other men being crucified.

The Roman guards, since this was a Jew, gambled for his clothing. Jesus wore a seamless garment, which was rare and valuable.

The detail is important, since the only other person known to wear a seamless garment was the Jewish high priest.²⁴

Most timelines agree they hung Jesus on the cross at Golgotha about nine in the morning. Jewish priests at the Temple began sacrificing the Passover lambs about noon.

Unusual events

Darkness

The sky went dark at noon and remained dark until three o'clock in the afternoon when Jesus died. It was dark enough people could see stars.

People have argued over the years that the darkness was a solar eclipse. That's wrong for several reasons:

- The idea was originally put forth by someone trying to disprove the crucifixion.
- Eclipses don't happen during a full moon, which is when Passover occurs.
- Full eclipses don't last three hours. (The longest one on record: 12 minutes).
- No eclipse took place that day, according to NASA's solar eclipse search engine.²⁵
- The apostles would have known what an eclipse was—and didn't call it one.

What was it then?

God, obviously, brought darkness leading up to Jesus's death.²⁶

The Earthquake

While earthquakes happened in Palestine all the time, they were believed to be "portents" of supernatural events.²⁷ Unreligious historians recounted the earthquake and the darkness both.

Some link it to another dramatic event: dead folks leaving the tomb and walking about

Jerusalem, thus demonstrating Jesus's victory over death. One assumes they returned to the grave and, thus, went into Paradise.

The Temple Veil torn in two

[I wrote about it here.](#)

The theological implications of the veil separating God from man being torn are many. The veil tore from top to bottom—not something that makes the remotest sense. It was a hand's-breadth thick and required 300 priests to clean it.

Perhaps the lintel breaking above it following the earthquake had a hand, but no one really knows. Jesus's victory over sin and death means all can face their God.

The Centurion's reaction

The very centurion, Roman guard, who pierced Jesus's side to ensure he was dead, is thought to have been the seasoned soldier who pronounced Jesus the Son of God.

He had no reason to do so unless he, too, recognized Jesus as such—based on personal observations following his experience observing many crucifixions.

The Burial

Joseph of Arimathea “took courage,” and begged for Jesus's body. As a member of the Sanhedrin and openly associating himself with Jesus, now dead, this action could make him an enemy of the Jews and the Romans both.

He put Jesus in his family's new, unused tomb, not far from Golgotha, and managed to

take down Jesus, pack herbs around the body (brought by Nicodemus), and then wrap him in a linen shroud before sundown and Passover began.

Saturday

[I wrote about Holy Saturday here.](#)

Most of the principals of Holy Week lay low—celebrating the Sabbath.

The Christian Church has two thoughts on Jesus’s Holy Saturday location.

Peter’s epistle is the only Bible verse:

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient.” ([1 Peter 3:18-20](#))

Theories abound as to what Peter meant.

The “conventional” Christian thought takes us to the [Apostle’s Creed](#): “He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell.”

That’s where I think Jesus was on Holy Saturday, showing himself to those who died in faith long before.

What was Jesus doing in Sheol, a waiting place for those eventually headed to heaven?

Bringing good news.

Resurrection day!

Jesus rose from the dead.

He began his risen ministry on the Road to Emmaus and continues today!

I wrote about that [Road to Emmaus discussion here.](#)

What is Passover and why was it so significant?

Let me count the ways.

It marks and remembers one of the central moments in Jewish history: why God sent Moses to “set his captives free,” from Pharaoh’s Egypt.

Jesus came to redeem all mankind from the curse of sin. His coming, life, death, and resurrection are an even greater freeing from sin’s slavery than anything else in history.

The events of this Holy Week fulfill prophecies and parallel not just the Jews freed from Egypt, but also, another pseudo- Passover story: Isaac and Abraham.

The (non) sacrifice of Isaac—or, “the binding of Isaac,” or the “*Akedah*.”

See the story in [Genesis 22](#).

Constantinou spent a chapter examining the relationship between the Jewish tradition of Akedah and it’s parallel with the Passover. The non-cannon Jewish literature popular during the time of Jesus’s birth specifically links the [Book of Jubilees](#) [part of the pseudepigrapha] with the Passover.

In particular, Jubilees 17²⁸-18 provides a date: 12 Nisan. Since Jews count days from sunrise to sundown, the three days Abraham and Isaac walked to the place of sacrifice, meant Abraham bound Isaac for sacrifice on 14 Nisan.

That’s the same day and month when Passover lambs were sacrificed. Jesus was crucified on that day, as well.

Parallels between the “binding of Isaac” and Jesus’s death on the cross:

- Rabbinic tradition about the Akedah says Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice

on his back.

- The Father was willing for his only son to be sacrificed.
- Given Isaac's age, he had to be willing to be sacrificed, as was Jesus.
- No lamb was provided for the sacrifice: it was a ram, or an *adult* male sheep.

[Here's a list of 30 similarities:](#)²⁹

1. The father leads his son to be sacrificed.
2. A donkey is involved on the road to the sacrifice.
3. They leave their "homeland" to go to the place of sacrifice (Abraham & Isaac travel to the mountain, Jesus leaves heaven to come to earth).
4. To get from where they are to the place of sacrifice requires a journey.
5. Each son is the "one and only son" of his father.
6. The son is a descendant of Abraham.
7. The son had been born with divine intervention.
8. The sacrifices take place on the same mountain (called Mt. Moriah in the Old Testament, called Mt. Calvary in the New Testament — also known as Mt. Zion, by the way)
9. The companions that were with them stayed behind (most likely on the hill across the valley, called the Mt. of Olives) when the son went with the father for the sacrifice.
10. The son carried the wood/cross to the place of sacrifice.
11. The son asked questions of the father.
12. The father knew what he was called to do.
13. The son was submissive to the will of the father.
14. The father was willing to sacrifice his son, if necessary.
15. The father believed in resurrection.
16. The father loved the son.
17. A resurrection was prophesied (Abraham said, "we'll come back to you." Jesus said, "I will rise on the third day.")
18. The son was laid upon the wood/cross.
19. The son was bound to the wood/cross.
20. Abraham had a knife to pierce his son, Jesus's skin was pierced by whips laced with bones, glass and rocks.
21. The Lord Himself provided the sacrifice (the ram, Jesus). [Note, the word order in the Hebrew text of Genesis 22:8 could read, "The Lord will provide Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." A foreshadowing of Jesus]
22. Blood was shed.

23. The sacrifice was a substitute (ram a substitute for Isaac, Jesus a substitute for us).
24. The sacrifice was a demonstration of love for God.
25. Men of great faith in God who were committed obediently to the will of God.
26. The ram was caught in the thorns, and Jesus had a crown of thorns on his head.
27. Abundant blessings flow because of the sacrifice (abundant life).
28. Abraham was tested, Jesus was tested.
29. The son ultimately survived the sacrifice.
30. The son was resurrected on the third day.



Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Endnotes

I've written many blog posts surrounding Holy Week. A comprehensive collection up to 2020 is here. [Thoughts on Holy Week and Easter.](#)

¹ [Live Science: Keeping Time: The origin of B. C. and A. D.](#) accessed April 11, 2022

² *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory* p. 326 note 15

³ *Ibid* p. 95

⁴ *Ibid*, p 292, note 10 and other sources

⁵ [Did Jesus Know When He was going to Die?](#) Zondervan academic, accessed April 11, 2022

⁶ *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*, p. 40

⁷ [According to the Scriptures.org](#) Accessed April 11, 2022

⁸ *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*, p 146 for both, n 6 for Josephus

⁹ I can't help but think of the poignant moment in [Ezekiel 8-11 when God left the Temple.](#) Accessed April 11, 2022

¹⁰ *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*, p 69n 13

¹¹ *Ibid* p 68

¹² [Cursing a Fig Tree sermon of Country Club Rd. Church of Christ.](#) Accessed April 11, 2022

¹³ Among other tasks, explaining what the withered fig tree meant.

¹⁴ Ibid; note page 100, speaking about Saint John Chrysostom on the relationship between prophecy and fulfillment. The prophet or his prophecy is never the cause of the event. The event did not occur because the prophet foretold it. The prophecy was made because the prophet saw what would happen in the future. Judas was not forced to betray Christ because a prophecy had been made. Judas was not a victim of the prophecy or a pawn in the plan of salvation. He was never deprived of his free will.

¹⁵ [Centered on Christ by Jameson Steward](#), accessed April 11, 2022

¹⁶ *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*, p 129

¹⁷ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe you have sent me.” ESV

¹⁸ Constantinou pointed out that in those years, the Mount of Olives was a hillside outside of Jerusalem where olive trees grew. She believed Jesus and his disciples took shelter in a cave that houses a working olive press, since John 18 said Jesus “came forward,” from a cave to meet the soldiers. *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*, p 106

¹⁹ *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*, p 111

²⁰ [Life, Hope and Truth: 10 Reasons the Trial of Jesus was Illegal](#). Accessed April 11, 2022

²¹ *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory* p 152. [Jesus used the same statement five different times in three Gospels.](#)

²² Ibid p. 183

²³ Whose name means “Son of the Father.”

²⁴ Constantinou cites Josephus Ant. 3.74

²⁵ [You can look at the engine here](#). Accessed April 11, 2022

²⁶ [First century Roman historians mentioned the darkness](#). Accessed April 11, 2022

²⁷ [Greek pagan historian Phlegon](#) recounted the earthquake occurring the same time as the darkness. The earthquake reached the Asia Minor town of Bithnia and toppled buildings in Nicaea. [NBC News gave it a date: Friday, April 3, AD 33](#). Accessed April 11, 2022

²⁸ This is from the [pseudepigrapha](#): <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/17.htm>. Accessed April 11, 2022.

Pseudepigrapha are linked to the Apocrypha and are NOT God’s word—and thus not in the Bible. However, they can include information that is pertinent to the social life and traditions of the times.

²⁹ [Derek Spain blog, 30 Similarities](#) Accessed April 11, 2022. *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory*, p 289, says the Passover lamb was roasted in an upright position in a special oven, basically on a spit that looked like a cross. When eating the Passover lamb, bones were not to be broken.

Bibliography

The Crucifixion of the King of Glory: The Amazing History and Sublime Mystery of the Passion by Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, PhD; Ancient Faith Publishing, Chesterton, IN 2022