

## Appendix B

### When Was Jesus Christ Born?

The date of Jesus Christ's birth has been a topic of controversy for centuries. Various theories place the year of His birth in a range from 6 BC to 1 AD. As to the season of the year, most believe that He was born in the winter. Some claim that He was born in the spring, while others feel that He was born in the fall. Still others are inclined to shrug their shoulders, declaring that they don't know and, it really doesn't matter. While some theologians claim that it is not possible to know when Jesus was born, they readily accept December 25 as the day to celebrate His birth. They reason that the date or season is not as important as remembering the event.

Although an abundance of scriptural and historical evidence proves Jesus was not born on December 25, the majority of professing Christians still observe this date as His birthday. Few realize that this observance is based on ancient pagan tradition that predates Jesus Christ's birth by thousands of years. Age-old customs of pagan origin entered the Christian churches many centuries ago and are now viewed as an essential part of Christian worship. Most churches today encourage their members to freely participate in the popular customs of the Christmas season.

While supposedly honoring the birth of Jesus Christ, the traditional observance of Christmas actually distorts the scriptural story of His birth and ignores the revealed purpose of His coming to earth in the flesh. His birth is, in fact, the chief cornerstone and foundation of true Christianity. The birth of Jesus Christ fulfilled a number of significant prophecies that are recorded in the Old Testament. A proper understanding of the true circumstances of His birth will provide deeper insight into the meaning of His life and the ultimate purpose of His coming.

The scriptural and historical facts concerning the birth of Jesus Christ are readily available to all who are willing to examine them. These records clearly reveal the year, season and the approximate day of Jesus Christ's birth.

#### ***Jesus Was Born During the Reign of Herod the Great***

The Gospel of Matthew records that the birth of Jesus Christ occurred during the reign of Herod the Great. When Herod heard that the prophesied king of the Jews had been born, he feared that the Jews would begin to revolt against his rule. Matthew's account follows: "Now after Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea, in *the* days of Herod the king, behold, Magi from *the* east arrived at Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.' But when Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matt. 2:1-3).

Intending to slay the infant king, Herod summoned the scribes and chief priests to Jerusalem to inquire where the Messiah would be born, according to the prophecies in the Old Testament. Upon learning that Christ was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem, Herod instructed the Magi to return and inform him after they had found Him. But God intervened, through a dream to Joseph, to prevent Herod from harming the young Jesus:

"And after hearing the king, they departed; and behold, the star that they had seen in the east went in front of them, until it came and stood over *the house* where the little child

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was. And after seeing the star, they rejoiced *with* exceedingly great joy.

“And when they had come into the house, they found the little child with Mary His mother, and they bowed down and worshiped Him; then they opened their treasures *and* presented their gifts to Him—gold and frankincense and myrrh.

“But being divinely instructed in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another way. Now after they had departed, behold, an angel of *the* Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise and take the little child and His mother, and escape into Egypt, and remain there until I shall tell you; for Herod is about to seek the little child to destroy Him.’ And he arose by night and took the little child and His mother, and went into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod ...” (Matt. 2:9-15).

Matthew’s account of these events indicates that Herod died not long after Jesus was taken to Egypt. After the death of Herod, Joseph brought Jesus and Mary back from Egypt to Nazareth, a city in the district of Galilee: “Now when Herod had died, behold, an angel of *the* Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt in a dream, saying, ‘Arise and take the little child and His mother, and go into *the* land of Israel; for those who were seeking the life of the little child have died.’ And he arose *and* took the little child and His mother, and came into *the* land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of Herod his father, he was afraid to go there; and after being divinely instructed in a dream, he went into the parts of Galilee. And after arriving, he dwelt in a city called Nazareth ...” (Matt. 2:19-23).

This scriptural record offers conclusive evidence that the birth of Jesus Christ occurred a short time before the death of Herod the Great. Through the historical writings of the noted historian Josephus, we can determine precisely when Herod reigned and when he died. Josephus reveals the specific year that Herod was crowned king at Rome: “... And thus did this man receive the kingdom, having obtained it on the hundred and eighty-fourth olympiad, when Caius Domitius Calvinus was consul the second time and Caius Asinius Pollio [the first time]” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 14:14:5).

An olympiad is four years in length and is reckoned from July to July. The 184th olympiad extended from July 1, 44 BC, to June 30, 40 BC. Records of this period show that Calvinus and Pollio were consuls in the year 714 AUC (years from the founding of Rome), which was 40 BC (Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p. 96). Thus we know that Herod became king in 40 BC. While the olympiad was reckoned from July 1 to June 30, the calendar year for consuls was reckoned from January 1 to December 31. Since the 184th olympiad ended on June 30, 40 BC, and the consuls did not take office until January 1 of that year, we know that Herod was made king sometime during the six-month period from January through June of 40 BC.

Although Herod was crowned at Rome in 40 BC, three years passed before he conquered Jerusalem and began to reign in that city: “When the rigour of winter was over, Herod removed his army, and came near to Jerusalem and pitched his camp hard by the city. Now this was the third year since he had been made king at Rome ...” (Josephus, *Ant.*, 14:15:14).

While Herod launched his attack in the spring, it was not until the summer of that year that he was able to take the city of Jerusalem. Josephus reveals the specific date of this event: “... for it was summer time.... This destruction befell the city of Jerusalem when Marcus Agrippa and Canninius Gallus were consuls of Rome, on the hundred eighty and fifth olympiad, on the third month, on the solemnity of the fast ...” (Ibid., 14:16:2, 4).

The 185th olympiad extended from July 1, 40 BC, to June 30, 36 BC. Agrippa and Gallus became consuls in 717 AUC, which corresponds to 37 BC. The fast of the third month that Josephus refers to was the 23rd of Sivan, according to the Hebrew Calendar, which was June 22 on the Julian Calendar. Herod completed the conquest of the city of Jerusalem in the summer of 37 BC, and began to reign as king in Jerusalem at that time.

Josephus provides additional historical records concerning the reign of Herod that enable us to determine the time of his death: “... he [Herod] died ... having reigned since he

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had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven” (Ibid., 17:8:1). Josephus records elsewhere in the same book that Antigonus was killed shortly after Herod had conquered Jerusalem (Ibid., 14:16:4).

In linking Antigonus’s death with Herod’s conquest of Jerusalem in 37 BC, Josephus confirms that Herod did not reign in Jerusalem until three years after his coronation at Rome. Consequently, there are two methods of reckoning the reign of Herod the Great – the Jewish method, which counts thirty-four years from 37 BC, and the Roman method, which counts thirty-seven years from 40 BC. Since the first year of his reign is included in the count, both methods of reckoning arrive at 4 BC as the end of Herod’s reign. This date is conclusively established by the records of history as the year that Herod died.

Josephus’ detailed account of Herod’s death enables us to further pinpoint the time of the year. In his account, Josephus records that Herod died after an eclipse of the moon but before Passover. The lunar eclipses that occurred during this period of history have been calculated in the book *Solar and Lunar Eclipses of the Ancient Near East* by M. Kudler and E. Mickler (published by Neukirchen-Bluyn: Verlas Butson & Bercker Kevelaer, 1971). Here is a listing of the lunar eclipses:

- 7 BC - No eclipses
- 6 BC - No eclipses
- 5 BC - Total eclipse, March 23, 8:30 PM
- 5 BC - Total eclipse, September 15, 10:30 PM
- 4 BC - Partial eclipse, March 13, 2:20 AM
- 3 BC - No eclipses
- 2 BC - No eclipses

The first lunar eclipse to occur during this period was a total eclipse on March 23 in the year 5 BC. In this year the Passover, Nisan 14, was observed by the Jews on March 22. Because the Scriptural reckoning of days is from sunset to sunset, the Passover day extended from sunset March 21 to sunset March 22. Since the total eclipse that occurred at 8:30 PM on the night of March 23 was after Passover and not before, this was not the eclipse that Josephus refers to in conjunction with Herod’s death.

The second total eclipse of the moon during this period took place on September 15, 5 BC, which was a significant day by Scriptural reckoning. According to the Hebrew Calendar, September 15 was the 14th of Tishri (the seventh month). The moon was totally eclipsed at 10:30 PM that night, which was the beginning of the 15th of Tishri, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The twin total eclipses of the moon in 5 BC are so rare that on these dates it only occurs once in 2717 years (*Canon of Lunar Eclipses 1500 B.C.—A. D.* by Bao-Lin and Alan D. Faila).

Josephus’ account of this period of Jewish history includes a number of events which point to this eclipse as the one that occurred shortly before the death of Herod. In recounting the final months of Herod’s reign, Josephus gives us an accurate time frame for establishing the date of Jesus Christ’s birth.

### ***Historical Records of Herod’s Death Reveal the Year of Christ’s Birth***

Josephus gives us detailed records of the events that took place before the death and burial of Herod. These events are listed chronologically in the synchronized Hebrew/Roman calendar on pages 720. Events that are not specifically dated by historical records have been given approximate dates based on the evidence that is available in history. This calendar accurately depicts the sequence of events that took place during that time period.

Josephus relates that shortly before his death, Herod sent ambassadors to Rome. As noted on the synchronized Hebrew/Roman calendar, this action is estimated to have occurred

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during the week ending August 26, 5 BC. Sometime during the next week, a group of zealots stormed the temple and proceeded to chop down the golden idol that Herod had erected over one of its gates. Herod learned that Matthias, the high priest, had incited the zealots to undertake this action in the mistaken belief that Herod was dead. Herod punished Matthias by removing him from the office of high priest and burning him alive, as Josephus relates. In his writings, Josephus shows that these events took place in the fall of the year and were marked by an eclipse of the moon. Josephus' gives this detailed account: "He deprived Matthias of the high priesthood, as in part an occasion of this action, and made Joazar, who was Matthias' wife's brother, high priest in his stead. Now it happened, that during the time of the high priesthood of this Matthias, there was another person made high priest for a single day, that very day which the Jews observe as a fast day [the day of Atonement, the 10th day of Tishri, the seventh month] 'the great day of expiation.' The occasion was this: Matthias the high priest, on the night before the day when the fast was to be celebrated, seemed in a dream to have conversation [sexual relations] with his wife: and because he could not officiate himself on that account, Joseph, the son of Ellemus, his kinsman, assisted him in that sacred office. But Herod deprived this Matthias of the high priesthood, and [later] burnt the other Matthias [on Tishri 14], who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon [Tishri 15]" (*Ant.*, 17:6:4).

This eclipse was obviously an autumnal eclipse, as it occurred in Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew Calendar, which corresponds to September/October on the Julian Calendar. As documented in the record of lunar eclipses by Kudler and Mickler, only one autumnal eclipse occurred during that period of history. This was the eclipse of September 15, 5 BC, on the evening beginning the Feast of Tabernacles – the 15th day of Tishri.

Josephus records the decline of Herod's health after this autumnal eclipse and the state of insanity that preceded his death. Shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles, Herod's "distemper" increased, and he sought the help of the warm mineral baths at Callirrhoe, which was located beyond the Jordan River. It has been estimated that he went there the week ending November 4. There is no record of the exact length of his stay; but since his funeral procession and burial took place after the winter, he must have stayed there approximately eight or nine weeks. He then went to Jericho, probably arriving by January 13. Josephus describes Herod's deplorable mental state at that time: "... and came again to Jericho, where he grew so choleric, that it brought him to do all things like a madman; and though he was near his death, he contrived the following wicked designs" (*Ibid.*, 17:6:5).

Herod commanded the principal men of his government to come to Jericho, intending to have them killed after his death. It is estimated that these men arrived at Jericho by January 20 to 27. A few days later, Herod received letters from Rome brought by the ambassadors he had sent. Although the news was good and seemed to revive him, he attempted suicide soon afterward. His attempt was not successful, as he was restrained by Achiabus. In his rage he ordered his son Antipater to be killed, and he himself died five days later. Josephus records, "When he had done these things, he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven" (*Ibid.*, 17:8:1).

Herod died thirty-seven years from the time of his coronation at Rome in the spring of 40 BC. Although his reign began near the end of the 184th olympiad (reckoned from July 1 to June 30), it is included as the first year in Josephus' count. Based on the records of Josephus and other historical evidence, Herod's death is estimated to have occurred during the week ending February 17, 4 BC.

After Herod's death, Archelaus succeeded Herod as king. He carried out Herod's wishes for an extended period of mourning and a long funeral before his burial. The time needed for these ceremonies was approximately twenty-five days, not counting Sabbaths. The chronology of these events is laid out step by step on the synchronized Hebrew/Roman calendar on page 720. As illustrated in this calendar, the funeral procession finished its journey with the arrival of Herod's body in Jerusalem during the week ending March 24, 4 BC,

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at which time Archelaus began his rule in Jerusalem.

The records of Josephus clearly contradict the commonly held theory that the eclipse of March 13, 4 BC, was the eclipse before Herod's death. If Herod had died after March 13, the extended mourning and funeral procession could not possibly have been completed by March 24. As Josephus shows, these extended ceremonies began many weeks before the Passover day and ended with Herod's burial in the middle of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed the Passover. To further substantiate the time of Herod's burial, Josephus records that at that time Archelaus slaughtered 3,000 people who had crowded into the temple area to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This slaughter occurred during the week which ended April 14, 4 BC, confirming that Herod's burial took place about two months after his death.

As recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea during the reign of Herod the Great. After His birth, Jesus was taken to Egypt and remained there for a period of time before Herod died. Matthew's record of these events indicates that the birth of Jesus occurred several months before the death of Herod. Since Herod's death occurred very early in 4 BC—approximately mid-February—it is evident that Jesus was born sometime during the preceding year. Thus Herod's death places Christ's birth in the year 5 BC. The Gospel of Luke provides additional evidence that enables us to know the specific season of the year in which Christ was born.

### ***Scriptural Evidence of the Season of Jesus Christ's Birth***

In his account of the birth of Jesus Christ, Luke records a major historical event of that time. Luke writes, "Now it happened in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. (This registration first occurred when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) Then all went to be registered, each to his own city" (Luke 2:1-3).

The taxation and census decree by Caesar Augustus was carried out according to the Jewish custom which required that such taxes be collected after the fall harvest (See *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Chronology, New Testament, pp. 199-200). Luke's record of this taxation reveals that the birth of Jesus took place during the autumn. When we combine Luke's record with Matthew's account of Herod's death, it is evident that Jesus was born in the fall of 5 BC.

Luke gives us additional evidence that Jesus was born during the fall harvest season by recording that there were no guest rooms available at the inn when Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem. The scarcity of room was due not only to the taxation but also to the festival days that followed the fall harvest. Many thousands of people were already in the Jerusalem area to observe the fall festival season. Bethlehem was extremely crowded because of its proximity to Jerusalem. Since there was no room at the inn, Joseph and Mary were forced to lodge in a barn. Jesus was born there and was laid in a manger.

In addition, Luke makes it clear that Jesus was not born in the winter by recording that shepherds were tending their flocks in the fields that night (Luke 2:8). The shepherds in that region of Palestine always brought their flocks out of the fields before the onset of winter. The flocks were never left to graze in the pastures during the winter months because the cold weather prevented the grass from growing. There is much discussion in Bible commentaries for those who desire to study these points further.

### ***Records of John's Ministry Confirm Jesus' Birth in the Fall of 5 BC***

In his account of the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry, Luke gives another historical reference that helps to verify the date of Jesus Christ's birth: "Now in *the* fifteenth year of the government of Tiberius Caesar ... *the* word of God came unto John, the son of

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Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he went into all the country around the Jordan, proclaiming *the* baptism of repentance for *the* remission of sins” (Luke 3:1-3).

Luke tells us that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. A dispute has existed over which year of Tiberius’ reign was reckoned by Luke as the fifteenth year because the first two years of Tiberius’ reign were a co-rulership with Augustus. Consequently, there are conflicting opinions as to whether the Scriptural record includes Tiberius’ co-reign or counts from the beginning of his sole reign.

The dispute is settled when Luke’s record is linked with other scriptural and historical records of that time. The reign of Tiberius is firmly established by historical records dating the death of Augustus. Augustus died August 19 in the year that Sextus Apuleius and Sextus Sillus were consuls. The year of the consuls’ rule was 767 AUC, which was 14 AD. This date is confirmed by the fact that Augustus died 44 years, lacking 13 days, after the Battle of Actium (*Dio’s Roman History*, Loeb ed., Book LVI: 29-30, vol. 7, pp. 65, 69).

Josephus records that the Battle of Actium took place during the 187th olympiad in the seventh year of the reign of Herod (*Ant.*, 15:5:1-2; *Wars*, 1:20:3). The 187th olympiad was the four-year period from July 1, 32 BC, to June 30, 28 BC. The Battle of Actium took place during the second year of the olympiad, which was July 1, 31 BC to June 30, 30 BC. This was the seventh year of Herod’s reign by Jewish reckoning, but the tenth year of his reign by Roman reckoning. Counting forward 44 years from the Battle of Actium, which ended in September, 31 BC, we arrive at 14 AD as the year of Augustus’ death.

Records of the reign of Augustus reveal that during his final years, “... the consuls caused a law to be passed ... that he [Tiberius] should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus and hold the census with him” (*Seutonius*, Ed. J.C. Rolfe, LCL, vol. 1, p. 323).

Tiberius began his co-rulership with Augustus in 12 AD, two years before the death of Augustus. Counting from this date, we arrive at 26 AD as the fifteenth year of Tiberius and the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry. Other Scriptural and historical records confirm that John the Baptist began his ministry in the spring of 26 AD and that Jesus began His ministry six months later in the fall of 26 AD.

Major supporting evidence is found in the Gospel of John, which records the words of the Jews at the time of the first Passover of Christ’s ministry. During this Passover season, the Jews stated that the temple had been forty-six years in building (John 2:20). We can determine the date of this Passover, and the first year of Christ’s ministry, by counting from the year that the building of the temple began.

Josephus records that the building of the temple was begun during the eighteenth year of Herod’s reign: “And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign [that is, the eighteenth in Jerusalem, but the twenty-first year from his coronation in Rome] ... undertook a very great work, that is to build of himself the temple of God” (*Ant.*, 15:11:1).

The eighteenth year of Herod’s reign in Jerusalem, which was the first year of building the temple, was from the summer of 20 BC to the summer of 19 BC. Counting forward, the forty-sixth year of building was from the summer of 26 AD to the summer of 27 AD. The only Passover that occurred during this period of time was the Passover of 27 AD. Thus, scriptural and historical records place the first Passover of Christ’s ministry in the spring of 27 AD. Since His ministry began in the fall of the year, we can date its beginning to the autumn of 26 AD.

### ***The Birth of John the Baptist a Key to the Day of Jesus Christ’s Birth***

In the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we find a detailed account of the circumstances and events that preceded the birth of Jesus Christ. In this account, Luke reveals that the conception of Jesus by the virgin Mary occurred six months after the conception of John by Mary’s aunt, Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias. Zacharias was a priest

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of God who served at the temple in Jerusalem.

At the beginning of his account, Luke records, “There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest of *the* course of Abijah, Zacharias by name....And it came to pass *that* in fulfilling his priestly service before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priestly service, it fell to him by lot to burn incense when he entered into the temple of the Lord” (Luke 1:5, 8-9).

Zacharias was executing his priestly duties according to the order and course of Abijah. This information is most helpful in establishing the time frame of Luke’s account. In ancient Israel, King David divided the duties of the priests into twenty-four working courses, or shifts (I Chron. 24:7-19). Each course or shift was assigned to work one full week, from noon Sabbath to noon Sabbath (Talmud, *Sukkah*). The Old Testament records the exact rotation and time order of the priestly courses, which continued down to New Testament times. Zacharias was of the course of Abijah, which was the eighth course or shift in the series of yearly assignments for the priesthood.

Josephus (noted Jewish historian) was a priest of the first course or shift. Josephus confirms that the priestly courses established by King David were still functioning in New Testament times. He records, “He [King David] divided them also into courses ... and he found [or established] of these priests, twenty-four courses ... and he ordained that one course should minister to God eight days, from sabbath to sabbath ... and this partition hath remained to this day” (*Ant.*, 7:14:7). This record confirms that the courses of priests remained in effect down to the time of Zacharias and the birth of Jesus Christ. These courses undoubtedly continued until the temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

The Talmud reveals that the first priestly course, or shift, began in the first full week of the first month of the Hebrew Calendar. The second course worked the second week. This rotation continued on a week-by-week basis through all twenty-four courses. Each priestly course served a one-week shift twice each year. In addition, all courses were required to work during the three weeks in the year that coincided with the three festival seasons: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Thus all the priests shared equally in the priestly responsibilities for the entire year.

We know that the angel Gabriel delivered the promise of John’s birth while Zacharias was serving in his priestly course in the temple. The Gospel of Luke reveals that John was born six months before Jesus (Luke 1:35-36). Our examination of both the scriptural and historical records has established that Jesus was born in the fall of 5 BC. Accordingly, John the Baptist was born in the spring of 5 BC and was conceived nine months earlier in the summer of 6 BC. Knowing the year that John was conceived enables us to determine the exact period of time that Zacharias was serving in the temple.

In the year 6 BC, the first day of the first month (the month of Nisan according to the Hebrew Calendar) was a weekly Sabbath. According to calculations synchronizing the Hebrew Calendar and the Julian Calendar, this Sabbath was March 20. Projecting forward, the assignments course by course, or week by week, were: Course 1, the first week; Course 2, the second week; all courses for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, the third week; Course 3, the fourth week; Course 4, the fifth week; Course 5, the sixth week; Course 6, the seventh week; Course 7, the eighth week; Course 8, the ninth week; and all courses the tenth week, which was the week of Pentecost. (See the synchronized Hebrew/Roman calendar on page 717.)

Because Zacharias was of the course of Abijah, the eighth course, he was assigned the ninth and tenth weeks from the beginning of the year. These weeks of service were counted from noon Sabbath to noon Sabbath. The ninth week was from Iyar 27 through Sivan 5, which corresponds to May 15 through May 22 on the Julian Calendar. The tenth week, Sivan 5 through Sivan 12, or May 22 through May 29, was the week of Pentecost. Sometime during these two weeks, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the temple and prophesied the birth of John.

Although the exact time of Gabriel’s appearance is not recorded, it is reasonable to

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conclude that Gabriel delivered this message from God on the day of Pentecost. The announcement that Zacharias's wife Elizabeth would bear a son came during the two weeks in which Zacharias served at the temple, and the day of Pentecost occurred on Sivan 6, in the middle of the two-week period. Since John the Baptist's birth was a major fulfillment of prophecy, it is appropriate that God would send Gabriel on a holy day to announce the promise of his conception to Zacharias. Luke records the angel Gabriel's message to Zacharias as he was in the temple offering incense: "According to the custom of the priestly service, it fell to him by lot to burn incense when he entered into the temple of the Lord. And all the multitude of the people outside were praying at the hour of the *burning of incense*. Then an angel of *the Lord* appeared to him, standing at *the right side* of the altar of incense. And when he saw *the angel*, Zacharias was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

"But the angel said to him, 'Fear not, Zacharias, because your supplication has been heard; and your wife Elizabeth shall bear a son to you, and you shall call his name John. And he shall be a joy and exultation to you; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great before the Lord. And he shall not drink wine and strong drink in any form, but he shall be filled with *the Holy Spirit* even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to *the Lord* their God. And he shall go before Him in *the spirit* and power of Elijah, to turn *the hearts* of the fathers to *the children*, and *the disobedient* to *the wisdom of the righteous*, to make ready a people prepared for *the Lord*' " (Luke 1:9-17).

Because Zacharias did not believe God's promise, Gabriel pronounced a sign from God. Zacharias would be unable to speak until the child was born and given the name John, which God had chosen (Luke 1:13, 19-20). After completing his service at the temple, Zacharias returned to his house, and John was conceived in the following days: "Now it came to pass *that* when the days of his service were fulfilled, he departed to his house. And after those days, Elizabeth his wife conceived, but hid herself *for* five months ..." (Luke 1:23-24).

The Gospel account indicates that Elizabeth became pregnant shortly after Zacharias returned home. Since he returned on May 29, it is reasonable to assume that she became pregnant between May 30 and June 12 (Sivan 13-26) in the year 6 BC. This estimated time allows a two-week conception period.

Luke was inspired to record that Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy when the virgin Mary was miraculously impregnated through the power of the Holy Spirit and conceived Jesus: "Now behold, Elizabeth your kinswoman has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is *the sixth month* for her who *was called barren*" (Luke 1:36). Based on the estimated time of conception, the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy was November/December by Roman reckoning.

Luke gives additional details that indicate Mary became pregnant in the last two weeks of Elizabeth's sixth month. Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that Elizabeth was already in the sixth month of her pregnancy. Mary then visited Elizabeth and stayed with her almost three months (Luke 1:39-40, 56). Soon after Mary left, Elizabeth reached her full term of nine months, and John was born sometime between Adar 19 and Nisan 3, or February 27 and March 11, in 5 BC.

As illustrated by the synchronized Hebrew/Roman calendar on page 718, Mary's probable conception period coincides with the last two weeks of Elizabeth's sixth month. That two-week period was Keslev 17-30, or November 28-December 11. Projecting forward nine months from the estimated time of Mary's conception, we arrive at the two-week period during which Christ was probably born. This two-week time period was Elul 24-Tishri 8, or August 27-September 9. As the synchronized Hebrew/Roman calendar shows on page 719, the Feast of Trumpets was the middle day of this two-week period.

Many passages in the Bible show that the Feast of Trumpets pictures the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Day of the Lord and the angelic trumpets in the book of Revelation clearly project this symbolism and meaning. Is it not reasonable to conclude that God also chose the Feast of Trumpets as the day of Jesus Christ's birth? The apostle Paul

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reveals that the prophesied birth of Jesus was fulfilled at a set time. Paul wrote, “But when the time for the fulfillment came, God sent forth His own Son, born of a woman ...” (Gal. 4:4). While the Gospels do not reveal the specific day, the birth of Jesus Christ on the Feast of Trumpets would be in harmony with God’s great plan as portrayed through His annual holy days.

Although the Scriptures do not record the exact date of His birth, the biblical and historical evidence makes it abundantly clear that Jesus Christ was not born in the middle of winter, or any time during winter or spring. All the evidence clearly points to the two-week period around the Feast of Trumpets, in the fall of 5 BC, as the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. Professing Christians today need to open their eyes to this truth and forsake their misguided belief that Jesus was born on December 25. The observance of Christmas neither honors Jesus Christ nor commemorates His birth. In fact, the traditional festivities that are observed each year at Christmas time are a perpetuation of ancient pagan customs that no true Christian should practice (Deut. 12:29-32, Jer. 10:1-8). These traditions, like other religious traditions of this world, are neither pleasing nor acceptable to God (Mark 7:6-9), and those who practice them dishonor God the Father and Jesus Christ.

### *The Calculated Hebrew Calendar with the Julian Calendar*

This synchronized calculated Hebrew/Julian calendar illustrates the time period from March 6 BC to April 4 BC. The sequence of scriptural, historical and astronomical events depicted in this calendar reveals the actual year, season, and the most likely day of Jesus Christ’s birth. (See *Appendix C for “A Synchronized Chart of Historical and Scriptural Records That Establish the Year of Christ’s Birth”*). **Note:** The columns read downward—left column first.

6 B.C.										6 B.C.									
NISAN										SIVAN									
MARCH					APRIL					MAY					JUNE				
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB	1st Course begins - noon Sabbath.	S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB	8th Course works - All courses begin at noon Sabbath.				
					20	1	1st Course works - 2nd Course begins noon Sabbath.				18	19	20	21	22				
							2nd Course works - All courses begin at Passover.				1	2	3	4	5				
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	9th Course begins noon Sabbath.					
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	*6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Zacharias leaves.					
28	29	30	31	1	2	3	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	Elizabeth’s probable two-week conception period ends.					
9	10	11	12	13	*14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	*6th - Day of Pentecost (probably day that Gabriel appeared to Zacharias).					
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	11	12						
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	13	14	15	16									
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	*14th - Passover,	27	28	29	30								
18							15th-21st - Feast of Unleavened Bread.												
30																			
6 B.C.										6 B.C.									
IYAR										TAMMUZ									
APRIL					MAY					JUNE					JULY				
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB	4th Course works - 5th Course begins noon Sabbath.	S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB	17	18	19		
					1	2	5th Course works - 6th Course begins noon Sabbath.						1	2	3				
25	26	27	28	29	30	1	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	6th Course works - 7th Course begins noon Sabbath.					
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	7th Course works - 8th Course begins noon Sabbath.					
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	8th Course works.					
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	End of 1st month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy.					
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## Appendix B

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# When Was Jesus Christ Born?

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			1	2	3		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
11	12	13	*14	15	16	17	
26	27	28	29	30	31	1	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
2	3	4	5	6	7		
25	26	27	28	29	30		

(23) Total eclipse on March 23 at 8:30 PM.  
 \*14th-Passover.  
 15th-21st-Feast of Unleavened Bread.

End of 4th month of Mary's pregnancy.

5 B.C.

AB

JULY			AUGUST			
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB
			5	6	7	8
			1	2	3	4
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
30	31	1	2	3		
26	27	28	29	30		

End of 8th month of Mary's pregnancy.

5 B.C.

IYAR

APRIL					MAY	
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB
					8	
					1	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
9	10	11	12	13	*14	15
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

End of 5th month of Mary's pregnancy.

5 B.C.

ELUL

AUGUST			SEPTEMBER			
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB
					4	5
					1	2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28	29	30	31	1	
24	25	26	27	28	29	

End of 9th month of Mary's pregnancy.

5 B.C.

SIVAN

MAY					JUNE	
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
*8	9	10	11	12	13	14
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
4	5					
29	30					

\*Day of Pentecost.

End of 6th month of Mary's pregnancy.

5 B.C.

TISHRI

SEPTEMBER			OCTOBER			
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB
					2	
					*1	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2	3	4	5	6	7	**8
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
1						
30						

Feast of Trumpets, Tishri 1, middle day of two-week period.

\*\*Probable day of Jesus' circumcision.

(15) Total eclipse on September 15, at 10:30 PM.

\*1st - Feast of Trumpets.  
10th - Day of Atonement.  
15th-21st - Feast of Tabernacles  
22nd - Last Great Day.

5 B.C.

TAMMUZ

JUNE					JULY	
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB
			6	7	8	9
			1	2	3	4
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
2	3	4				
27	28	29				

End of 7th month of Mary's pregnancy.

5 B.C.

HESHVAN

OCTOBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	SAB
			2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
29	30	31				
28	29	30				

Wise men arrive and meet with Herod.

Probable two-week period for the presentation and blessing of Jesus at the temple. Wise men find Jesus and present their gifts. Joseph, Mary and Jesus escape into Egypt.

Herod orders the slaughter of all male children two years and younger.

