

In the previous post I began to explain how there could be an account in the Gospels that is not historically accurate because an author is more interested in conveying what, to him, is a theological “truth” than in giving a history lesson about what actually happened in the life of Jesus. In my view, the early Christian story tellers and Gospel writers (often?) changed historical data in order to make theological points. What mattered more than historical accuracy was the ultimate point of the story.

In this post I give a concrete example of how it works. To make sense of what I have to say about this story you need to remember what I said yesterday about how the Passover feast worked in the days of Jesus. This particular example involves only a small detail in the Gospel of John - a tiny detail, in some ways. But it is illustrative of a larger point. Sometimes Christian authors changed a historical fact in order to express what, for them, was a theological “truth.”

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So, back to the Gospels. According to all four accounts, Jesus died sometime during the feast. But when? The earliest account we have - that is, the first Gospel to have been written — is Mark’s. Here the chronology of events is quite clear. In Mark 14:12 ...

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