

## The Date of Christ's Death

Even though Pilate ruled Judea from AD 26-36, scholars have proposed dates for the death of Christ ranging from AD 21 to AD 36.<sup>1</sup> Since this is the most significant death in history, it is worthy of our time to discern when the crucifixion of Christ took place. This study compares the two dates evangelicals hold most (AD 30 & AD 33) by summarizing the two books below.

### I. Contrasts Between the Main Dates Proposed

<i>Issues</i>	<i>AD 30</i>	<i>AD 33</i>
<i>Beginning of John's Ministry in Tiberius' 15<sup>th</sup> year (Luke 3:1-2)</i>	No satisfactory solution yields the required AD 25-26 date for John's ministry start in order to arrive at an AD 30 crucifixion of Christ.	Adding 15 years to Tiberius' coronation in AD 14 yields AD 28/29 for the start of John's ministry, so Christ's 3.5-year ministry that started later gives AD 33 as the date of Christ's death (Hoehner, 100).
<i>Passover (Nisan 14) on a Friday (John 19:28)</i>	Nisan 14 fell on a Friday in AD 30, which satisfies John's account (Synoptics followed a different calendar).	Astronomy shows that Nisan 14 fell on a Friday in AD 27, 30, 33 and 36. <sup>2</sup>
<i>46-year temple construction (John 2:20)</i>	The "temple" began to be constructed by Herod in 19 BC and continued to AD 27.	Jews referred to the sacred building ( <i>ναός</i> John 2:20)—not the whole temple area with their courts ( <i>ιερόν</i> John 5:14; 7:14, etc.). The building took 1.5 years to build, being completed in 18/17 BC. <sup>3</sup> Thus the building <i>had stood</i> for 46 years by AD 29/30. "Therefore, the Jews were asking Jesus how He would be able to raise in three days the temple edifice which had stood for forty-six years" (Hoehner, 42).
<i>About 30-years old at start of His ministry (Luke 3:21-23)</i>	A ministry start in AD 26 brings Christ's birth back to 4 BC at latest—probably 6 BC for Christ to be 32 years old.	A ministry start in AD 29 brings Christ's birth back to 4 BC exactly, so that Jesus was 32-33 years old when he began his ministry.
<i>Proponents</i>	Elwell & Yarbrough <sup>4</sup>	Hoehner <sup>5</sup>

### II. Conclusion

Issues 2, 3, & 4 above seem inconclusive for both the AD 30 and the AD 33 views. However, given the clear reference to the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius (issue #1), the AD 33 date appears to have the most merit. This would argue that Jesus was crucified on Friday, 3 April, AD 33.

<sup>1</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 95.

<sup>2</sup> See several sources cited by Hoehner, 100, n. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus *Ant.* 15.11.5

<sup>4</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the NT*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 119.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 1 above.