

THE TIMING AND PLACEMENT OF EVENTS

RECORDED IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

I. For the first year, the Gospel records events during an unidentified week during which the events begin near the Jordan River and end in Galilee. The narrative resumes at the Passover during early to mid spring and then skips to what appears to be Pentecost, which would be in the late spring. The events proceed from the Jordan to Galilee to Jerusalem, and then back again over the same sites.

A. During the first half of the opening week, John the Baptist introduces Jesus and shows the first disciples to Him. As the week proceeds, Jesus calls and receives these and other disciples. The first week ends with the miracle at the wedding in Cana. These events are described from chapter 1, verse 19 to chapter 2, verse 12. The structure of these events along the lines of a single week is almost certainly symbolic, for the distances would be too much for them all to occur in one week.

B. At a Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus cleanses the Temple and speaks in private to Nicodemus about being reborn of water and the Spirit. Then Jesus goes to the Jordan, where His disciples begin baptizing. Here and after a dispute about washings, John gives witness to Jesus. These events are described in chapter 2, verse 13 through chapter 4, verse 3. The Synoptic Gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark and Luke) all place the cleansing of the Temple during Holy Week, right after the entrance into Jerusalem. John may have placed it here to set up right from the start the themes of Jesus purifying and fulfilling the Jewish feasts and worship and the conflict over Him in Jerusalem.

C. Jesus then travels through Samaria to get to Galilee. On the way, He meets the Samaritan woman at the well and the proclamation of the Gospel in non-Jewish lands begins. In Cana of Galilee, He cures the centurion's son, who may have been an adopted servant. These events are described in the rest of chapter 4.

D. Jesus then returned to Jerusalem for an unidentified feast, which was probably Pentecost, a celebration that takes place in late spring. Here He cures the paralyzed man on the Sabbath and gives a discourse on His authority and the works of God. These events are described in chapter 5.

II. The events described for the next year goes from Galilee to Jerusalem and then resume again in Jerusalem, followed by a final return to the Jordan.

A. On the next Passover, Jesus is back up in Galilee, where He feeds the multitude with the loaves and fishes, walks on water and gives the bread of life discourse. These events are described in chapter 6.

B. Jesus then goes back to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles (or Booths), which would have been in the early autumn. He comes to Jerusalem in secret during the feast because the plot against Him is building. Here He speaks of Himself as showing the glory of God as conflicting opinions of Him are rising. These events are recorded in chapter 7.

C. Right after the feast and while still in Jerusalem, He forgives the adulterous woman, and speaks of Himself as the light of the world and of the freedom and adopted sonship that He offers. He then cures the man born blind and describes Himself as the Good Shepherd. These events are described in chapters 8 and 9 and chapter 10, verses 1 to 21.

D. At the feast of the Dedication of the Temple (or Hanukkah), which would occur in December, He describes Himself again as the Good Shepherd and how He does the work of the Father. He then goes back to the Jordan River, where He remains apparently until His final approach to Jerusalem. Here, more and more people recognize in Him the one of whom John the Baptist spoke. This event is described in chapter 10, verses 22 to 42.

III. The events described for the final year goes from Bethany (between the Jordan and Jerusalem) to Jerusalem and then back to Galilee. The final week before the Crucifixion leads up to the Passover in Jerusalem, where Jesus dies on the Cross. Then the risen Jesus appears again in Jerusalem during eight days after the Resurrection. Finally, the scene moves back up to Galilee for another Resurrection appearance and commissioning.

A. They begin sometime before the Passover in Bethany where Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and the priests and Pharisees begin their final plot for the death of Jesus. These events are described in chapter 11.

B. Six days before the Passover (i.e., Saturday night or Sunday morning or afternoon) Mary, a sister of Lazarus, anoints Jesus in preparation for His death and burial. This event is described in chapter 12, verses 1 to 11. The Synoptic Gospels place this event right before the Last Supper. However, they may place it there, not because it occurred at this time, but rather because it is so connected to the passion and death of Christ, which the Last Supper will also anticipate.

C. On the following day (i.e., Monday), Jesus enters Jerusalem. Sometime during that week, He sends messages to the Greeks in Jerusalem about His upcoming death. He speaks again about the light and salvation He brings and about the darkness and judgement that those who reject Him are choosing. These events are described in chapter 12, verses 12 to 50.

D. Then, on the day before the Passover (i.e., Thursday night to Friday afternoon), He celebrates the Last Supper, which is described in chapters 13 to 17. He is arrested in the dead of night, summarily tried during the night and early morning, and sent to be crucified at about noon. He dies at about three o'clock and is buried just before sunset, as the Passover Day is about to begin. These events are described in chapters 18 and 19. The Synoptic Gospels record this day as the Passover Day itself, possibly because Jesus moved it a day earlier, in accordance with a rabbinic custom of moving the Passover if it would otherwise fall on a Sabbath day.

E. On the "first day of the week," Sunday, the risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene outside of the tomb and then to all of the Apostles except Thomas in Jerusalem. On the next Sunday, He appears to all the Apostles again in Jerusalem. Sometime later He again appears to seven of His disciples in Galilee. These events are described in chapters 20 and 21.