

The Commencement of the Ministry of Jesus

Luke tells us several things in 3:1-3 about the beginning of Jesus' ministry:

Pilate was the procurator (26-37 AD)

Herod Antipas was ruler in Galilee (deposed in 39 AD)

Philip was tetrarch up north (he died in 34 AD)

Caiaphas was the High Priest (18-37 AD)

We know nothing about Lysanias.

But all these things fix the time of Jesus' ministry between 26 and 36 AD. Now Luke tells us that John began his ministry in the 15th year of the emperor Tiberius. But how do we calculate what that was?

If Luke was using Jewish reckoning, this would correspond to somewhere between 26 and 28. But it is unlikely Luke did that. He is a Gentile writing to Theophilus. He would have used the Julian calendar's reckoning. The 15th Roman regnal year of Tiberius would have been between August, 28 AD, and August 29 AD.

We can say then that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fall of 29 AD, and Jesus came to be baptized by John a few months after that.

The temple edifice was built 46 years before. The temple complex was started in 23/22 BC, or perhaps even closer to 20. But Herod first had to build the massive retaining wall around the crown of the hill to make the platform (which was 34 acres). The reference here is most likely to the temple proper, the edifice, as the terms indicate. The sanctuary was done in 18/17 BC. So, 46 years = 17 years + 29 years takes the date to 29 AD. So, if Jesus went up to Passover in 30 AD and cleansed the temple the first time (the second time was during the passion week), they could say the temple took 46 years to build.

Again, this indicates that Jesus was baptized in the fall of 29 AD. It was in the spring of 30 AD, at the Passover, when he spoke of the raising up the temple.

The Duration of the Ministry of Jesus

From a study of the ministry of Christ, especially the different festivals that he appears to have attended in the Gospels, we would conclude that he had a ministry of three and a half years. The Gospels mention three Passovers in his public ministry, 30 A.D. (John 2:13), then another in John 6:4, and another in John 11:55, which would turn out to be his Last Supper. But most chronologists believe there was another Passover that the Gospels do not mention, one that would have come second, or in 31 AD. The John 6:4 Passover was in 32 AD, and John 11:55 was 33 AD. This allows all the events to fit into the chronology, especially with the references to the times of the year.

He could not possibly have died in 30 AD, because that would have meant a public ministry of less than a year. There are too many events to fit in to that time period. In conclusion, the ministry of Jesus began in the fall of 29 AD. It lasted three and a half years until his crucifixion in 33 AD.