

Beauties of the Truth

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their consideration and appreciation of the boundless riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 10034 S.W. 52nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97219. Editorial Board: Bros. Jerry Leslie (Editor-in-Chief), Carl Hagensick, Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Stephen Suraci.

The Memorial Supper – Questions of Interest

QUESTION 1. Since Bible Students link the celebration of the Memorial to the Passover observance and use the Jewish calendar to determine the date for the 14th of Nisan, why does our Memorial occur consistently two days before the Passover? (Using the 1996 calendar to illustrate this point, Thursday, April 4 is listed as the Passover day, but our Memorial will be held on Tuesday evening, April 2.)

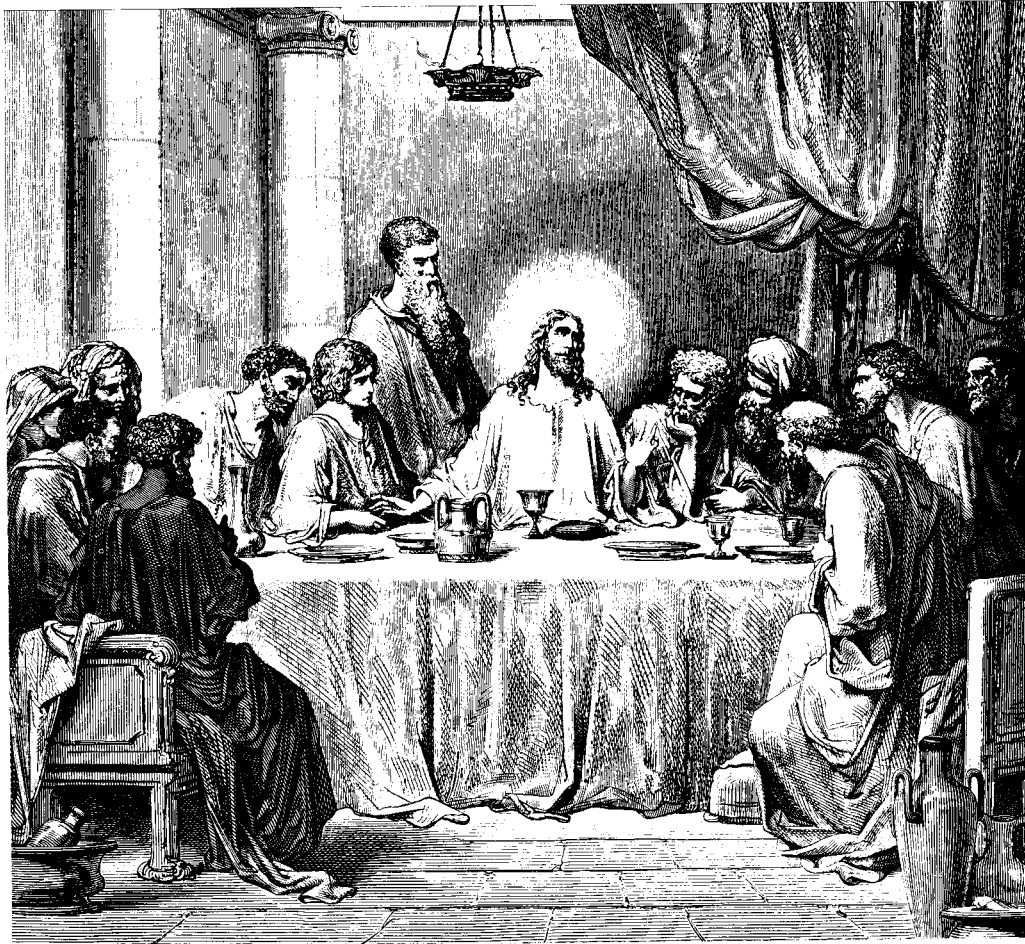
There is a very simple explanation for our practice, which becomes evident upon reflection. The term "Passover" is appropriately used to describe the events of either the 14th day of Nisan on which the lamb was originally slain or the 15th day of Nisan on which the feast was held. In modern times, the lamb is no longer slaughtered by the Jews, so that less emphasis is placed upon the 14th day and the current Jewish calendar does not give it any significance. It is the 15th day which is now exclusively emphasized, commemorating the feast and the exodus from the land of Egypt. This explains why the calendar marks only the 15th day of Nisan as the "Passover."

Hence, whatever day the calendar identifies as the "Passover," that day is the 15th of Nisan (the major portion of the day, but not its actual beginning). The previous day would be the 14th of Nisan, and our Memorial celebration would begin on the evening of the day preceding that. Returning to our example, if Thursday, April 4 is listed as the Jewish Passover, then that would be

Nisan 15. The previous day, Wednesday, April 3, would be the 14th of Nisan and our Memorial would commence on the evening prior to this, after 6 o'clock on Tuesday, April 2, the evening (beginning) of the 14th day according to Jewish reckoning. (The Jewish day, it is to be remembered, commences from 6:00 p.m. in the evening, instead of from midnight.)

Thus it is quite correct and consistent with the Jewish calendar for our Memorial celebration to fall two days prior to the Passover.

QUESTION 2. Did our Lord's death on the cross occur at the full of the moon, and if so, what is the spiritual significance of this?



The Last Supper

Many scholars are now agreed that Jesus expired on the cross about 3:00 p.m. on Friday, April 3, 33 AD (Julian calendar). According to astronomical calculations, the moon became full shortly after this occurrence, precisely at 5:23 p.m. Jerusalem mean time.¹ As pointed out by Pastor C.T. Russell, the moon being full and starting to wane shortly after our Lord's death carried great significance in picturing God's dealings with the nation of Israel.²

The moon appears to be a symbol of that nation and the Law Covenant God made with her. The 12 and sometimes 13 lunations could represent the various Jewish tribes. The fullness of the moon at the time of Jesus' crucifixion would thus represent the fullness of God's favor to Israel at that point in her history. Her Messiah had appeared; the "Royal Majesty of the Heavens" was in her midst.

But Israel was not ready to receive her Messiah at his first advent and as a nation rejected him outright. Then followed the waning of the moon, illustrating that the divine favor toward Israel would gradually decline for a season and mark a period of national judgment. The sentence had already been rendered just days earlier, "Behold! Your house is left unto you desolate!" (Matthew 23:37, 38) Many Bible students have identified this period of judgment with the prophecy of the "Jewish Double" the punishment aspect of which extended for 1,845 years from 33 AD to 1878 AD, the year of the first permanent Jewish settlement in Palestine.³ Since that time, God's hand has again been manifested upon Israel in a remarkable way and the waxing of His favor continues, preparatory to the leading role marked out for that nation during the Kingdom period.

QUESTION 3. Shouldn't the occurrence of the full moon dictate the proper date for the celebration of the Memorial Supper, especially in view of the significance of Jesus' death occurring at that time? (Most Bible Student celebrations of the Memorial seem to take place a day or two before the full of the moon.)

The full of the moon occurred shortly after our Lord's death (at 5:23 p.m. on Friday, which was almost into the beginning of Nisan 15 at 6:00 p.m.). Hence, in 33 AD the full of the moon occurred almost a full day after the Memorial celebration. Therefore, if our modern observance of the Memorial falls a day before the calendar indicates the moon to be full, that would be entirely consistent with what occurred in our Lord's day. However, because of a considerable variation in the moon's orbit, we should not expect this pattern to repeat each year. It turns out that the moon's waxing period varies from 13.9 days to 15.5 days, averaging 14.7 days to reach maximum fullness. The moon is regularly full on the 15th of Nisan but occasionally will be full on either the 14th or 16th day. Hence we should not normally expect to find the moon full on the night (beginning) of the 14th of Nisan at our Memorial time, but at least one night later. For example, in the year 1991 our Memorial was celebrated on Thursday evening, March 28, after 6:00 p.m., which was the beginning of Nisan 14. The moon did not become full until 11:17 p.m. on Friday, March 29, when the 15th of Nisan had already begun. Since it had only taken 13.96 days to become full that year, clearly even on a short orbit maximum fullness may occur on the 15th day (rather than the 14th); on average it will be on the 15th day and on a long orbit it may occur on the 16th of Nisan. The table below lists specific comparisons for the years 33 AD (Julian calendar, Jerusalem mean time) and 1991 AD (Gregorian calendar, Pacific standard time):

	33 AD ⁴	1991 AD ⁵
New Moon	Th, Mar 19, 1:02 pm Fr, Apr 3, 5:23 pm (late on 14 Nisan)	St, Mar 16, 12: 10 am Fr, Mar 29, 11:17 pm (early on 15 Nisan)
Interval	15.18 days	13.96 days

QUESTION 4. On the occasion of our Lord's death on the cross, was there also an eclipse of the moon as well as it being full? If so, what would this illustrate and does it have a bearing on establishing the date of our Lord's crucifixion?

Astronomical calculations show that not only did the moon begin to wane, but that there was also an eclipse of the moon on the evening of Jesus' crucifixion. In the city of Jerusalem it was a partial eclipse, from moonrise on Friday, April 3, 33 AD, at 6:18 p.m. to 6:37 p.m. (19 minutes altogether). About an hour earlier at 5:23 p.m. (Jerusalem time), the moon both began to wane and reached the peak of its eclipse (40% total), several thousand miles to the east of Jerusalem over New Guinea.⁶

An eclipse would be a much more dramatic, sudden event than merely the waning of the moon. We think it signaled the abrupt end of the Law arrangement which God had established with Israel. (Colossians 2:13, 14) Further, it seemed to dramatize that nation's being cast off from the position of chief favor and eligibility to the high calling. Henceforth, the call would go out predominantly to the Gentiles. (Acts 15:7-9, Romans 11:17)

This did not mean that Israel would be forever alienated from God, as already touched upon in Question 2, but merely that a turning point in His dealings with that nation had been reached. (Romans 11:1, 2; Psalms 89:30-35)

In addition, the fact that an eclipse of the moon did occur at Passover time in 33 AD further corroborates the occurrence of the crucifixion in that year. In the range of years from 26 to 36 AD, only in two years - 31 and 33 AD - did an eclipse of the moon occur during the early spring of the year. This was on April 25, 31 AD, and on April 3, 33 AD, respectively. But in the year 31 AD the eclipse occurred on a Wednesday, which means that to consider that year as a possible date for the crucifixion the eclipse would have occurred two days before that event.⁷ (All of the gospel accounts agree that Jesus died a few hours before the start of the Jewish Sabbath - night fall on a Friday.) Hence, 31 AD is ruled out as a possible year for the crucifixion, since the eclipse of the moon did not coincide with the day of Jesus' death. Using this data as a criterion, only 33 AD remains as a viable year for the crucifixion, with the eclipse of the moon coinciding precisely with Jesus' death on the cross.

QUESTION 5. Why does the date for our Memorial never fall on Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday?

If the Jewish calendar is used as the basis for computing our Memorial dates, it will be found that there are certain regulations which govern the days that the Passover Feast (Nisan 15) may not be held. This is necessary because of the fixed relationship between the first (or feast) day of Passover (Nisan 15) and the first day of the new year that follows (Tishri 1), amounting to exactly 163 days. This in turn affects the days on which Yom Kippur (Tishri 10) and Hoshana Rabba (Tishri 21) occur: it is necessary that the first holiday never fall on the day preceding or following a regular Saturday Sabbath (which would result in two consecutive days of complete rest and interfere with

meal preparations); and that the second holiday never fall on a Saturday (which would violate the Sabbath because of the physical activity connected with the Hoshana ritual).

To satisfy these special holiday requirements, the calendar is regulated so that the feast day of Passover (Nisan 15) never occurs on Wednesday, Friday, or Monday.⁸ This being so, it becomes evident that Nisan 13 cannot fall on Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday. Hence our Memorial service, which is held on the calendar day marked Nisan 13 (and which becomes Nisan 14 after 6:00 p.m.), never occurs on these days.

– Charles Redeker

¹ See H.H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons 1001 BC to AD 1651*, 1973 edition, p. 87, corrected to Jerusalem mean time.

² See C.T. Russell, *The New Creation* (Volume 6 of the Scripture Studies series), p. 481. (F481)

³ For a detailed explanation of this prophecy, see C.T. Russell, *The Time Is At Hand* (Volume 2 of the Scripture Studies series), pp. 209-232. (B209-B232)

⁴ H.H. Goldstine, *loc. cit.*, p. 87, corrected to Jerusalem mean time.

⁵ Griffith Observatory, Los Angeles, California, information, telephone (213) 664-1181.

⁶ J.K. Fotheringham, "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion" *Journal of Theological Studies*, XXXV (1934), pp. 146-162. (The occurrence of the moon's reaching its full and being eclipsed at the exact same instant in time - 5:23 p.m. - is a necessary coincidence, since the moon can only be eclipsed at the time it is full.)

⁷ Cj. Humphreys and WG. Waddington, "Dating the Crucifixion," *Nature*, Vol. 306, Dec. 1983, p. 745; and J.K. Fotheringham, *loc. cit.*

⁸ G. Zinberg, *Jewish Calendar Mystery Dispelled*, pp. 41-42.

The Right Hand

“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.- my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy,- at thy right hand there are Pleasures for evermore.” - Psalms 16.-8-11

Whether David is here speaking of himself or whether his words are prophetic of the Messiah, there is an apparent inconsistency in these verses. In verse eight the writer has placed God at his right hand but in verse eleven the writer is at the right hand of God.

In all other instances in the Psalms it is Jehovah who places the other person at his [God's] right hand.

Usually when we think of two monarchs sitting side by side we picture two thrones facing the audience. In such a posture one is at the right hand of the main monarch and the other has the main king at his left hand.

The Psalmist sees a different scene. Rather than seeing two monarchs side by side, he sees them facing each other so that they can both be at the other's right hand. The relationship between these two monarchs (whether they be David and Jehovah or Jesus and his Father) is not formal but familial. They are seated in a conversational mode as two who are discussing the affairs of state.

This is the relationship to which God invites us. He seeks family members, a bride for his son. His relationship is not as a ruler to subject, nor even as a former co-regent, but rather as a friend he sits to talk to us. “Come,” he says, “let us reason together.” (Isaiah 1: 18) As with Moses of old, he talks with us “face to face, as a man speaketh with a friend'.”(Exodus 33:11)

- Carl Hagensick

Beauties of the Truth 1995 Financial Statement

\$ 669.50	Balance January 1, 1995
5311.41	Donations
30.90	Interest
- 2667.87	Expenses
\$ 3343.94	Balance December 31, 1995

“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast.”

Dating the Crucifixion

This article is abbreviated from one appearing in Nature Magazine, December 1983, by Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington. (Square brackets indicate BT editorial comments.) In this study astronomical calculations have been used to reconstruct the Jewish calendar in the first century AD and to date a lunar eclipse that Biblical and other references suggest followed the crucifixion. The evidence points to Friday 3 April AD 33 as the date when Jesus Christ died.

The only certainty about the date of the crucifixion is that it occurred during the 10 years that Pontius Pilate was procurator of judaea (AD 26-36). ... [On this] Tacitus (Annals XV, 44) agrees with the four gospels. All four gospels agree that Jesus died a few hours before the beginning of the Jewish sabbath (nightfall on a Friday) and - within a day - that it was the time of the Passover, the annual Jewish feast held at the time of a full moon.

Passover time was precisely specified in the official festival calendar of Judaea, as used by the priests of the temple. Lambs were slaughtered between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan (corresponding to March/April in our calendar). The Passover meal began at moonrise that evening, at the start of 15 Nisan (the Jewish day running from evening to evening). - Leviticus 23:5, Numbers 28:16

Some scholars believe that all four gospels place the crucifixion on Friday, 14 Nisan [this is the common view of the brethren], and others believe that, according to the Synoptics, it occurred on Friday, 15 Nisan. For generality, we assume at this stage that both dates are possible and set out to determine in which of the years AD 26-36 the 14th and 15th Nisan fell on a Friday. Previous attempts' to use astronomy to resolve this ambiguity have shown that while the times of new and full moons can be accurately specified, we do not know with what skill the Jews of the first century could detect the first faintly glowing lunar crescent after conjunction with the sun. (The new moon itself is invisible by definition.)

JEWISH CALENDAR

Hitherto it has been customary to assume arbitrarily that the sickle of the new moon would be invisible to the unaided eye until a certain length of time (usually 30 hours) had elapsed since conjunction. Fotheringham's more realistic criterion, based on the apparent position of the moon in the sky at sunset, was modified and improved by Maunder, but even that criterion is not rigorous, excluding several thin crescents that have been observed.

We have therefore computed the visibility of the lunar crescent as a function of time after sunset for the beginning of each lunar month in the period of interest. Whether or not the crescent moon is visible depends on whether its contrast with the sky background exceeds the visual contrast thresholds. The lunar semidiameter and the position of the moon in the sky at and after sunset have been evaluated from harmonic syntheses of the perturbed orbits of the Earth and moon and the sky brightness for an observer at Jerusalem calculated as a function of the depression of the sun below the horizon, as is the moon's apparent surface brightness. At the latitude of Jerusalem, we find that the lunar crescent is first visible after sunset at a lunar altitude corresponding to approximately 0.5°

less than that given by Maunder and this is consistent with many recent observations of the first sickle of the new moon. Assuming normal atmospheric transparency, we obtain the results of Table 1.

Table 1. The date of 14 Nisan in Jerusalem, AD 26-36.

<i>Year</i>	<i>New Moon</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Deduced</i>	<i>Date of 14 Nisan</i>
26 AD	6 April	6:40	Sunday	21 April
27 AD	26 March	20:05	Thursday	10 April*
28 AD	15 March	2:30	Tuesday	30 March
29 AD	2 April	19:40	Monday	18 April†
30 AD	22 March	19:55	Friday	7 April†
31 AD	12 March	0:25	Tuesday	27 March
32 AD	29 March	22:10	Sunday	13 April*
33 AD	19 March	12:45	Friday	3 April
34 AD	9 March	5:25	Wednesday	24 March
35 AD	28 March	6:10	Tuesday	12 April
36 AD	16 March	17:50	Saturday	31 March

The time of new moon is given as calculated apparent (sundial) time of conjunction for Jerusalem (± 5 min). The deduced rate is the Julian day (from midnight to midnight), starting at 6th hour 14 Nisan and ending at 6th hour 15 Nisan.

* 14 Nisan AD 27 and AD 32 could have been on the following day if the new moon was not detected due to poor atmospheric transparency.

† In each of these cases it is not impossible, but highly improbable, that 14 Nisan would have occurred on the preceding day.

Although in the first century AD the beginning of the Jewish lunar month (in the official calendar) was fixed rigorously by astronomical observation, difficulties arise because of the Jewish use of intercalary (or leap) months. Twelve lunar months total approximately 11 days less than a solar year, but for agricultural and ritual purposes, lunar months were kept at roughly the same place in the solar year by the intercalation of a thirteenth month when necessary, roughly once every three years. In the first century AD, intercalation was regulated annually by proclamation by the Sanhedrin according to certain criteria,³ one of the most important of which was that Passover should fall after the vernal equinox. If, towards the end of a Jewish year, it was estimated that Passover would fall before the equinox, the intercalation of an extra month before Nisan was decreed. Table 1 has been constructed on this basis.

Unfortunately, a leap month could also be decreed if the crops had been delayed by unusually bad weather (since the first fruits must be ripe for presentation on 16 Nisan) or if the lambs were too

young. There are, however, no historical reports of the proclamation of leap months in the years AD 26-36, so that it is possible that in some years Nisan was one month later than given in Table 1. Calculations show that in the period AD 26-36, if Nisan was one month later than given in Table 1, 14 Nisan would not fall on a Friday in any year and 15 Nisan would fall on a Friday only in AD 34 (April 23).

Table 2 lists all the possible dates of a Friday crucifixion falling on either 14 or 15 Nisan. These are the only dates that are astronomically and calendrically possible for the crucifixion. We now consider which of them can be eliminated by means of other available evidence.

Table 2. Calendrically Possible Dates for the Crucifixion.

Jewish Day	Date (Julian Calendar)
14 Nisan	Friday 11 April AD 27*
	Friday 7 April AD 30
	Friday 3 April AD 33
15 Nisan	Friday 11 April AD 27*
	Friday 23 April AD 34†

*There is some uncertainty, depending on the atmospheric conditions, as to whether this day was on 14 or 15 Nisan (see text and Table 1). We include all possibilities for completeness.

†Only in the case of a leap month being inserted because of exceptionally severe weather (see text).

FURTHER EVIDENCE

AD 27 is almost certainly too early. Luke 3:1-2 carefully states that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar and subsequently baptized Jesus. Depending on whether the Hellenistic (Roman) civil or the Jewish ecclesiastical reckoning is used, the fifteenth year (340 Seleucid Era) would either have been autumn AD 28-29 or spring AD 29-30.⁴ In addition, most scholars believe that Pilate had been procurator for some time before the crucifixion (see Luke 13:1, 23:12).

Similarly, AD 34 is almost certainly too late, for it would conflict with the probable date of Paul's conversion. We can fairly confidently date the later events in Paul's life and, working back from these using time intervals given by Paul himself (for example Galatians 1:18, 2:1) leads many scholars to infer Paul's conversion was in AD 34. Moreover, AD 34 is only a possible crucifixion date if the weather that spring had been exceptionally severe. There is therefore no positive evidence in favor of AD 34 and we exclude it. (The only eminent advocate of 23 April, AD 34 that

we have come across is Sir Isaac Newton, whose chief reason seems to have been that 23 April is St. George's Day.)

Having eliminated AD 27 and AD 34, we note from Table 2 that the crucifixion must have occurred on 14 Nisan. We remark that by this means, a scientific argument has ... shown that the crucifixion occurred on 14 not 15 Nisan, so that Jesus died at the same time as the Passover lambs were slain. This is consistent with many New Testament statements such as "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

By elimination, AD 30 and AD 33 are now the only two plausible dates for the crucifixion. The earliest possible time at which Jesus can have begun his ministry is autumn AD 28, while John's gospel records three different Passovers occurring in the ministry (including that at the crucifixion). If this evidence is accepted, AD 30 cannot be the crucifixion year and AD 33 is the only possibility.

This is also consistent with the reference in John 2:20 which records that the Jews said to Jesus at the first Passover of his ministry that the temple had taken 46 years to build. Assuming that this refers to the inner temple,⁵ the 46 years leads to AD 30 or 31, depending on how much preparation time was involved before building began. If the only Passovers of Jesus' ministry were the three explicitly mentioned in John's gospel, an AD 33 crucifixion implies a ministry of about 2½ years. Many scholars, however, believe that John omitted to mention a further Passover, in which case the ministry would have lasted for 3½ years. [And this length is supported by Daniel 9:27.]

A LUNAR ECLIPSE

We now consider further evidence that has not, to the best of our knowledge, been used in helping to date the crucifixion - the subsequent occurrence of a lunar eclipse. [Actually the eclipse at issue had been noted by some brethren more than twenty years ago.]

We first take up the meaning and significance of the references to the moon being "turned to blood" in the Bible and also in the Apocrypha.

In Acts 2:14-21 it is recorded that on the day of Pentecost, the apostles were accused by a crowd of being drunk and that Peter stood up and said "No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people ... I will show wonders in the heavens above ... The Sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before that great and glorious day of the Lord shall come."

It is not clear whether Peter was claiming that all the quoted prophecy from Joel had recently been fulfilled ... but in our view, the phrase "the moon turned to blood" probably refers to a lunar eclipse, in which case the crucifixion can be dated unambiguously.

Peter prefaces his quotation from Joel with the words "Let me explain this to you ... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" " He appears to be arguing that recent events had fulfilled the prophecy he was about to quote. If this interpretation is correct, "the last days" began with Christ's first advent (*cf* 1 Peter 1:20, Hebrews 1:1-2), the outpouring of the spirit commenced at Pentecost, and "that great and glorious day" refers to the resurrection. "The sun will be turned to darkness"

(v. 20) refers back to the 3 hours of darkness which occurred only 7 weeks previously, at the crucifixion (Matthew 27:45), and would be understood as such by Peter's audience.

As is well known, the mechanism by which the sun was darkened may have been a khamsin dust storm. Since the darkened sun occurred at the crucifixion it is reasonable to suppose that “the moon turned to blood” occurred that same evening, “before that great and glorious day,” the resurrection. [The “great and terrible day” of Joel 2:31 may actually refer to the end of the nation some decades later.]

Other documentary evidence suggests that on the day of the crucifixion, the moon appeared like blood. The so called “Report of Pilate,” a New Testament Apocryphal fragment,⁶ states that at the crucifixion “the sun was darkened; the stars appeared and in all the world people lighted lamps from the sixth hour till evening; the moon appeared like blood” Although much of the Apocrypha cannot be used as primary historical evidence, Tertullian records that Pilate wrote a report of all the events surrounding the crucifixion for the Emperor Tiberius. The manuscript fragments of the “Report of Pilate” are all of a later date, but may be partly based on the lost original.

On the other hand, the report may have used the Acts as a source, in which case it may be significant that the event described by Peter in which the moon turned to blood is clearly stated to have occurred at the crucifixion.

It is of course also possible that the report is a late Christian forgery, but even such a document may be thought to reflect a widely held contemporary belief. In other words, the “Report of Pilate” is secondary supporting evidence that the moon appeared like blood on the evening of the crucifixion.

THE MOON TURNED TO BLOOD

The reason an eclipsed moon is blood red is well known. Even though the moon is geometrically in the Earth's shadow, sunlight still reaches it by refraction in the Earth's atmosphere and is reddened by having traversed a long path through the atmosphere where scattering preferentially removes the blue end of the spectrum.

Descriptions of some well documented ancient eclipses have been compiled ... and matched with calculated eclipse dates. We quote three examples: (1) The lunar eclipse of 20 September 331 BC occurred 2 days after Alexander crossed the Tigris and the moon was described by Curtius (IV, 10 (39), 1) as “suffused with the colour of blood.” (2) The lunar eclipse of 31 August AD 304 (probably) which occurred at the martyrdom of Bishop Felix, was described in Acta Sanctorem “when he was about to be martyred the moon was turned to blood.” (3) The lunar eclipse of 2 March AD 462 was described in the Hydatius Lemnicus Chronicon thus: “on March 2 with the crowing of cocks after the setting of the sun the full moon was turned to blood” In ... mediaeval European annals ... many lunar eclipses are described by “the moon turned to blood.”

LUNAR ECLIPSES VISIBLE IN JERUSALEM AD 26-36

We have determined the eclipses relevant to our work by the use of the most comprehensive data available, as corrected by Stephenson,⁷ in the light of Babylonian records and long-term changes in the Earth's rate of rotation. All lunar eclipses (total and partial) visible from Jerusalem between AD 26 and AD 36 are listed in Table 3 which shows that in the period AD 26-36, there was only one lunar eclipse at Passover time visible from Jerusalem.

Table 3. Lunar Eclipses Visible from Jerusalem AD 26-36.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Magnitude</i>	<i>Starting Time</i>
15 Aug.	AD 26 Friday	50%	23.16
31 Dec.	AD 27 Wednesday	70%	23.45
14 June	AD 29 Tuesday	Total	20.45
9 Dec.	AD 29 Friday	45%	20.92
25 April	AD 31 Wednesday	35%	21.58
19 Oct.	AD 31 Friday	25%	4.82
3 April	AD 33 Friday	60%	Moonrise
27 Sept.	AD 33 Sunday	85%	4.88
11 Feb.	AD 35 Friday	55%	4.91
7 Aug.	AD 35 Sunday	60%	20.30
31 Jan.	AD 36 Tuesday	Total	Moonrise
26 July	AD 36 Thursday	Total	22.23

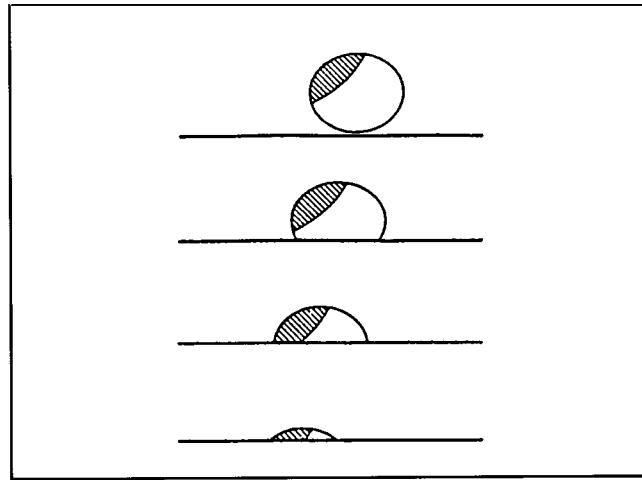
The date Friday, 3 April AD 33, is the most probable date for the crucifixion deduced independently using other data. The interpretation of Peter's words in terms of a lunar eclipse ... allows us with reasonable certainty to specify Friday, 3 April AD 33 as being the date of the crucifixion.

VISUAL APPEARANCE

All times quoted below are local Jerusalem times as measured by a sundial, and the probable error in the eclipse times is about ? 5 minutes. The start of the eclipse at 3:40 p.m. was invisible from Jerusalem, being below the horizon. At its maximum at about 5:15 p.m., with 60% of the moon eclipsed, the eclipse was still below the horizon from Jerusalem. The moon rose above the Jerusalem horizon at about 6:20 p.m. (the start of the Jewish Sabbath and also the start of Passover day in AD 33) with about 20% of its disk eclipsed and the eclipse finished some 30 minutes later at 6:50 p.m..

Although at moonrise only 20% of the total area of the moon's disk was eclipsed (in the umbral shadow), this "bite" was positioned close to the top (leading edge) of the moon. The drawing below shows the appearance of the moon at, and shortly after, moonrise at 3 April AD 33. As the umbral shadow (in which the sun is geometrically entirely hidden) was near the top of the moon, about

65% of the visible area of the rising moon would initially have been seen as fully eclipsed, while the remainder would have been in the penumbral shadow.



Moonrise on Friday 3 April AD 33 as seen from Jerusalem.
Atmospheric refraction caused the distorted shape of the moon.
The time interval between successive diagrams is 45 seconds.
The probable colors of the moon were: shaded area red,
unshaded area yellow-orange.

The coloration of eclipses varies greatly with atmospheric conditions. For partial eclipses, particularly with the moon at high altitude, there is a large contrast difference between the obscured and unobscured part of the disk so that the moon often appears almost white with a very dark “bite” removed. However for some partial eclipses the red colour of the umbral shadow is clearly visible. For example, Davis⁸ has recently depicted in colour an eclipse sequence as seen by the human eye with the moon low in the sky, when the blood red of the umbra in the partial eclipse phase is almost as vivid as when the eclipse is total.

For the eclipse of 3 April AD 33, the moon was just above the horizon and the most probable colour of the visible portion would have been red in the umbral shadow (shaded in Figure 1) and yellow-orange elsewhere. The small yellow-orange region would have indicated that the moon had risen, but most of its visible area would have “turned to blood.” If in fact a massive dust storm was responsible for darkening the sun a few hours previously, dust still suspended in the atmosphere would have tended to modify these colours, probably further darkening and reddening the moon.

The eclipse of 3 April AD 33 would probably have been seen by most of the population of Israel, since the Jews on Passover Day would be looking for both sunset and moonrise in order to commence their Passover meal. Instead of seeing the expected full Paschal Moon rising they would have initially seen a moon with a red “bite” removed. The effect would have been dramatic. The moon would grow to full in the next half hour. The crowd on the day of Pentecost would undoubtedly have understood Peter's words as referring to an eclipse which they had recently seen.

¹ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, London, 1966. J.K. Fotheringham, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 35, 146, 1934. H.H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons*, 100 BC to AD 1651, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1973.

² G.H. Kornfeld, WR. Lawson, *J. Opt. Soc. Am.*, 61, 911 (1971).

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Jeremiah's Purchase

Think of all the important documents that have touched your life. Insurance policies offer assurance to file claims in time of distress. You may keep some honorary degrees or certificate of credentials in a safe place to be used to acquire employment. Power of Attorney and letters of authorization empower you to act on behalf of another in the eyes of the law. Your passport is necessary to cross certain international borders.

Your auto title of ownership is essential in the event of a sale. Your mortgage documents on your home are a very important set of papers, that is until you have paid back the loan. However, then the Deed or Title to the home becomes a very important document to be kept in a safe place, should you ever want to sell your house. A Land Deed identifies you as the owner and entitles you to pass the property to another generation or to whomever you will.

So it is that official papers play an important part in our lives. Consider also their role in state, national and international affairs. How much more important were those documents touching Israel when guided by the finger of God!

Just such a document was produced only months before the nation of Israel was overrun at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. It is found in Jer. 32:6-15. This was a rather private agreement. In the earlier verses Jeremiah was commanded to prophesy the destruction of Jerusalem. The king and remnant of Judah would be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans by Nebuchadnezzar's army.

At the same time, God here commands Jeremiah to purchase a field in Anathoth, the city where he was born and his cousin now lived. The name of the village today is Anata. It is just beyond the suburbs of Jerusalem, about one mile northeast of the city, just beyond Mt. Scopus. It is within

easy walking distance of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was told to make credentials of the purchase, place them in an earthen jar, and bury it in the earth, to be recovered after many days, or years (vs. 14). Here is a command so very opposite to the import of the prophecy that Jehovah sent a direct word to Jeremiah to prepare him for it. Whoever heard of buying a field that was soon to pass into the hands of enemies!

Jeremiah purchased the field from his cousin, Hanameel. Under the circumstances of economic collapse, Hanameel probably needed money for bread and asked him to buy the field, yet leaving ownership in the family line. The price of 17 shekels of silver was next to nothing but provided Hanameel with the necessities to span the next few months. But why then was Jeremiah instructed to make such a legal formality about recording the purchase, and to secure a copy "*for many days?*" The transaction was made so public that as many as possible were made aware of it.

It was a custom in regard to land deeds to make two copies of major land transactions. One was for public files, and a duplicate signed and hidden. In a future time, if there should be contention over land rights or if the public files had been doctored, modified or lost, the family heirs could produce the hidden original. Such clay jars with documents have been found at Qumran, Engedi and elsewhere throughout the Holy Land.

But here is even a stranger fact for such a small purchase. Jeremiah knew full well that the end of the nation was at hand. He was exiled to Egypt and died there, while the rest were removed to Babylon. In chapter 43 Jeremiah begins to deliver his prophecies from Egypt and there is no record for Jeremiah's descendants upon the return under Ezra and Nehemiah. But God gave this instruction specifically to a prophet who chose *never to marry*. He had no children, no one else to claim the inheritance. There is no further reference to this land deed that God gave Jeremiah to so specially record and hide. No one ever found the jar, produced the documents or laid claim to the field.

The chapter itself seems to give the clue to its purpose in 32:15. "Houses and fields and vineyards *shall be possessed in this land.*" In Jer. 32:24-25 God says to buy and record the purchase even though the city should be handed over to the Babylonians, with the assurance in Jer. 32:27 that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

The latter part of the chapter looks to a future restoration, beyond that of the return by the decree of Cyrus. Jeremiah 32:37 speaks of gathering them from "all countries" to dwell safely. In Jer. 32:39 they are given a new heart. In the final two verses, God says fields will once more be purchased and they will record the documents. This clearly points to the regathering we have been witnessing in this last generation. Specifically Jer. 32:44 says from the NIV-

"Fields will be bought for silver, and *deeds will be signed and witnessed* in the territory of Benjamin, *in the villages around Jerusalem*, in the towns of Judah and in the towns of the hill country, of the western foothills and in the Negev, because I will restore their fortunes, declares the Lord ."

Since Jeremiah had no natural progeny, we hold that as God instructed him personally to record the deed, that Jeremiah will return as a resurrected Ancient Worthy to claim it! He will be recognized

as the Jeremiah of old, for only he knows where the deed is hidden. Since it will match the biblical record and all other deeds and accords.

This is in the spirit of Acts 7:4-5 where Stephen says Abraham was promised in the land, but was not given so much as to set his foot on. Hidden within this statement is the idea that the promise is assured, waiting for Abraham's resurrection. So it is also with Jeremiah.

Now notice something peculiar about the city where this field is located. You will notice on a map of Israel that there is what is called the "green line" just northeast of Jerusalem that marks



Anathoth, near Jerusalem

what faithful citizens of Israel call Judea and Samaria and what politicians call the "West Bank." Anathoth, now called Anata, lies just east of this line, in the territory that Yitzhak Rabin negotiated into the hands of Palestinian autonomy. The Palestinians, who now hold such a close margin to Jerusalem, look with ambition upon the Holy City itself as their next possession.

In this manner Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 8:9-10. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces ... Take

counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us."

Among the last words spoken by Jeremiah are the words found in Jeremiah 50:19: "I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead."

It will not surprise us if Jeremiah's land deed will yet be used to annul the claims of foreigners and strangers. Who knows if the early demise of Rabin will delay the transfer of this land until the rightful owner appears to lay claim to this God-given inheritance!

- Jerry Leslie