



MINUTES WITH MESSIAH

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COMMITTED

I know that it sounds cra-zy, A lit-tle fool-ish, too; But I can give a reas-on For ev-'ry-thing I do.

You should be com-mit-ted, I hear some peop-le say, For fol-low-ing this Je-sus, and walk-ing in his way.

I will be com-mit-ted, but not the way they say; Com-mit-ted to my sav-ior, to-day and ev-ry day.

The song on this page was written for Spiritual Explosion XI, a youth rally to be sponsored by Riverside church of Christ in Albuquerque on April 15-17, 2011. The theme is: Committed.

The song on the back page was written after somebody said, "You rock" in response to something I did for them. For those of my generation and older, that phrase is a good thing, along the lines of "you're cool" or "gnarly, dude." After what Jesus did for us, it only makes sense for us to tell him, "Jesus, you rock." (And the lyric is a lot easier to write music for than "Gnarly Jesus.") I also call it "the video game song."

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WHAT DAY? WHAT YEAR?

The crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah is the central event of human history. It is celebrated every year (or, for some of us, every week). It seems that many people think they know all there is to know about the crucifixion and resurrection. Even those who do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah or that he rose from the dead think they know the story, and try to use it against Christians. As well as we know the story, and as well documented as it is in the gospels, there are still some incidentals about the incident that we do not know. Perhaps the biggest of these is when it happened. It seems that nobody knows for sure when this pivotal event occurred.

We don't even know what year it happened, by the Gregorian calendar. That is because the person who did the research on which the calendar was based may have gotten things wrong by at least four years. Year one should, according to the intent of the calendar, have been the year of the birth of Jesus. But Herod the Great, by most calculations, died in what would be 4 BC by that calendar. So it may be at least four years off. Since Matthew says that Herod (presumably Herod the Great) ordered the massacre of the children in Bethlehem based on the calculations of the Magi, and since he ordered children up to two years of age killed, that means Jesus may have been born in 6 BC at the latest, and possibly a year or two earlier. On the other hand, Luke specifically says that Jesus was born during the census ordered when

Can we narrow that down any? Perhaps. We can possibly narrow it based on the day of the crucifixion. The problem is, we don't even know that. Most people think it was on a Friday, hence the designation of Good Friday. Since he was crucified on a Passover (or possibly the day before Passover, the "preparation day"), we should then look for which of those years has a Passover beginning on Friday. That leads to another problem. The first day of Passover *never* falls on a Friday. Passover only falls on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, or Sunday, as shown in this chart of the days of the first day of Passover for the years 26-40 AD.

Year	Day	Year	Day
25	Tuesday	26	Saturday
27	Thursday	28	Tuesday
29	Sunday	30	Thursday
31	Tuesday	32	Tuesday
33	Saturday	34	Tuesday
35	Tuesday	36	Saturday
37	Thursday	38	Tuesday
39	Saturday	40	Saturday
41	Tuesday	42	Sunday

Source: www.hebcal.com

If Jesus was crucified on the first day of Passover it must have been a Thursday.

Quirinius was governor of Syria (which census led to the formation of the Zealot party in Judea). Quirinius was not governor of Syria until 6 AD (Gregorian), under Herod Archelaus. So the researcher may have been off by six years the other way. Jesus could have been born in 6 BC or 6 AD. But what does that have to do with the date of the crucifixion? Jesus began his public ministry when he was "about thirty years of age." (Lk 3:23) The gospels tell of three, or possibly four, Passovers between then and his crucifixion. So he was anywhere from 32 to 34 years old when he died. That puts the year of his death anywhere from 26 to 30 AD or 38 to 40 AD (all dates Gregorian). That is a pretty wide range of years.

If Jesus was crucified on a Friday, then it must have been the day before Passover (as seems to be the case in the book of John). If Jesus was crucified on the first day of Passover it could not have been a Saturday, Sunday, or Tuesday (because that would put him in the tomb less than or more than three days), so it must have been on a Thursday. The advantage of his crucifixion coming on a Thursday is that it would silence those critics that say Friday to Sunday is less than three days and nights. But if it was on a Thursday, how does one reconcile Mark's statement that it was the day before Sabbath (Mk 15:42)? One of three possibilities must be true. One option is that the sabbath to which he was referring was the Passover, regardless of what day of the week on which it fell, since most of the Levitical holidays are called sabbaths. That would put the crucifixion on Wednesday or Friday. Another option is that the sabbath to which he referred was the second day of Passover, since even to this day the Passover Seder may occur on the first or second day under certain conditions. The third option is that Jesus was crucified on Friday, the day before a sabbath Passover, and all the other accounts actually have him celebrating the Seder a day early. (Or maybe they have him celebrating on the second day of Passover—the

first being a Thursday—and thus dying on a Friday during Passover.) Sound confusing? Indeed it is.

If Jesus was crucified on the first day of Passover (or a Friday second day of Passover), it must have been a year when Passover fell on Thursday, which would mean he died in 27 or 30 AD. If he died on a Friday “preparation day” before Passover, then he may have died in 26 (at age 32), 39, or 40 AD (at age 33 or 34). But since Herod Antipas, who died in 37 AD was involved in his trial, he must have died in 26 AD. That gives us three possible years of his death: 26 (on a Friday), 27 (on a Thursday), or 30 (on a Thursday). The year 26 is the least likely, based on other historical considerations. Thus, Jesus was probably crucified on a Thursday.

If this is a valid analysis, that presents another problem. Luke says Jesus was born in the census ordered while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and that he began his public ministry at about age 30. Since Quirinius did not become governor of Syria and order a census as such until 6 AD, these dates become impossible to reconcile. Some choose to believe that Luke was wrong about Quirinius, and the census involved was actually the one ordered by Augustus Caesar in 2 BC. Historians are uncertain who, if anyone, was governor of Syria at that time, although it may have been Publius Quinctillius Varus. While he was generally known as Varus, it opens the possibility that Luke called him Quinctillius and a scribe later altered that to the better-known Quirinius. That, however, is highly unlikely. Another possibility is that Quirinius was actually governor of Syria a first time in this period. Although he led a military campaign about this time, his popularity with Augustus might have made this possible. Further, the census in 6 AD was ordered by Quirinius and not by Augustus (as Luke states). That census, then, is probably not the census mentioned by Luke. Again that brings us back to the probability that Jesus was born 4 to 2 BC. This resolves the discrepancy.

So what does all this mean? Why this overly complex analysis? One purpose is to show that we make assumptions based on traditions which may not be true. In spite of “Good Friday” it is very probable that Jesus was crucified on a Thursday, and there is nothing in scripture, including the passage in Mark, that would necessarily prevent that.

Another advantage of this analysis is that it may help to silence some critics of the gospels. When Jesus predicted his death he said, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days *and three nights* in the heart of the earth.” (Matt 12:40, emphasis mine). When people ask how Friday through Sunday is three days, the common answer is that the Jews count part of a day as a whole day. Thus Friday evening counts as one day, Saturday a second day, and Sunday morning a third day. Most choose to ignore the “and nights” in the Matthew passage, since this only allows for two nights. Some have argued that the

evening of Friday, before full night, might count as the third night, but that is tenuous at best. If Jesus was crucified on Thursday and buried sometime that night, after sundown, this meets the requirement of three days and three nights, by either Roman or Jewish accounting. So the next time someone asks how Friday to Sunday is three days, we can ask them to show that Jesus was crucified on Friday. Assert that it was a Thursday, which would silence their objections. If they then say that the church says it was a Friday, we can share that the traditions of the church do not negate the truth of the scriptures.

What really initiated this article was a struggle. If the scriptures are the word of God, then they must be accurate. If they are accurate they must agree with what

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we know to be true from history. If there is an apparent discrepancy, then either the scriptures are not true, history is not true, or something is missing. When dealing with things two millennia old, chances are something is missing. Nevertheless, the apparent differences between the death of Herod the Great and the governorship of Quirinius begged a resolution. Otherwise, the scriptures are inaccurate. If Luke was inaccurate about this one thing then the rest of his scholarship is questionable. In essence, this rather difficult article is a response to a very real question of the inspiration of the Bible. It comes from a need to resolve doubts in the author's mind, doubts that threatened to shake the very foundations of his faith. In resolving his doubts it is hoped that this article might do the same for someone else.

It is easy to accept everything we have always heard as fact, without investigation. Many people have a simple faith that says, “My mind is made up; don't confuse me with facts.” Not everyone can have such a faith. Some require verifying the truth, so that when challenges come, and they will come, they are “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” (1 Pet 3:15) Blind faith has its place, perhaps, but it is indefensible. Some people require a reasonable faith. Sometimes that results in complex study.

Passover begins April 19 (a Tuesday), 2011

JESUS, YOU ROCK!

$\text{♩} = 130$

Je-sus, you rock be-cause you are my rock. You walk with me ev-'ry day. You fight the pow-ers of sin 'round the clock, Pro-tect-ing me all the

This system of music features a treble and bass clef with a common time signature. The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 130.

way. This is no game, not a vid - e - o game, The ar - my of sin is real. You are the giv - er of wealth and of fame,

This system continues the melody and bass line. The bass line has a '8' below it, possibly indicating a specific rhythm or a section marker.

And you have the pow'r to heat. You are my rock and my sal - va - tion. You are my strength and my shield. You help me con-quer all temp-ta-

This system continues the melody and bass line.

- tion You are the sword that I wield. Temp-ta-tions come at me from far and wide, Try-ing to get me to sin. Je-sus, the vic-tor, is

This system continues the melody and bass line.

now on my side, And with him I know I'll win. With Je - sus how can I but win.

This system concludes the piece with a final cadence. The bass line has an '8' below it.

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