

One Year Ministry of Jesus



When I first read the Gospels as a twelve year old, it seemed to me that the ministry of Jesus lasted one year. Later I learned that the ministry of Jesus lasted three years or more. I could not believe it. I studied the New Testament and could not find three years worth of ministry there. While attending Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, I began reading books by first century Christians, and they were referring to the one-year ministry of Jesus. What is going on? I wondered.

In *Stromata* – Book One (21:146), Clement of Alexandria (150-215AD) studies dates of events in relation to world events and Jewish writings. At the end of the chapter, we read:

*And there are those who have determined not only the year of our Lord's birth, but also the day; and they say that it took place in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus, and in the twenty-fifth day of Pachon. And the followers of Basilides hold the day of his baptism [under John the Baptist] as a festival, spending the night before in readings. And they say that it was **the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar**, the fifteenth day of the month Tubi; and some that it was the eleventh of the same month. And treating of His passion, with very great accuracy, some say that it took place in **the sixteenth year of Tiberius**, on the twenty-fifth of Phamenoth; and others the twenty-fifth of Pharmuthi and others say that on the nineteenth of Pharmuthi the Saviour suffered. Further, others say that He was born on the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of Pharmuthi.* <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02101.htm>

While Clement notes debate about the exact day of certain events, the important takeaway here is that Jesus' ministry started in the fifteenth year of Tiberius at his baptism by John the Baptist and ended in the sixteenth year. One year of ministry.

In *Against Heresies*: Book 1, chapter 3, Iranaeus of Lyons (died 202AD) writes:

*They further maintain that the passion which took place in the case of the twelfth Æon is pointed at by the apostasy of Judas, who was the twelfth apostle, and also by the fact that Christ suffered in the twelfth month. For their opinion is, that **He continued to preach for one year only after His baptism.*** <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anfo1.ix.ii.iv.html>

Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340AD) wrote in *History of the Church* (published 316AD), "For it is evident that the three evangelists [Matthew, Mark, Luke] recorded only the deeds done by the Saviour for one year after the imprisonment of John the Baptist." Eusebius later argued for a 3 ½ year ministry of Jesus without sufficient or specific arguments.

Orogen Admantius (184-254AD) wrote in *De Principiis*, "[Christ] taught about a year and a few months."

In *Stromata* – Book One (21:145), Clement of Alexandria wrote about the one-year ministry of Jesus in relation to the prophecy of Isaiah.

*And our Lord was born in the twenty-eighth year, when first the census was ordered to be taken in the reign of Augustus. And to prove that this is true, it is written in the Gospel by Luke as follows: And in the fifteenth year, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zacharias. And again in the same book: And Jesus was coming to His baptism, being about thirty years old, and so on. **And that it was necessary for Him to preach only a year, this also is written: He has sent Me to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord** [Isaiah 61:2]. This both the prophet spoke, and the Gospel.*

In his Gospel, Luke talks about how Jesus stood up in the synagogue and said he was there to fulfill what was spoken by the Prophet Isaiah (Luke 4:16-22). He quotes Isaiah 61:2: "... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." This is another reason people expect a one-year ministry of Jesus: the Year of the Lord's Favor, later interpreted as a Year of Jubilee.

Other church fathers talked about the one-year ministry of Jesus, so how did the three-year ministry idea come about. The answer is simple: Origen tampered with the Gospel of John.

If something in the bible is not in the oldest versions of the bible, then it must have been added later. There are several extremely old versions of the Gospel of John. Codex 472 in the Library of Lambeth Palace from approximately the 1400's, does not have John 6:4. My friend, Father Dean Scovell, went to a library in Wales to see another copy, and personally confirmed that John 6:4 was missing. Therefore, we should strike it from our present-day bibles—I did.

John 6:4, "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near" (NAS)

By adding this annual Passover event, Origen added a whole year to the ministry of Jesus. Without it, the Gospel of John starts with a Passover and ends with a Passover—one year. Then by extension, people try to squeeze another year by pointing out that there are now three Passovers and John 5:1 might also be a Passover—another stretch.

Why would Origen do that? Let's look at the Book of Daniel.

Although Origen originally refers to a one-year ministry of Jesus, Origen had been studying the Book of Daniel, particularly Daniel 9:20-27. Verse 26 begins, "Seventy sevens ["sevens" is not *shavuot* or weeks, but *shavuim* or sevens of anything] are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."

What if *shavuim* is meant to be days? Then 70 times 7 equals 490 days, which comes out to one year, four months. Or the length of Jesus' ministry.

But if *shavuim* is years, then we are talking about 490 years. Could both be true at the same time? If years, then Gabriel tells Daniel that 490 years total are required for these prophetic events to happen. But all 70 sevens do not happen one after another. 69 sevens take place from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the first coming of Jesus. The last seven has not happened yet.

The Sevens

Daniel 9:25 states that there are 70 sevens divided into three units—7 sevens, 62 sevens, and 1 seven—or seven divisions of the 490 years. During the first seven or 49 years, Jerusalem is rebuilt after the 70-year exile in Babylon. At the end of the 62 sevens or 434 years - 483 years total (7 sevens and 62 sevens), the Anointed One comes and “will be cut off and will have nothing.” [Messiah means Anointed One.]

The Hebrew word for “cut off” means to be killed as a criminal, as by execution.

“*And will have nothing,*” is better translated as, “*but not for himself,*” meaning that his death was that of a criminal, but he died for someone else. This then agrees with Isaiah 53:5, “*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities.*”

“*To make an end to sin, to atone for wickedness*” (Dan 9:24). Sin can only be removed by atonement with blood (Lev 17:11). We see that action with the death of the Messiah, the shedding of his blood as the Lamb led to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7, *He was led like a lamb to the slaughter*) to clear away transgressions, sins and iniquity.

Then what happened? A great period of time passed. Daniel 9:26-27 tells us that the *city and sanctuary will be destroyed, and that the end will come like a flood, war will continue until the end and desolations have been decreed.* Verse 27, “*He (the Gentile antichrist) will confirm a covenant (sign a treaty with Israel) with many for one seven (the last seven years of the prophecy), but in the middle of that seven (at 3 ½ years), he will put an end to sacrifice and offering by placing abominations on a wing of the temple...*” This has not happened and is the seven years of Great Tribulation we often hear about.

Daniel started this passage saying 70 sevens were required to bring about the end of sin, atonement of wickedness, bring in everlasting righteousness, and to anoint the most holy. There is a sense from this passage that these things happened with the coming of the Anointed one, but that they are also part of the conclusion at the very end, after the last seven years of the Great Tribulation. In one sense, the Messiah accomplished these things before being “cut off”, but Gabriel tells us that the whole prophecy reaches fulfillment with the benefits of verse 24 at the Second Coming of Christ—at the end of the 70 sevens. The Messiah comes and is cut off, but he comes again to complete the 70 sevens prophecy.

Origen decided that Jesus came in the last seven years of Daniel’s prophecy, because he reasoned that the death of Jesus was the only way to end the need for sacrifice and offering. Therefore, the ministry of Jesus must have been three and a half years. From the time Origen came to this conclusion (Commentary on Matthew, 246AD), he wrote about it and others promoted and expanded the same idea—to their everlasting error.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist and anointed by God to begin his ministry as the Anointed One, or Messiah. He goes up to Cana in Galilee for a wedding and changes water into wine. Some time passes as Jesus begins his ministry, but we see in John 2:23, that he and the disciples head up to Jerusalem for Passover. From the Book of Daniel, I would say about four months had

passed. One year later, Jesus would become the Passover Sacrificial Lamb, slain for the sins of the whole world.

How could Origen change the Gospel of John?

First, the Apostle John wrote the Gospel late in life (80AD or later). He reportedly lived to be over 100 years old. Origen was born in 184. It is believed that when he decided to add the Passover to John 6:4, he could not change the gospels of Matthew, Mark or Luke, because they had been around so long, and many copies were then in circulation. But the Gospel of John was still relatively new. All new copies of the the Gospels were transcribed by hand. However Origen did it, he had many scribes add the word Passover into John 6:4. Only a few came down through the ages without that heretical change.

If it was not Origen who had the Gospel of John changed, then the burden should fall to Eusebius who adamantly promoted the 3 ½ year ministry idea.

Isn't it interesting that Origen was never canonized as a saint, because of his heretical views, which included contradicting the Apostles John and Paul? Origen taught that souls pre-existed, which is also taught by the Mormons; that all creatures would be reconciled to God, even the devil; that God the Son was subordinate to the Father, meaning he was not fully God, which of course would negate the meaning of his death on the cross. He further taught that Jesus was born fully human and only became divine at baptism, which also negates the idea that Jesus was always fully and completely God (*"The Word was God..."* John 1:1).

How long was the ministry of Jesus? One year, or more specifically, about 16 months.

SIDENOTE

Some have argued that the ministry of Jesus must have been longer than a year, because there were so many events: Plucking ears of corn, feeding the 5,000, and more. But what kind of argument is that? I see the ministry of Jesus as a sprint for the finish line. One year of teaching, confrontation, and ministry to the hurting. Jesus has a "in your face" ministry, speaking with authority, condemning the Jewish authorities, and challenging their way of life. The authorities are clearly frustrated with Jesus, and the idea that they would tolerate him for longer than a year just doesn't make sense.

REFERENCES

<https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/issues/issues-v05-n01/the-messianic-time-table-according-to-daniel-the-prophet/>

