

# The True Birthday of Christ



By  
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**T**HE TRUE BIRTHDAY OF CHRIST: IN OUR SEARCH FOR THE DATE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH, LET US TURN TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE. Here we find the high priest named Zacharias performing his duties as priest and Luke gives us some details of when this was happening. "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth—

And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord." [1]

The time of this happening is given to us in the phrase "in the course of Ab-i-ah." Now we need to go back in time to the days of David, who divided the performing of the priestly duties into twenty-four hour shifts, relays, or as stated in verse 5 and 8, "courses." David, in 1 Chronicles 24, allocated sixteen of the courses the descendants of Eleazar and eight courses to the descendants of Ith-a-mar.

Each course was determined by casting lots and the first course fell to Jehoiarib (Je-hoy-a-rib) and "—the eighth to Abijah (a-bi-jah)," [2].

Each course administered for one week at a time and changes were made on the Sabbath day before the evening sacrifice [3], and all the courses were active during the main festivals. This reckoning or cycle began on the 22nd of Tis-ri. Reckoning from the 22nd of Tis-ri, the ministering in the temple would fall upon the course of A-bi-jah twice a year, from 6 to 12 December, and from 13-19 June in the year 5 B.C.

Thus Zacharias would have been ministering in the temple in the order of his course from the 13th to the 19th of June. It was during this time that the angel of the Lord appeared unto Zacharias and told him of the coming birth of John. In verse 24 we are told: "And it came to pass, that, as soon

as the days of his ministrations were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying." [4]

From verse 39, we know that Zacharias lived somewhere in the "hill country" which is generally accepted to be in the city of Hebron, the city of priests mentioned in Joshua 21:11, which was some 40 miles south of Jerusalem, or in the city of Jut-tah mentioned in Joshua 15:55, which was some 30 miles south of Jerusalem.

The "after those days" of verse 24 would have to be sometime after the days of the course of A-bi-jah, or sometime after the 19th and 20th of June as the 20th day would also have been a holy day on which he could not travel. So because of these holy days, Zacharias could not have left Jerusalem prior to the 20th and he should have arrived at his home sometime on the 21st or 22nd of June.

Therefore Elizabeth's conception would have taken place anytime after the 21st or 22nd of June. Now if we assume that John was conceived on the 23rd or 24th of June, then his birth would have been on or about the 7th day of Ni-san, or March 28th or 29th in the year 4 B.C.

Returning to Luke: "And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and \*the virgin's name was Mary." [5]

It has already been shown that the "after those days" verse 24 were the days "after" the course of A-bi-jah which would have been after June 13-19 in the year 5 A.D. Next we need to deal with the problem of what month is meant in verse 25 where it states "in the sixth month." This is one of those cases where we attempt to apply what we think was meant to the situation, rather than what the verses really say. It has been speculated that the sixth month refers to the sixth month of the religious calendar which began with Nisan which would correspond to our August

and September. And of course there was the civil calendar and the Roman calendar to consider.

To solve the problem of the sixth month, we need to re-read verses 24 and 25 together and then verses 26 and 27 together, rather than as four separate verses: 24-25:

"And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men." 26-27:

"And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary."

Rearranging the above verses will enhance our understanding of the sixth month. Remember, that "after those days" refers to after the days of the feast of tabernacles or after the day the conception of John took place. Now all we need to do is leave out all the words after "five months" to the beginning of verse 26 and then it will read: "after those days—Elizabath—hid herself five months, and in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent ..."

It seems all too obvious that when reading the verses as above, the "and in the sixth month" refers to the sixth month "after those days" which would equate to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Looking at these verses a little bit differently, Elizabeth hid herself for five months and then in the sixth month of her hiding the angel was sent to Nazareth. Thus the angel Gabriel appeared unto Mary six months "after those days" or six months after Elizabeth became pregnant. Therefore the conception of Jesus was six months after the conception of John, so Christ was born six months after John.

Since John's conception was on June 23rd or 24th, his birth would be somewhere around March 28th or 29th in the year 4 B.C. Therefore, Christ's birth would be on the 28th or 29th of September in that same year.

Examining a calendar for the year 4 B.C., we find that September 29th just happened to be the first day of the feast of tabernacles or the 15th of Tis-ri.

Moving back in time by 280 days (period of gestation), the conception of Christ in the womb of Mary would have transpired on or about the 1st day of Te-beth, the tenth ecclesiastical month and the first month of the civil year. The 1st of Te-beth, by our western reckoning, was, by some strange coincidence, December 25 in the year 5 B.C.

But getting back to the feast of Tabernacles or booths, this was an important feast to the Israelites as they were told to celebrate the feast in the Book of Leviticus: "Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days." [6]

Thus we see that the feast of tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the first and the eighth day being a day of rest, and the first seven being the feast days and the last day being a holy day called the Great day.

Christ and the Feast of Tabernacles: We only find one reference of our Lord participating in the feast of tabernacles and that is found in the Gospel of John: "Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand—Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught." [7]

A discussion of the law transpired in verse 19-23, in which Christ asks why they wanted to kill him, and known that that they were upset because of His having done "one work" on the Sabbath (the haling of the impotent man in chapter five, verse 7-9), Christ asked them about the law of the circumcision. Christ's position was that if it was against the law to heal the important man on the Sabbath, why wasn't it against the law to perform the ritual of the circumcision on the Sabbath.

It is very interesting that Christ used this particular custom of the circumcision to get His point across. Especially since He was born on the 1st day of the feast of Tabernacles and this conversation is taking place on the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles, and this selfsame day, the eighth day, or the Great Day, would have been the very day on which the Christ child was circumcised.

This cannot be mere coincidence and we would suggest that Christ used this example because He knew when He was born and also that this was the anniversary day of His circumcision. Nevertheless, in verse 37 we are told: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" [8]

This is a reference to the Messiah, who is the giver of life. Christ was and is the source of all spiritual blessings as the Scriptures plainly state: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." [9]

From Isaiah 12:3, we know that it was the custom to draw "water out of the wells of salvation."

This water was drawn from the well of Si-lo-am and poured over the altar. Christ also referred to Himself as living waters.

"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living

water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." [10]

Then Christ tells the woman what is meant by the living waters: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." [11]

As blood flowed from Christ on the day of His circumcision, Christ now announces that if any man thirst, "let him come unto me and drink" of living waters.

Conclusion: In any event, on the date Mary conceived, which was December 25, 5 B.C., the Word became flesh and that flesh was born on September 29 in the year of 4 B.C. and tabernacled, dwelt, or resided among man as the prophets had predicted.

The Birth of Christ, as depicted above, along with the references to God promising to again tabernacle with His people, causes the gospel of John to make a little more sense when it states: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." [12]

The word "dwelt," used in this verse, actually means "to tent or encamp, or to reside" and this is also the word translated as "tabernacle." Thus, the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us and He did so beginning on His date of birth on the 1st day of the feast of tabernacles. What perfect sense it makes. December 25th: The historical evidence is so overwhelming that there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that December

25 was a pagan holiday, but with the conception of Christ being on that very same day, we think it needs to be asked, could the custom of celebrating the birth of Christ on December 25th possibly have also been, for the Christians, a day set aside to commemorate the day the angel Gabriel appeared unto Mary, the day of the conception of Christ, and the day of the "Word became flesh" within the womb of Mary?

It is also very interesting that modern day Jews celebrate the feast of dedication or Hanukkah which begins on December 25th. It is supposedly celebrated as a memorial of the dedication of the altar or to commemorate the cleansing of the sanctuary by the Maccabees in the year 165 B.C. However, the Jewish Encyclopaedia states the December 25th: "—had been celebrated as the winter solstice feast by the Jewish people before it became a historical festival associated with the great Maccabean victory." [13]

It is obviously unknown how many years or decades the Israelites and later the Jews celebrated this feast of Dedication or Hanukkah. But it seems a bit ironic that the Jews now celebrate their Hanukkah beginning on the day Christ was conceived. Perhaps it was designed by God that the Jews, a people who despise the name of Jesus, and to this day refer to Him as a bastard, would celebrate the day of His conception as one of their holy days!!!!

## Notes

[1] Luke 1:5, 8-9.

[2] 1 Chronicles 24:10.

[3] 2 Kings 11:5, 9.

[4] Luke 1:23-24.

[5] Luke 1:24-27.

[6] Leviticus 23:39-40.



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[7] John 7:2, 5.

[8] John 7:37-39.

[9] Zechariah 13:1.

[10] John 4:10-15.

[11] John 4:23-26.

[12] John 1:14.

[13] Jewish Encyclopaedia, 1905, Vol. 6, p. 224.



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