

THE LENGTH OF MESSIAH'S MINISTRY

I have before cited Sir Isaac Newton's remark about the impossibility of the one and two year ministry lengths. This leaves the three year ministry, bounded by four Passovers, and the four year ministry, bounded by five Passovers to be considered. Newton and others of his time reasoned that five Passovers were required. This was revised to four Passovers, and a three year ministry when more accurate astronomical calculations, and pre-rabbinic intercalation, showed that A.D. 34 could not produce a Friday date. This does not mean however, that the arguments supporting five passovers suddenly became invalid. It simply means that no one wanted to consider them anymore due to the fact that the required Friday crucifixion could not be worked out with five passovers.

The first Passover is pretty obvious. It is mentioned in John 2:13 and corresponds to A.D. 30. So also the third in John 6:4, and the fifth during which Messiah died. It remains to be shown then where the second and fourth passovers fall. The fourth passover is the one that we really need to prove, but first the proof of the second one as given by three year ministry advocates:

There needs to be an additional year of his ministry between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4. The Passover of 6:4 took place around the time Jesus fed the five thousand, the only miracle mentioned in all four Gospels. Previous to this feeding miracle the Synoptic Gospels mention the disciples plucking grain in Galilee (Mat. 12:1; Mk 2:23; Lk 6:1), and this must have taken place after the Passover of John 2:13. The reason for this is that the Passover of John 2:13 occurred shortly after Jesus' baptism and the locale of his ministry was in Judea, whereas the plucking of the grain occurred a considerable time after Jesus' baptism and the locale of his ministry was in Galilee. Therefore, the plucking of the grain would fit well around the Passover between the Passovers recorded in John 2:13 and 6:4.

John provides two other indications of time that would indicate an additional year between these two Passovers. First, after the Passover of John 2:13 Jesus ministered in Judea and then went to Samaria. There he mentioned that there were four months until harvest (Jn