Prophetic Timing: The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry
John 1:19-29

ETS: Jesus's ministry began exactly when predicted
ESS: God works on a timetable
OSS: I want people to understand that God works on a timetable
PQ: Are you ready for Jesus's return?
UW: Timetable

ME

Winter Timetable

WE

Realized I had two sermons

- WHY did Jesus come to the earth when He did?
- How did John know to start baptizing?
- Why did John baptize where he did?

John series: Prophetic pictures/timelines

- **WHY:** God works on a timeline
    - God is not a God of chaos or the unplanned
    - God moved everything into place before Jesus' first coming

- God is moving everything into place for Jesus' second coming!

GOD

God Operates on a Timetable

Prophetic Context: **Matthew 3:1-3** "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!" 3 For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said: A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!

"In those days" = What days?

The Jews celebrate **7 annual feasts** (4/Spring; 3/Fall)

- Spring: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First fruits, Pentecost
- Fall: Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles

Before the sixth feast, *the Day of Atonement*, the Jews developed a **tradition** called the "Season of Teshuvah" (the Season of Repentance).

- The inspiration for **Teshuvah** was Moses' return to the top of Mt. Sinai, where he pleaded with God for 40 days and 40 nights for forgiveness on behalf of the Jews due to their worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32).
    - Thus, before the *Day of Atonement feast*, the Jews observe 40 days of repentance.

Many scholars believe that John's baptism of repentance coincided with Teshuvah.

- WHEN was this Teshuvah?
- WHAT made this Teshuvah important?

Luke 3:1 "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,

- **Tiberius Caesar**: AD 12 to AD 37
- **Pontius Pilate**, AD 26 to AD 36/37
    - Range is narrowed to between AD 26 and AD 36/37
- **Herod was tetrarch** of **Galilee**: 4BC to AD 39
- **Philip tetrarch** of Iturea and Trachonitis: 4BC to AD 34
    - Range is narrowed to between AD 26 and AD 34

- **Lysanias**, tetrarch of Abilene: AD 14 to AD 29 (archeological evidence)
    - Range is narrowed to between AD 26 and AD 29

Luke 3:2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, God's word came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

- **Annas**: AD 5 to 15, but Annas retained immense influence as the patriarch of a powerful priestly dynasty: five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas later served as high priests. He was often still referred to as "high priest" in Jewish society (e.g., Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6; John 18:13–19, where Jesus is brought to him first for questioning).
- **Caiaphas**: Tenure as official high priest: AD 18 to 36

Roughly a 3**-year window: AD 26 to 29**

- John's mission did not begin UNTIL this exact time!
    - It was at this exact time that "God's word came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness."

AD 26
Jesus Ministry Begins:

WHEN John got his mission:

- **Luke 3:3** "He went into all the vicinity of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,
    - Likely that John the Baptist attracted the attention of the people and the Jewish leaders in the 1st year he began **baptizing** (AD 26).

Why does God's Word come to John the Baptist to begin baptizing in **AD 26**?

- What is going on at this POINT that John gets the word to start his mission?

Jesus Ministers on a Timetable

Luke 3:23 "As he began his ministry, Jesus was about thirty years old…"

What is **significant** about being **30 years old**?

- **Joseph** entered the service of Pharaoh (becoming vizier/governor over Egypt) at exactly 30 (*Joseph is a picture of Christ*!)
    - **Beloved** son of his father
    - **Hated** by his brothers
    - **Sold** for silver
    - **Humiliated**, falsely accused
    - **Exalted** after his suffering

    - **Savior** of his people and the **nations**
    - **Forgave** those who wronged him
- **David** became King at **30 years** old (*David is a picture of Christ*!)
    - **Anointed** by God as King
    - The **shepherd**/King
    - **Victorious** over his enemies
    - A **man** after **God's** own **heart**
    - **Eternal** throne and kingdom
- **Levites** began their formal service in the tabernacle/temple at age 30
    - **Set apart** for service
    - **Mediators**
    - Offered sacrifices and atonement
    - Inheritance in God alone
        - *The Levites are a picture of Christ!*

God Operates on a Timetable

BTW: All the detail in **Luke 3:1-2** gives us a good idea of **WHEN** Jesus was born

- If Jesus was "about 30 years old" in **AD 26**, then His birth would have been in **4-5 BC**

Matthew 2:1 "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem."

- Herod the Great died in **4 BC**
  - Josephus mentions a lunar eclipse during a fast (likely near the end of his life). A partial lunar eclipse visible in Judea occurred on March 10-11, 4 BC

WHEN was Jesus born? CLUES

- **John 1:14** "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
  - *Eskēnōsen* = tent or tabernacle
- **Feast of Tabernacles** = final fall feast (7th feast)
  - Was Jesus born during the Feast of Tabernacles in 5 BC?

What is the Feast of Tabernacles?

- The last of the 7 feasts the Jews are commanded to celebrate
  - Celebrated in the Fall (Sept/Oct)
- It is 7 days long, followed by an 8th day of a Solemn assembly
- During the feast, the Jews are to live in temporary booths (sukkot) made of branches from trees (e.g.,

palm, myrtle, willow) as a reminder of the fragile shelters the Israelites lived in during their 40 years in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt (Leviticus 23:42–43).

- It is one of the three pilgrimage festivals (shalosh regalim), requiring Jewish males to appear before God in Jerusalem

Luke 2:7 NO room in the inn

- Bethlehem's overcrowding during the census (Luke 2:1–5) could coincide with pilgrimage crowds heading to Jerusalem for Sukkot (one of the three major festivals requiring males to appear in Jerusalem, Deuteronomy 16:16). Some suggest the "inn" (Greek katalyma) was full due to festival travelers, and Jesus was born in a temporary shelter resembling a sukkah.

Luke 2:8 Shepherds

- Shepherds watching flocks at night suggest a milder season (late summer/early fall) rather than mid-winter (December).
    - The Feast of Tabernacles aligns with harvest time, when shepherds might still be in fields.

Luke 1 describes Zechariah (John's father) serving in the Temple "during the course of Abijah" (Luke 1:5).

- The service of the division of Abijah is calculated to align with spring festivals (often Pentecost).
    - **Pentecost** in **6 BC** would have been around **May 18-19th**
    - If Elizabeth conceived shortly thereafter (late May/June)

Luke 1:36 states Mary conceived Jesus when **Elizabeth** (John's mother) was in her **sixth** month

- January 5 BC
    - 9 Months later, Jesus would have been born in the **fall**, potentially during the Feast of Tabernacles, which occurs (September/October).

Timetable of Jesus' Birth
May/June 6 BC: Zechariah Visited by Gabriel:
June of 6 BC: Elizabeth Conceives:
January of 5 BC: Visits Elizabeth / Mary Conceives
Jesus Born: Sept/Oct 5 BC (Feast of Tabernacles)

Timeline: **Fall of 26 CE**

- It is reasonable to assume that **Jesus** requested that John baptize Him on the **first day** of **Teshuvah (Gregorian calendar** = late August or early September**)**

- According to the Scriptures, after His baptism, Jesus was "immediately" driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where He fasted and prayed for **40 days** (Mark 1:12-13)=*the 40 days of Teshuvah.*

Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days

The **Number 40** in the Bible represents or symbolizes

- A time of testing or probation (endurance through hardship)
- Preparation for a new phase or covenant
- Judgment or purification

Examples of 40

- **The Flood:** Rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 7:4, 12), marking global judgment and cleansing, followed by a new beginning for humanity and a covenant with Noah.
- **The Israelites** wandered 40 years after refusing to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:33–34; Deuteronomy 8:2). This was punishment for unbelief but also a time of testing, dependence on God (manna), and preparation for the next generation to inherit the land.

- **Moses** spent 40 years in Midian as an exile before his calling (Acts 7:30).
- **Elijah** fasted and traveled 40 days and nights to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8), where God spoke to him in a still small voice—renewal after despair.
- **Jonah** preached that Nineveh had 40 days to repent (Jonah 3:4), resulting in the city's turning to God and averting judgment.
- **Jesus** fasted 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, facing Satan's temptations (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2), marking preparation for His public ministry.
- **Jesus** appeared to His disciples over 40 days before ascending to heaven (Acts 1:3), a time of teaching and commissioning.
- **Goliath** taunted Israel for 40 days before David defeated him

The Jubilee Cycle

- Leviticus 25 = 6 years of sowing on the 7th year the land was to rest (Lev. 25:1-4)
- 7 years * 7 years = 49 Marked by sounding the ram's horn on the Day of Atonement
- On the 50th year is the year of freedom
    - Property is returned to the original owners
    - No sowing = eat produce directly from the field
    - Israelites who sold themselves are set free

Jesus was crucified in **AD 30**

- The year 2030 will be **40th** Jubilee cycles of **50** years! (40 * 50 = 2,000)

Are we moving toward something significant?

Do you know what Jewish feast follows after Teshuvah?

The Day of Atonement

- It is possible that Jesus returned and began His public ministry on the **Day of Atonement**!

WHY the Day of Atonement?

- That is the **one day** of the year the **priest** entered the Holy of Holies in the Temple and **sprinkled** the **blood** of the **bull** and the **sacrificed goat** on and before the mercy seat to atone for the sanctuary, the altar, the priests, and the entire assembly—covering all sins, transgressions, and uncleanness.
    - Jesus would be crucified as the sacrificial lamb!

The **Day of Atonement** is on the **10th** day of the 7th month of the Jewish calendar (September/October)

- **Five days later**, the **Feast of Tabernacles begins**
    - Jesus was "About 30 years old" when He started His ministry on the Day of Atonement and

turned 30 years old during the *Feast of Tabernacles.*

This is why we have John's reaction in **John 1:29, 35-36** "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "**Look, the Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world!...35 The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "**Look, the Lamb of God!"**

- On the **Day of Atonement**, while the *High Priest was entering the temple in Jerusalem*, Jesus returned from the wilderness, and **John the Baptist** cried out, "Look, the Lamb of God!"
- **3 ½ years later**, when the priests were sacrificing animals on the bronze altar outside the temple, Jesus hung on the cross. outside Jerusalem, on the **Passover** (the first feast of the year), as the sacrificial "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"
    - Jesus would have been **33 years old** when He was crucified
        - 33 = divine fulfillment of purpose and sacrifice

Did you know….

- The **33rd mention of Noah's** name occurs when God makes a special **covenant/promise** with him (after the flood; Genesis 9).

- The **33rd mention of Abraham's name** is tied to the birth of Isaac, *the child of promise* (Genesis 21:5).
- The **33rd mention of Jacob** aligns with his vision of the *ladder to heaven* and his vow to God (Genesis 28:12–22).

These instances suggest that the number **33** marks points where **God reaffirms or fulfills covenants**.

Timetable of Jesus' Ministry

Fall 26 AD:

- First Day of **Teshuvah**- Jesus Baptized "about 30"
- 40 Days of **Teshuvah** - Jesus in the Wilderness "about 30"
- Day of Atonement: Jesus Returns "about 30"
- Feast of Tabernacles: Jesus turns 30 years old

Timeline: **Fall of 26 CE** (this fall marks the 2,000-year anniversary of the beginning of Jesus' ministry!)

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We know **WHY** John the Baptist started baptizing in **AD 26**

- Jesus was "about 30 years old" = it was time for Him to begin his ministry

Why did the Holy Spirit lead John to baptize "in Bethany across the Jordan"?

God Acts on Purpose

John 1:28 "All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing."

- The **Jordan River** holds deep biblical meaning as a
  - **boundary** of entry into the Promised Land (Joshua 3–4),
  - a place of **transition**, **cleansing** (e.g., Naaman's healing in 2 Kings 5),
  - Prophetic events (Elijah's ascension in 2 Kings 2).

MAP of JORDAN RIVER

The "Bethany" most people know is the village near Jerusalem (home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in John 11-12, about 2 miles east of Jerusalem).

- By adding "*across the Jordan*" (or "beyond the Jordan"), the Gospel clarifies this is a **different place**—on the **eastern bank** of the Jordan River (*in modern-day Jordan*), NOT the western side near Jerusalem.

John baptized Jesus in the same area where:

- The **Israelites** crossed over the **Jordan** into the Promised Land
- **Elijah** ascended into heaven ("The Sequel begins"!)
    - One of the reasons the religious leaders asked John, "Are you Elijah"
    - Elijah walked from Jericho down to the Jordan. Elijah hits the water with his cloak, the river parts, and they "crossed over on dry ground."
        - It is there "beyond the Jordan" that Elijah is raptured

Bethany = "House of the Poor" or "House of Affliction."

- Jesus launches His ministry from the "House of the Poor," out in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by people owning up to their sins.

Jesus is baptized "Beyond the Jordan" and He then CROSSES over the Jordan into the Promised Land.

- Jesus is re-enacting **Israel's** ultimate "**new beginning**" story: crossing the Jordan River.
    - Just like **Joshua** crossed the Jordan to start his mission in the Promised Land, **Jesus** is now beginning his mission.[1]

[1] Jurica Šinko, "John 1:28 Meaning: Where Is Bethany Beyond the Jordan?" Reading John, October 20, 2025, https://readingjohn.com/john-1-28-meaning/.

God Acts on Purpose

Is it a coincidence that 2030 is 40 Jubilee cycles from Jesus' death and resurrection?
Is it a coincidence that 2030 is at the end of the 6,000 Biblical years?

Other timings suggest **2030** as a significant year in Bible prophecy.

What about NOW?

- I believe we are witnessing a "Shaking" that is **preparing** the world for the return of Christ!

What are we to do?

- We are to carry out our mission: To Testify About Jesus!
- We are to be like John the Baptist and prepare the way for the return of our Messiah!

WE

Take comfort that

- God operates on a Timetable
- There are no coincidences

PQ: Are you Testifying about Jesus?