

## How Long Was Jesus' Earthly Ministry?

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by Wayne Goff

*"Now **the Passover** of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (John 2:13).*

We get our information from John about the length of Jesus' earthly ministry. He groups his account around six Jewish festivals: (1) 1st Passover, **Jn. 2:13**; (2) Another "*feast*," **5:1**, probably Passover; (3) Another "*Passover*," **6:4**; (4) the "*Feast of tabernacles*," **7:2**; (5) "*the Feast of Dedication*," **10:22**; (6) and "*the Passover of the Jews*," **11:55**. This gives the entire length of Jesus' ministry as three years and a fraction.

**Passover** — Began on the 14th day of the 1st month of the Jewish calendar, **Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:5**

**Tabernacles** — Began on the 15th day of the 7th month of the Jewish calendar and ran for seven days, **Leviticus 23:34**.

**Dedication** — **Hanukkah**, also **Feast of the Maccabees**, celebrated annually by the Jews for eight days to commemorate the cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem after it had been desecrated by the Syrians under Antiochus Epiphanes. It is generally observed in late December, but sometimes as early as late November, due to the lunisolar calendar. In **John 7:2**, John tells us that it was winter. This feast was not mentioned in the Old Testament, though Daniel prophesies the devastation caused by the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus.

Much of the chronology of Jesus' life, including His birth, is divinely shrouded in a bit of mystery, probably because God did not want man to remember the various dates of magnificent events in the life of Jesus, but rather His work and its purpose. Jesus came to "*seek and save that which was lost*" (**Lk. 19:10**), and "*to give His life a ransom for many*" (**Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45**). Far more important than any date is the importance of preaching the gospel to the lost so that they might believe and obey Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Just the same, it is very interesting to realize that all of the work of Jesus on earth was done in less than 3 1/2 years. John's gospel account is how we know this to be so.

I recently read in **Readers' Digest** the humorous story of a 4th grade boy who broke his hand and needed help from his 6th grade brother to carry cupcakes to class for a celebration. So his mother asked if he would help. He said, "I will, but I'd rather not." The father overheard his answer, and seeing a teaching moment, said, "Now son, what would Jesus do?" The sixth grader quickly replied: "Jesus would heal his hand so that he could carry his own cupcakes!" Not only did I think that to be funny, it also contains a good lesson: Jesus won't do for us what we can do for ourselves! And, don't pray for anything you're not willing to work for yourself. ~ **Wayne Goff**

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