

Part I, Chapter XI: Of the Times of the Birth and Passion of Christ

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Source: *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London: 1733).

Published online: September 2006

<144>

CHAP. XI.

Of the Times of the Birth and Passion of Christ.

The times of the Birth and Passion of *Christ*, with such like niceties, being not material to religion, were little regarded by the *Christians* of the first age. They who began first to celebrate them, placed them in the cardinal periods of the year; as the annunciation of the *Virgin Mary*, on the 25th of *March*, which when *Julius Cæsar* corrected the Calendar was the vernal Equinox; the feast of *John Baptist* on the 24th of *June*, which was the summer Solstice; the feast of *St. Michael* on *Sept.* 29, which was the autumnal Equinox; and the birth of *Christ* on the winter Solstice, *Decemb.* 25, with the feasts of *St. Stephen*, *St. John* and the *Innocents*, as near it as they could place them. And because the Solstice in time removed from the 25th of *December* to the 24th, the 23d, the 22d, and so on backwards, hence some in the following centuries placed the birth of *Christ* on *Decemb.* 23, and at length on *Decemb.* 20: <145> and for the same reason they seem to have set the feast of *St. Thomas* on *Decemb.* 21, and that of *St. Matthew* on *Sept.* 21. So also at the entrance of the Sun into all the signs in the *Julian* Calendar, they placed the days of other Saints; as the conversion of *Paul* on *Jan.* 25, when the Sun entred ♊; *St. Matthias* on *Feb.* 25, when he entred ♈; *St. Mark* on *Apr.* 25, when he entred ♎; *Corpus Christi* on *May* 26, when he entred ♊; *St. James* on *July* 25, when he entred ♋; *St. Bartholomew* on *Aug.* 24, when he entred ♌; *Simon and Jude* on *Octob.* 28, when he entred ♏; and if there were any other remarkable days in the *Julian* Calendar, they placed the Saints upon them, as *St. Barnabas* on *June* 11, where *Ovid* seems to place the feast of *Vesta* and *Fortuna*, and the goddess *Matuta*; and *St. Philip* and *James* on the first of *May*, a day dedicated both to the *Bona Dea*, or *Magna Mater*, and to the goddess *Flora*, and still celebrated with her rites. All which shews that these days were fixed in the first *Christian* Calendars by Mathematicians at pleasure, without any ground in tradition; and that the *Christians* afterwards took up with what they found in the Calendars.

Neither was there any certain tradition about the years of *Christ*. For the *Christians* who first began to enquire into these things, as <146> *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen*, *Tertullian*, *Julius Africanus*, *Lactantius*, *Jerome*, *St. Austin*, *Sulpicius Severus*, *Prosper*, and as many as place the death of *Christ* in the 15th or 16th year of *Tiberius*, make *Christ* to have preached but one year, or at most but two. At length *Eusebius* discovered four successive Passovers in the Gospel of *John*, and thereupon set on foot an opinion that he preacht three years and an half; and so died in the 19th year of *Tiberius*. Others afterwards, finding the opinion that he died in the Equinox *Mar.* 25, more consonant to the times of the *Jewish* Passover, in the 17th and 20th years, have placed his death in one of those two years. Neither is there any greater certainty in the opinions about the time of his birth. The first *Christians* placed his baptism near the beginning of the 15th year of *Tiberius*; and thence reckoning thirty years backwards, placed his birth in the 43d *Julian* year, the 42d of *Augustus* and 28th of the *Actiac* victory. This was the opinion which obtained in the first ages, till *Dionysius Exiguus*, placing the baptism of *Christ* in the 16th year of *Tiberius*, and misinterpreting the text of *Luke*, iii. 23. as if *Jesus* was only beginning to be 30 years old when he was baptized, invented the vulgar account, in which his birth is placed two years later than before. As therefore relating to these <147> things

there is no tradition worth considering; let us lay aside all and examine what prejudices can be gathered from records of good account.

The fifteenth year of *Tiberius* began *Aug. 28, An. J.P. 4727*. So soon as the winter was over, and the weather became warm enough, we may reckon that *John* began to baptize; and that before next winter his fame went abroad, and all the people came to his baptism, and *Jesus* among the rest. Whence the first Passover after his baptism mentioned *John* ii. 13. was in the 16th year of *Tiberius*. After this feast *Jesus* came into the land of *Judea*, and staid there baptizing, whilst *John* was baptizing in *Ænon*, *John* iii. 22, 23. But when he heard that *John* was cast into prison, he departed into *Galilee*, *Mat. iii. 12*. being afraid, because the Pharisees had heard that he baptized more disciples than *John*, *John* iv. 1. and in his journey he passed thro' *Samaria* four months before the harvest, *John* iv. 35. that is, about the time of the winter Solstice. For their harvest was between *Easter* and *Whitsunday*, and began about a month after the vernal Equinox. Say not ye, saith he, *there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest;* <148> meaning, that the people in the fields were ready for the Gospel, as his next words shew ^[1]*John* <149> therefore was imprisoned about *November*, in the 17th year of *Tiberius*; and *Christ* there <150> upon went from *Judea* to *Cana* of *Galilee* in *December*, and was received there of the *Galileans*, who had seen all he did at *Jerusalem* at the Passover: and when a Nobleman of *Capernaum* heard he was returned into *Galilee*, and went to him and desired him to come and cure his son, he went not thither yet, but only said, *Go thy way, thy son liveth; and the Nobleman returned and found it so, and believed, he and his house*, *John* iv. This is the beginning of his miracles in *Galilee*; and thus far *John* is full and distinct in relating the actions of his first year, omitted by the other Evangelists. The rest of his history is from this time related more fully by the other Evangelists than by *John*; for what they relate he omits.

From this time therefore *Jesus* taught in the Synagogues of *Galilee* on the sabbath-days, being glorified of all: and coming to his own city *Nazareth*, and preaching in their Synagogue, they were offended, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which the city was built to cast him headlong; but he passing thro' the midst of them, went his way, and came and dwelt at *Capernaum*, *Luke* iv. And by this time we may reckon the second Passover was either past or at hand.

<151>

All this time *Matthew* passeth over in few words, and here begins to relate the preaching and miracles of *Christ*. When *Jesus*, saith he, *had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt at Capernaum, and from that time began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, *Matth. iv. 12*. Afterwards he called his disciples *Peter, Andrew, James* and *John*; and then went about all *Galilee*, teaching in the Synagogues, — and healing all manner of sickness: — and his fame went thro'out all *Syria*; and they brought unto him all sick people, — and there followed him great multitudes of people from *Galilee*, and from *Decapolis*, and from *Jerusalem*, and from *Judea*, and from beyond *Jordan*, *Matth. iv. 18, 25*. All this was done before the sermon in the mount: and therefore we may certainly reckon that the second Passover was past before the preaching of that sermon. The multitudes that followed him from *Jerusalem* and *Judea*, shew that he had lately been there at the feast. The sermon in the mount was made when great multitudes came to him from all places, and followed him in the open fields; which is an argument of the summer-season: and in this sermon he pointed at the lilies of the field then in the flower before the eyes of his auditors. Consider, saith he, *the lilies of the field, how* <152> *they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is and to morrow is cast into the oven, &c. Matth. vi. 28*. So therefore the grass of the field was now in the flower, and by consequence the month of *March* with the Passover was past.

Let us see therefore how the rest of the feasts follow in order in *Matthew's* Gospel: for he was an eye-witness of what he relates, and so tells all things in due order of time, which *Mark* and *Luke* do not.

Some time after the sermon in the mount, when the time came that he should be received, that is, when the time of a feast came that he should be received by the *Jews*, he set his face to go to *Jerusalem*: and as he went with his disciples in the way, when the *Samaritans* in his passage thro' *Samaria* had denied him lodgings, and a certain Scribe said unto him, *Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*, *Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,*

Matth. viii. 19. Luke ix. 51, 57. The Scribe told *Christ* he would bear him company in his journey, and *Christ* replied that he wanted a lodging. Now this feast I take to be the feast of Tabernacles, <153> because soon after I find *Christ* and his Apostles on the sea of *Tiberias* in a storm so great, that the ship was covered with water and in danger of sinking, till *Christ rebuked the winds and the sea*, Matth. viii. 23. For this storm shews that winter was now come on.

After this *Christ* did many miracles, and went about all the cities and villages of Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people, Matth. ix. he then sent forth the twelve to do the like, Matth. x. and at length when he had received a message from *John*, and answered it, he said to the multitudes, *From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*; and upbraided the cities, *Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum*, wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not, Matth. xi. Which several passages shew, that from the imprisonment of *John* till now there had been a considerable length of time: the winter was now past, and the next Passover was at hand; for immediately after this, *Matthew*, in chap. xii. subjoins, that *Jesus went on the sabbath-day thro' the corn, and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat, — rubbing them, saith Luke, in their hands*: the corn therefore was not only in the ear, but ripe; and consequently <154> the Passover, in which the first-fruits were always offered before the harvest, was now come or past. *Luke* calls this sabbath δευτερόπρωτον, the second prime sabbath, that is, the second of the two great feasts of the Passover. As we call *Easter* day high *Easter*, and its octave low *Easter* or *Lowsunday*: so *Luke* calls the feast on the seventh day of the unleavened bread, the second of the two prime sabbaths.

In one of the sabbaths following he went into a Synagogue, and healed a man with a withered hand, Matth. xii. 9. Luke vi. 6. And when the Pharisees took counsel to destroy him, he withdrew himself from thence, and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them all, and charged them that they should not make him known, Matth. xii. 14. Afterwards being in a ship, and the multitude standing on the shore, he spake to them three parables together, taken from the seeds-men sowing the fields, Matth. xiii. by which we may know that it was now seed-time, and by consequence that the feast of Tabernacles was past. After this he went into his own country, and taught them in their Synagogue, but did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Then the twelve having been abroad a year, returned, and told *Jesus* all that they had done: and at the same time *Herod* beheaded *John* <155> in prison, and his disciples came and told *Jesus*; and when *Jesus* heard it, he took the twelve and departed thence privately by ship into a desert place belonging to *Bethsaida*: and the people when they knew it, followed him on foot out of the cities, the winter being now past; and he healed their sick, and in the desert fed them to the number of five thousand men, besides women and children, with only five loaves and two fishes, Matth. xiv. Luke ix. at the doing of which miracle the Passover of the Jews was nigh, John vi. 4. But *Jesus* went not up to this feast; but after these things walked in Galilee, because the Jews at the Passover before had taken counsel to destroy him, and still sought to kill him, John vii. 1. Henceforward therefore he is found first in the coast of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, then by the sea of *Galilee*, afterwards in the coast of *Cæsarea Philippi*; and lastly at *Capernaum*, Matth. xv. 21, 29. xvi. 13. xvii. 34.

Afterwards when the feast of Tabernacles was at hand, his brethren upbraided him for walking secretly, and urged him to go up to the feast. But he went not till they were gone, and then went up privately, John vii. 2. and when the Jews sought to stone him, he escaped, John viii. 59. After this he was at the feast of the Dedication in winter, John x. 22. and when they sought again to take him, he fled beyond *Jor* <156> *dan*, John x. 39, 40. Matth. xix. 1. where he stayed till the death of *Lazarus*, and then came to *Bethany* near *Jerusalem*, and raised him, John xi. 7, 18. whereupon the Jews took counsel from that time to kill him: and therefore he walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called *Ephraim*; and there continued with his disciples till the last Passover, in which the Jews put him to death, John xi. 53, 54.

Thus have we, in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *John* compared together, the history of *Christ's* actions in continual order during five Passovers. *John* is more distinct in the beginning and end; *Matthew* in the middle: what either omits, the other supplies. The first Passover was between the baptism of *Christ* and the imprisonment of *John*, John ii. 13. the second within four months after the imprisonment of *John*, and *Christ's* beginning to preach in *Galilee*, John iv. 35. and therefore it was either that feast to which *Jesus* went up, when the Scribe desired to follow him, Matth. viii. 19. Luke ix. 51, 57. or the feast before it. The third was the next feast after it, when the corn was eared and ripe, Matth. xii. 1. Luke vi. 1. The fourth was that

which was nigh at hand when *Christ* wrought the miracle of the five loaves, *Matth.* <157> xiv. 15. *John* vi. 4, 5. and the fifth was that in which *Christ* suffered, *Matth.* xx. 17. *John* xii. 1.

Between the first and second Passover *John* and *Christ* baptized together, till the imprisonment of *John*, which was four months before the second. Then *Christ* began to preach, and call his disciples; and after he had instructed them a year, sent them to preach in the cities of the *Jews*: at the same time *John* hearing of the fame of *Christ*, sent to him to know who he was. At the third, the chief Priests began to consult about the death of *Christ*. A little before the fourth, the twelve after they had preached a year in all the cities, returned to *Christ*; and at the same time *Herod* beheaded *John* in prison, after he had been in prison two years and a quarter: and thereupon *Christ* fled into the desert for fear of *Herod*. The fourth *Christ* went not up to *Jerusalem* for fear of the *Jews*, who at the Passover before had consulted his death, and because his time was not yet come. Thenceforward therefore till the feast of Tabernacles he walked in *Galilee*, and that secretly for fear of *Herod*: and after the feast of Tabernacles he returned no more into *Galilee*, but sometimes was at *Jerusalem*, and sometimes retired beyond *Jordan*, or to the city *Ephraim* by the wilderness, till the Passover in which he was betrayed, apprehended, and crucified.

<158>

John therefore baptized two summers, and *Christ* preached three. The first summer *John* preached to make himself known, in order to give testimony to *Christ*. Then, after *Christ* came to his baptism and was made known to him, he baptized another summer, to make *Christ* known by his testimony; and *Christ* also baptized the same summer, to make himself the more known: and by reason of *John*'s testimony there came more to *Christ*'s baptism than to *John*'s. The winter following *John* was imprisoned; and now his course being at an end, *Christ* entred upon his proper office of preaching in the cities. In the beginning of his preaching he completed the number of the twelve Apostles, and instructed them all the first year in order to send them abroad. Before the end of this year, his fame by his preaching and miracles was so far spread abroad, that the *Jews* at the Passover following consulted how to kill him. In the second year of his preaching, it being no longer safe for him to converse openly in *Judea*, he sent the twelve to preach in all their cities: and in the end of the year they returned to him, and told him all they had done. All the last year the twelve continued with him to be instructed more perfectly, in order to their preaching to all nations after his death. And upon the news of *John*'s <159> death, being afraid of *Herod* as well as of the *Jews*, he walked this year more secretly than before; frequenting desarts, and spending the last half of the year in *Judea*, without the dominions of *Herod*.

Thus have we in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *John* all things told in due order, from the beginning of *John*'s preaching to the death of *Christ*, and the years distinguished from one another by such essential characters that they cannot be mistaken. The second Passover is distinguished from the first, by the interposition of *John*'s imprisonment. The third is distinguished from the second, by a double character: first, by the interposition of the feast to which *Christ* went up, *Mat.* viii. 19. *Luke* ix. 57. and secondly, by the distance of time from the beginning of *Christ*'s preaching: for the second was in the beginning of his preaching, and the third so long after, that before it came *Christ* said, *from the days of John the Baptist until now*, &c. and upbraided the cities of *Galilee* for their not repenting at his preaching, and mighty works done in all that time. The fourth is distinguished from the third, by the mission of the twelve from *Christ* to preach in the cities of *Judea* in all the interval. The fifth is distinguished from all the former by the twelve's being returned from preaching, and <160> continuing with *Christ* during all the interval, between the fourth and fifth, and by the passion and other infallible characters.

Now since the first summer of *John*'s baptizing fell in the fifteenth year of the Emperor *Tiberius*, and by consequence the first of these five Passovers in his sixteenth year; the last of them, in which *Jesus* suffered, will fall on the twentieth year of the same Emperor; and by consequence in the Consulship of *Fabius* and *Vitellius*, in the 79th *Julian* year, and year of *Christ* 34, which was the sabbatical year of the *Jews*. And that it did so, I further confirm by these arguments.

I take it for granted that the passion was on friday the 14th day of the month *Nisan*, the great feast of the Passover on saturday the 15th day of *Nisan*, and the resurrection on the day following. Now the 14th day of *Nisan* always fell on the full moon next after the vernal Equinox; and the month began at the new moon before, not at the true conjunction, but at the first appearance of the new moon: for the *Jews* referred all the

time of the silent moon, as they phrased it, that is, of the moon's disappearing, to the old moon; and because the first appearance might usually be about 18 hours after the true conjunction, they therefore began their month from the sixth hour <161> at evening, that is, at sun set, next after the eighteenth hour from the conjunction. And this rule they called יה *Jah*, designing by the letters י and ה the number 18.

I know that *Epiphanius* tells us, if some interpret his words rightly, that the *Jews* used a vicious cycle, and thereby anticipated the legal new moons by two days. But this surely he spake not as a witness, for he neither understood *Astronomy* nor *Rabbinical* learning, but as arguing from his erroneous hypothesis about the time of the passion. For the *Jews* did not anticipate, but postpone their months: they thought it lawful to begin their months a day later than the first appearance of the new moon, because the new moon continued for more days than one; but not a day sooner, lest they should celebrate the new moon before there was any. And the *Jews* still keep a tradition in their books, that the *Sanhedrim* used diligently to define the new moons by sight: sending witnesses into mountainous places, and examining them about the moon's appearing, and translating the new moon from the day they had agreed on to the day before, as often as witnesses came from distant regions, who had seen it a day sooner than it was seen at *Jerusalem*. Accordingly *Josephus*, one of the Jewish <162> Priests who had ministered in the temple, tells us^[2] that the Passover was kept on the 14th day of Nisan, κατὰ σελήνην according to the moon, when the sun was in Aries. This is confirmed also by two instances, recorded by him, which totally overthrow the hypothesis of the *Jews* using a vicious cycle. For that year in which *Jerusalem* was taken and destroyed, he saith, the Passover was on the 14th day of the month *Xanticus*, which according to *Josephus* is our *April*; and that five years before, it fell on the 8th day of the same month. Which two instances agree with the course of the moon.

Computing therefore the new moons of the first month according to the course of the moon and the rule *Jah*, and thence counting 14 days, I find that the 14th day of this month in the year of *Christ* 31, fell on tuesday *March* 27; in the year 32, on sunday *Apr.* 13; in the year 33, on friday *Apr.* 3; in the year 34, on wednesday *March* 24, or rather, for avoiding the Equinox which fell on the same day, and for having a fitter time for harvest, on thursday *Apr.* 22. also in the year 35, on tuesday *Apr.* 12. and in the year 36, on saturday *March* 31.

But because the 15th and 21st days of *Nisan*, and a day or two of *Pentecost*, and the 10th, 15th, and 22d of *Tisri*, were always sabbatical days or days of rest, and it was inconvenient on <163> two sabbaths together to be prohibited burying their dead and making ready fresh meat, for in that hot region their meat would be apt in two days to corrupt: to avoid these and such like inconveniences, the *Jews* postponed their months a day, as often as the first day of the month *Tisri*, or, which is all one, the third of the month *Nisan*, was sunday, wednesday or friday: and this rule they called ΙΤΑ *Adu*, by the letters Α , Τ , Ι signifying the numbers 1, 4, 6; that is, the 1st, 4th, and 6th days of the week; which days we call sunday, wednesday and friday. Postponing therefore by this rule the months found above; the 14th day of the month *Nisan* will fall in the year of *Christ* 31, on wednesday *March* 28; in the year 32, on monday *Apr.* 14; in the year 33, on friday *Apr.* 3; in the year 34, on friday *Apr.* 23; in the year 35, on wednesday *Apr.* 13, and in the year 36, on saturday *March* 31.

By this computation therefore the year 32 is absolutely excluded, because the Passion cannot fall on friday without making it five days after the full moon, or two days before it; whereas it ought to be upon the day of the full moon, or the next day. For the same reason the years 31 and 35 are excluded, because in them the Passion cannot fall on friday, without making it three days after the full moon, <164> or four days before it: errors so enormous, that they would be very conspicuous in the heavens to every vulgar eye. The year 36 is contended for by few or none, and both this and the year 35 may be thus excluded.

Tiberius in the beginning of his reign made *Valerius Gratus* President of *Judea*; and after 11 years, substituted *Pontius Pilate*, who governed 10 years. Then *Vitellius*, newly made President of *Syria*, deprived him of his honour, substituting *Marcellus*, and at length sent him to *Rome*: but, by reason of delays, *Tiberius* died before *Pilate* got thither. In the mean time *Vitellius*, after he had deposed *Pilate*, came to *Jerusalem* in the time of the Passover, to visit that Province as well as others in the beginning of his office; and in the place of *Caiaphas*, then High Priest, created *Jonathas* the son of *Ananus*, or *Annas* as he is called in scripture. Afterwards, when *Vitellius* was returned to *Antioch*, he received letters from *Tiberius*, to make peace with *Artabanus* king of the *Parthians*. At the same time the *Alans*, by the sollicitation of *Tiberius*, invaded the kingdom of *Artabanus*; and his subjects also, by the procurement of *Vitellius*, soon after rebelled: for *Tiberius* thought that *Artabanus*, thus pressed with difficulties, would more readily accept the conditions of peace. *Artabanus* <165> therefore

straightway gathering a greater army, opprest the rebels; and then meeting *Vitellius* at *Euphrates*, made a league with the *Romans*. After this *Tiberius* commanded *Vitellius* to make war upon *Aretas* King of *Arabia*. He therefore leading his army against *Aretas*, went together with *Herod* to *Jerusalem*, to sacrifice at the publick feast which was then to be celebrated. Where being received honourably, he stayed three days, and in the mean while translated the high Priesthood from *Jonathas* to his brother *Theophilus*: and the fourth day, receiving letters of the death of *Tiberius*, made the people swear allegiance to *Caius* the new Emperor; and recalling his army, sent them into quarters. All this is related by *Josephus Antiq. lib. 18. c. 6, 7*. Now *Tiberius* reigned 22 years and 7 months, and died *March 16*, in the beginning of the year of *Christ* 37; and the feast of the Passover fell on *April 20* following, that is, 35 days after the death of *Tiberius*: so that there were about 36 or 38 days, for the news of his death to come from *Rome* to *Vitellius* at *Jerusalem*; which being a convenient time for that message, confirms that the feast which *Vitellius* and *Herod* now went up to was the Passover. For had it been the Pentecost, as is usually supposed, *Vitellius* would have continued three months <166> ignorant of the Emperor's death: which is not to be supposed. However, the things done between this feast and the Passover which *Vitellius* was at before, namely, the stirring up a sedition in *Parthia*, the quieting that sedition, the making a league after that with the *Parthians*, the sending news of that league to *Rome*, the receiving new orders from thence to go against the *Arabians*, and the putting those orders in execution; required much more time than the fifty days between the Passover and Pentecost of the same year: and therefore the Passover which *Vitellius* first went up to, was in the year before. Therefore *Pilate* was deposed before the Passover A.C. 36, and by consequence the passion of *Christ* was before that Passover: for he suffered not under *Vitellius*, nor under *Vitellius* and *Pilate* together, but under *Pilate* alone.

Now it is observable that the high Priesthood was at this time become an annual office, and the Passover was the time of making a new high Priest. For *Gratus* the predecessor of *Pilate*, saith *Josephus*, made *Ismael* high Priest after *Ananus*; and a while after, suppose a year, deposed him, and substituted *Eleazar*, and a year after *Simon*, and after another year *Caiaphas*; and then gave way to *Pilate*. So *Vitellius* at one Passover made *Jonathas* successor <167> to *Caiaphas*, and at the next *Theophilus* to *Jonathas*. Hence *Luke* tells us, that in the 15th year of *Tiberius*, *Annas* and *Caiaphas* were high Priests, that is, *Annas* till the Passover, and *Caiaphas* afterwards. Accordingly *John* speaks of the high Priesthood as an annual office: for he tells us again and again, in the last year of *Christ's* preaching, that *Caiaphas* was high Priest for that year, *John* xi. 49, 51. xviii. 13. And the next year *Luke* tells you, that *Annas* was high Priest, *Acts* iv. 6. *Theophilus* was therefore made high Priest in the first year of *Caius*, *Jonathas* in the 22d year of *Tiberius*, and *Caiaphas* in the 21st year of the same Emperor: and therefore, allotting a year to each, the Passion, when *Annas* succeeded *Caiaphas*, could not be later than the 20th year of *Tiberius*, A.C. 34.

Thus there remain only the years 33 and 34 to be considered; and the year 33 I exclude by this argument. In the Passover two years before the Passion, when *Christ* went thro' the corn, and his disciples pluckt the ears, and rubbed them with their hands to eat; this ripeness of the corn shews that the Passover then fell late: and so did the Passover A.C. 32, *April 14*. but the Passover A.C. 31, *March 28th*, fell very early. It was <168> not therefore two years after the year 31, but two years after 32 that *Christ* suffered.

Thus all the characters of the Passion agree to the year 34; and that is the only year to which they all agree.

[1] I observe, that *Christ* and his forerunner *John* in their parabolical discourses were wont to allude to things present. The old Prophets, when they would describe things emphatically, did not only draw parables from things which offered themselves, as from the rent of a garment, 1 *Sam.* xv. from the sabbatic year, *Isa.* xxxvii. from the vessels of a Potter, *Jer.* xviii, &c. but also when such fit objects were wanting, they supplied them by their own actions, as by rending a garment, 1 *Kings* xi. by shooting, 2 *Kings* xiii. by making bare their body, *Isa.* xx. by imposing significant names to their sons, *Isa.* viii. *Hos.* i. by hiding a girdle in the bank of *Euphrates*, *Jer.* xiii. by breaking a potter's vessel, *Jer.* xix. by putting on fetters and yokes, *Jer.* xxvii. by binding a book to a stone, and casting them both into *Euphrates*, *Jer.* li. by besieging a painted city, *Ezek.* iv. by dividing hair into three parts, *Ezek.* v. by making a chain, *Ezek.* vii. by carrying out household stuff like a captive and trembling, *Ezek.* xii, &c. By such kind of types the Prophets loved to speak. And *Christ* being endued with a nobler prophetic spirit than the rest, excelled also in this kind of speaking, yet so as not to speak by his own actions, that was less grave and decent, but to turn into parables such things as offered themselves. On occasion of the harvest approaching, he admonishes his disciples once and again of the spiritual harvest, *John* iv. 35. *Matth.* ix. 37. Seeing the lilies of the field, he admonishes his disciples about gay clothing, *Matth.* vi. 28. In allusion to the present season of fruits, he admonishes his disciples about knowing men by their fruits, *Matth.* vii. 16. In the time of the Passover, when trees put forth leaves, he bids his disciples learn a parable from the fig tree: when its branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves,

ye know that summer is nigh, &c. *Matth.* xxiv. 32. *Luke* xxi. 29. The same day, alluding both to the season of the year and to his passion, which was to be two days after, he formed a parable of the time of fruits approaching, and the murdering of the heir, *Matth.* xxi. 33. Alluding at the same time, both to the money-changers whom he had newly driven out of the Temple, and to his passion at hand; he made a parable of a Noble-man going into a far country to receive a kingdom and return, and delivering his goods to his servants, and at his return condemning the slothful servant because he put not his money to the exchangers, *Matth.* xxv. 14. *Luke* xix. 12. Being near the Temple where sheep were kept in folds to be sold for the sacrifices, he spake many things parabolically of sheep, of the shepherd, and of the door of the sheepfold; and discovers that he alluded to the sheepfolds which were to be hired in the market-place, by speaking of such folds as a thief could not enter by the door, nor the shepherd himself open, but a porter opened to the shepherd, *John* x. 1, 3. Being in the mount of *Olives*, *Matth.* xxxvi. 30. *John* xiv. 31. a place so fertile that it could not want vines, he spake many things mystically of the Husbandman, and of the vine and its branches, *John* xv. Meeting a blind man, he admonished of spiritual blindness, *John* ix. 39. At the sight of little children, he described once and again the innocence of the elect, *Matth.* xviii. 2. xix. 13. Knowing that *Lazarus* was dead and should be raised again, he discoursed of the resurrection and life eternal, *John* xi. 25, 26. Hearing of the slaughter of some whom *Pilate* had slain, he admonished of eternal death, *Luke* xiii. 1. To his fishermen he spake of fishers of men, *Matth.* iv. 10. and composed another parable about fishes. *Matth.* xiii. 47. Being by the Temple, he spake of the Temple of his body, *John* ii. 19. At supper he spake a parable about the mystical supper to come in the kingdom of heaven, *Luke* xiv. On occasion of temporal food, he admonished his disciples of spiritual food, and of eating his flesh and drinking his blood mystically, *John* vi. 27, 53. When his disciples wanted bread, he bad them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, *Matth.* xvi. 6. Being desired to eat, he answered that he had other meat, *John* iv. 31. In the great day of the feast of Tabernacles, when the *Jews*, as their custom was, brought a great quantity of waters from the river *Shiloah* into the Temple, *Christ* stood and cried, saying, *If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*, *John* vii. 37. The next day, in allusion to the servants who by reason of the sabbatical year were newly set free, he said, *If ye continue in my word, the truth shall make you free*. Which the *Jews* understanding literally with respect to the present manumission of servants, answered, *We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?* *John* viii. They assert their freedom by a double argument: first, because they were the seed of *Abraham*, and therefore newly made free, had they been ever in bondage; and then, because they never were in bondage. In the last Passover, when *Herod* led his army thro' *Judea* against *Aretas* King of *Arabia*, because *Aretas* was aggressor and the stronger in military forces, as appeared by the event; *Christ* alluding to that state of things, composed the parable of a weaker King leading his army against a stronger who made war upon him, *Luke* xiv. 31. And I doubt not but divers other parables were formed upon other occasions, the history of which we have not.

[2] *Joseph. Antiq. lib. 3. c. 10.*