The academic debate that emerged after the release of the original English translation of the *Gospel of Judas* and then its *Critical Edition* attests to the fact that this gospel is filled with passages that challenge interpreters. Indeed, the problems start in the very first lines. Take for instance the expression found in lines 3–6. The expression reads and is translated in the *Critical Edition*:

(…) during eight days, three days before he celebrated Passover.2

When the author defines the chronological frame of the secret revelatory discourse he is presenting, his words are enigmatic and even ambiguous, juxtaposing two combined indications of time. The first temporal indication mentions “eight days”, while the second refers to “three days” before Passover.3 Which passion’s chronology lies behind this puzzling expression? What is the meaning and significance of this chronology from a literary point of view, within the context of the treatise itself, and in the light of the main issue concerning its relationship to earlier gospel narratives?

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1 I refer to Kasser et al. 2006a; Kasser et al. 2007.  
2 Kasser et al. 2007, 185. Alternatively, it is possible to intend πάσχειν as a translation of the Greek verb πάσχειν, so that we should read: “three days before suffering” or “three days before his passion”.  
The role played by numerology in the expression of fundamental aspects of early Christian thought is widely acknowledged. The richness of the symbolic meanings intrinsic to most of the numbers occurring in ancient Christian texts is drawn mainly from their biblical sources, although it is also often influenced by analogous conceptions deriving from different cultural heritages of antiquity, as François Bovon observes. In Bovon’s view, numbers were used by early Christians as “theological tools.” We should consider the chronologies recorded in ancient Christian literary works as a peculiar branch of these theological tools. In gospel narratives, the chronologies have multiple functions. They play as literary devices, articulating and organizing the accounts or lending them an aura of historical authenticity. But often they carry deeper, more pregnant meanings of an ideological or theological nature. Not all the early Christian authors give an equal importance to these tools, nor are all of these tools used in an identical way.

The Gospel of Mark, which normally is quite vague in providing the temporal settings of the episodes it records, sets out the events of Jesus’ last days—from Jesus’ entrance in Jerusalem to the announcement of his resurrection—in an articulated chronological frame. It very precisely assigns Jesus’ teachings and actions to different days. Because of its accuracy and abundance of details, especially with respect to the previous section of the Markan gospel, it is likely that this scheme is intentional. It appears to be in harmony with Mark’s focus on the concept of the time of salvation, the καιρός, which is a gracious and limited period that coincides with Jesus’ coming to the world, when the possibility of obtaining salvation is given to humankind. As the moment of Jesus’ death is approaching, the narrator becomes more...