

# The Dates of Christianity

## Purpose of the Series

All religions contain important dates that are celebrated by its followers. In Christianity, those dates revolve around the birth, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. As it is a two-thousand-year-old ancient religion, determining the years and dates within the year with any precision is difficult. This series will talk about how the current dates that are celebrated were historically determined, what are more likely actual dates, and try to clarify some of the events surrounding those important times.

## Part 1: The Birth Year of Christ

- I. What's a Calendar System?
  - a. A calendar system is a method of specifying dates relative to some anchor date. Note the term "relative". Calendar's always measure days before and after a certain arbitrary anchor date.
  - b. Civilization has used the Gregorian calendar is the calendar since October 1582.
    - i. People don't like changing calendars or elements of a calendar (e.g. Daylight-Savings Time)! It took the "papal bull" (the public decree of the Pope of the Catholic Church), Inter Gravissimas ("among the most serious of matters), issued by Pope Gregory XIII, to enact the modification of, and replacement for, the previous system, the Julian calendar.
    - ii. Among other things, the decree removed ten days of drift so that the vernal (Spring) equinox was on March 21, where it had been during the Council of Nicaea (20 May– 25 August 325). Therefore, the day following Thursday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1582, was Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup>. Note: this affected business transactions like rent and contracts and people paid by the day; and it caused widespread confusion, anxiety, and superstition.
    - iii. Some terms and definitions:
      1. A solar day is how long it takes for the earth to rotate such that a point on the earth is facing the sun again. Due to the motion of the earth around the sun, the earth must rotate a bit more than 360 degrees in order to be facing the sun. It takes 23 hours, 56 minutes, and 4 seconds to rotate 360 degrees, called a Sidereal (sigh-der-ee-al) Day. Thus, it takes an extra 3 minutes and 56 seconds to complete a solar day. Fun!
      2. A solar year is the amount of time it takes for the earth to make one complete orbit of the sun. Unfortunately, the length of the solar year is not an integer number of solar days. The precise

length of a year is 365.2422 solar days. The remainder is close to a quarter of a day but off enough that the simple leap second rule, one extra day every four years, which was employed by the Julian calendar, will drift about a day per century.

- iv. The Julian Calendar started on January 1, 45 BC, therefore its system had drifted 14 days. Pope Gregory only had to remove 10 of these because he wanted to shift the Vernal Equinox from where it was in 1582 on March 11<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- v. To keep the calendar drifting in the future, he changed the leap year rule to 1 extra day every 4 years except on even centuries except on every 4 centuries. Funny note: the year 2000 was a leap year because of the 400-year part of the rule. Computer programs would have gotten messed up if it hadn't been a leap year because lazy programmers often use the simple Julian definition!

## II. Where did we get 1 AD from?

- a. The relative date of the Julian Calendar was relative to the current emperor, called “the reign of Caesar” system. Therefore, a person would give the number of years since such-and-such emperor started his reign where the first year is one. e.g. In the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Julius or in the 10<sup>th</sup> year Nero. This was very common in those days.
- b. This stopped with the rule of Emperor Diocletian who ruled from 284 to 305 AD. It stopped with Diocletian partly because he divided the empire into 4 sub-empires, and partly because Constantine I, who we learned in the Church series Part 4, became a Christian and legalized Christianity in 313 AD. Constantine recognized that, with its focus on Jesus Christ rather than secular leaders, a universal dating system would better align with Christian theology. So he dropped the name “Diocletian” but kept the dating relative to Diocletian.
- c. A Christ-centered calendar would take time to arise. Dionysius Exiguus, a Catholic Monk, was tasked by Pope John I in the year 241 (of the year of Diocletian system) or 525 AD, to create a new method for calculating Easter.
  - i. *Note that the date of the resurrection of Christ*—not his birth date—that was foundational to early Christians, but Easter only cared about the day of the year and not the number of years since Christ (at least early on).
  - ii. Dionysius called his system “Anno Domini” Latin for “the Year of our Lord”.
  - iii. Dionysius used Luke 3:1, “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar” and Luke 3:23, “Now Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry”. Year 1 of Tiberius was Sept. 17, 14 AD, which was computed with the knowledge of Roman emperors (the day of the year they started ruling and for how long they ruled). Therefore, the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius would have been 28-29 AD and then Jesus would have been

born in 1 AD. Note that there is no 0 BC/AD—it goes from 1 BC to 1 AD (they didn't like zeros back then).

- d. Bede the Venerable, an English monk in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, popularized Dionysius' Anno Domini calendar in England. It became used in Europe widespread by the 9<sup>th</sup> century.
- III. Most theologians believe Jesus was born in the range 8 to 4 BC, but why?
- a. Herod the Great died in 4 BC, and Herod was definitely alive when Jesus was born according to Matthew chapter 2:
    - i. Mat 2:1, "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod"
    - ii. Mat 2:7, "Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared." Magi did not get there at Jesus' birth.
    - iii. Verse 16: When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under.
    - iv. Mat 2:19, "After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt".
  - b. The discrepancy between the Tiberius-relative date of Jesus' ministry (Luke 3:1) and Herod the Great's death relative date in 4 BC has been a longstanding issue in biblical chronology. Theologians and historians propose several ways to reconcile this apparent contradiction, though no solution is universally accepted.
    - i. Matthew, as a Gospel written to the Jews, references the Jewish king instead of the Roman emperor.
    - ii. The primary historical source for Herod's death in 4 BC is Josephus. Obviously, he couldn't use the yet-to-be-invented Anno Domini system.
    - iii. In Antiquities 17.6.4, Josephus references a solar eclipse occurring just days before Herod's death. Astronomical calculations identify an eclipse on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 4 BC. Josephus describes several weeks between the eclipse and his death and subsequent funeral and the Passover of that year. Historians place his death in early April of 4 BC.
    - iv. In Antiquities 17.8.1 Josephus says Herod ruled for 37 years after his appointment by the Romans and 34 years from Herod's capture of Jerusalem. Herod was appointed king in 40 BC by the Roman Senate and he captured Jerusalem in 37 BC. Working forward, this also puts his death in 4 BC.

### **More on the dating of Jesus' birth**

- Tiberius' 15th Year: Luke states that John the Baptist began his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar's reign (Luke 3:1). Tiberius became emperor on Sept 17<sup>th</sup>, 14 AD; therefore, his 15th year would range from 9/17/28 to 9/16/29. This is because the

“regal dating system” starts counting the day an emperor starts and calls that the first year of the given emperor. Not only does Luke mention Tiberius, but he also coincides this with Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea; the three tetrarchs Herod Antipas of Galilee, Philip of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias of Abilene; and the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. *Luke clearly wanted to date this momentous occasion to accuracy of one year.*

- Jesus’ age at the start of his ministry: Luke 3:23 notes that Jesus was “about 30 years old” when He began His ministry. This is unfortunately not a precise statement of age, but Luke did this because the age of 30 held significant meaning in the Jewish culture:
  - Num 4:3 says 30 is the age at which a Levitical priest could begin his full duties at the Tabernacle of the Temple.
  - King David was 30 when he began his reign (2 Sam 5:4).
  - Joseph of 30 when he was elevated to second in command of Egypt (Gen 41:46).
  - Ezekiel was 30 when he received his vision of the heavens opening (Eze 1:1).
  - Because of this, the Jews associated the age of 30 with spiritual authority and maturity. Although there was not a set age at which a person could become a rabbi, being 30 or over would help others not second-guess his maturity. In Luke 2:41-52, Jesus, who is twelve at the time, is shown to have extraordinary maturity and understanding as a sat and asked questions of the teachers; however, the teachers would clearly not have accepted him as a rabbi even if he was qualified as the son of God.

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Therefore, by starting his ministry at the age of 30, Jesus connected himself to the Levitical priesthood and to King David.

- Proposed solutions for reconciling Matthew and Luke’s accounts.
  1. Adjusting the Date of Herod’s Death
    - Some scholars question the traditional dating of Herod’s death to 4 BC, arguing it might have occurred later, around 1 BC.
    - This theory hinges on reinterpretations of Josephus’ accounts and astronomical data, such as the [lunar eclipse](#) Josephus mentions shortly before Herod’s death. Advocates suggest this eclipse was the one on January 10, 1 BC, not the more widely accepted eclipse of March 13, 4 BC.
    - If Herod died in 1 BC, Jesus’ birth could align with both Herod’s reign and a start to Jesus’ ministry around 29 AD.
  2. Interpreting Luke’s “15th Year of Tiberius”
    - Although there is limited evidence for this, some suggest Tiberius may have begun a co-reign with Augustus as early as 11 or 12 AD, before officially becoming emperor in 14 AD. If Luke counted from the co-reign, the 15th year could fall between 26–28 AD.

- This earlier dating would allow Jesus to begin His ministry slightly earlier, aligning better with a birth before 4 BC.
3. The interpretation of “about 30 years old”
- Luke’s description that Jesus was “about 30 years old” (Luke 3:23) is understood by many to be an approximate figure. If Jesus was born in 6–4 BC, he would have been 32–34 years old in 29 AD, which could reasonably fit Luke’s “about 30” description.
  - This explanation assumes Luke was not concerned with precise chronological accuracy, which is a fair assumption since people didn’t become concerned about the year Jesus was born for several centuries.
4. The Census of Quirinius
- Luke ties Jesus’ birth to a census conducted during Quirinius’ governorship of Syria (Luke 2:2). This has been a source of confusion, as Quirinius governed Syria starting in 6 AD, well after Herod’s death. It is possible that Quirinius governed twice, and that it was his second term that started in 6 AD. There is also evidence the Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a Roman-empire-wide census in 7 BC.
  - Some propose that there was an earlier, undocumented census under Quirinius during Herod’s reign, although there is no strong evidence for this.
  - Census or not, there is no historical connection to people needing to return to their birth town for a census. Censuses were primarily used for taxation purposes. It is possible that Joseph needed to travel to his family’s plot of land in Bethlehem.

<https://crossexamined.org/really-census-time-caesar-augustus/>

## Part 2: The Time of Year of Jesus' Birth

### Review from last week:

Last week I talked about the Gregorian Calendar and the placement of 1 AD as the birth year of Jesus—and the complexities associated in doing so. Several clues in Matthew and Luke limit the range of Jesus birth to 8 BC at the absolute minimum, to 6 AD at the maximum. It's out of the ordinary to be able to date an event that occurred over 2,000 years ago to such accuracy—but this was no ordinary event. Thus, scholars have sought to be more precise and eliminate any inconsistencies, like Herod dying in 4 BC but the census taking place in 6 AD. When it comes to Biblical truths, often for nefarious purposes, historians like to disprove the authenticity of the Bible by such inconsistencies. Yet time and time again, the Bible ends up proving itself when further evidence is revealed. I believe this is and will be the case here.

I did some more study after last week's podcast, and I have updated the outline which is on [theWitheredFigTree.com](http://theWitheredFigTree.com) if you'd like to see more information and evidence about this.

#### I. Are the year and date important?

- a. People like to observe a remembrance on the day of the year when the event happened.
- b. People like to say, "x number of years ago" something happened. Perhaps one can be more emphatic if they can say, "Precisely 2024 years ago, Christ was born".
- c. For me what is important are the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and the consistency of the Bible.

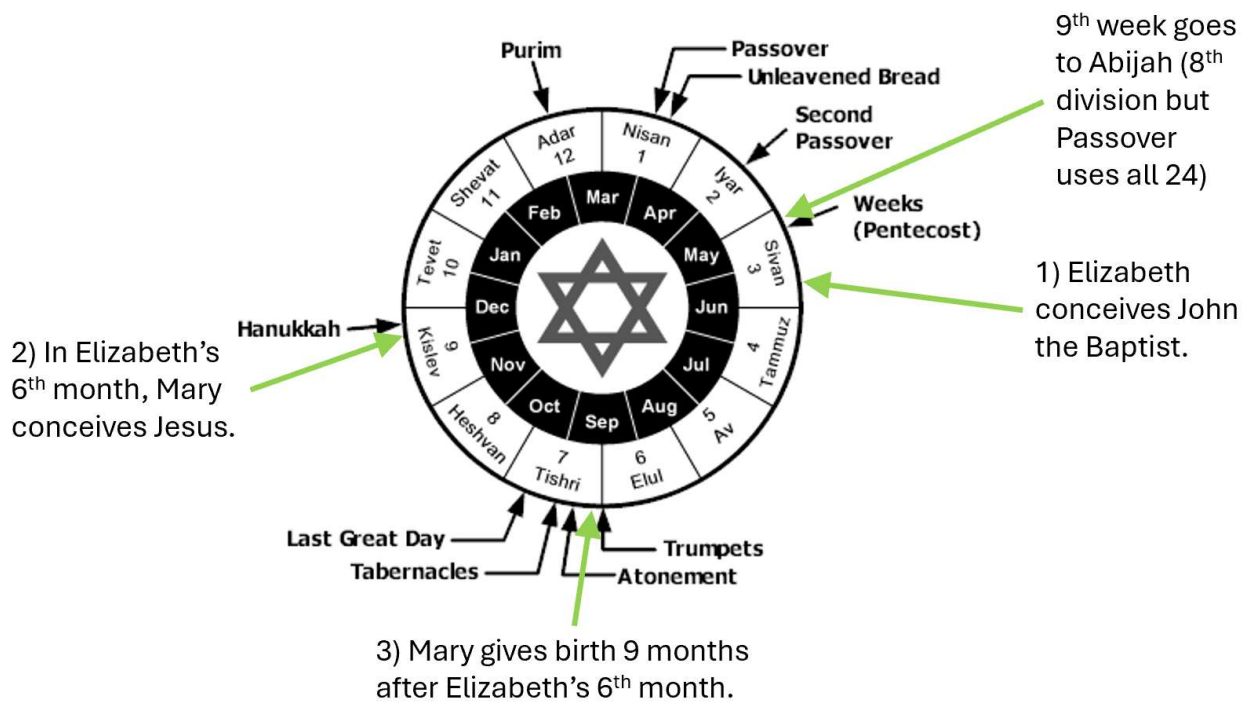
#### II. Where did we get December 25<sup>th</sup> from?

- a. It is thought to be a combination of the pagan celebration of the winter solstice and Saturnalia and the Roman holiday Sol Invictus. The "tree" part of our present-day Christmas culture comes from Saturnalia, where Romans would decorate their homes and temples with evergreen boughs to mark the solstice.
- b. The first recorded instance of celebrating Christ's birth on Dec 25<sup>th</sup> was in 336 AD during the reign of Constantine. Some scholars believe Constantine chose this date to weaken the significance of the pagan celebrations.
- c. Note: While the solstices and equinoxes occur on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month at present, the Romans aligned their calendar to the 25<sup>th</sup>.
- d. There is evidence that 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century Christian writers, Tertullian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo, connected December 25<sup>th</sup> to the conception of Jesus.

#### III. Does the Bible give hints as to what the actual time of year was?

- a. Yes, it's all in Luke chapters 1 and 2:
  - i. 1:5: John the Baptist's father, Zechariah was a Levite in the division Abijah.
  - ii. 1:23-24: After his return, Elizabeth conceives John the Baptist.

- iii. 1:26: Mary conceives Jesus in Elizabeth's sixth month.
  - iv. 2:8: There were shepherds living out in the fields. This is only done in temperate months.
  - v. Given the table of the priestly divisions (from 1Chron 24:7-19), this means Abijah served in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> weeks of the year, and this would mean Jesus was born in September or March.
  - vi. The nighttime temperatures in Judea in March are 45 to 48 F. This is too cold and why shepherds would only stay in the fields typically from May (72-82 F) until September (65 to 72 F), putting much more probability of a September conception of Jesus. Given the mild weather at this time of year, this is highly plausible.
  - vii. The nighttime temperatures in December are 43 to 50 F. The shepherds are not out in the fields in December.
- b. A September birth could mean Jesus was born on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, or Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles. Both of these would have amazing spiritual significance.



<https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/when-was-jesus-really-born-spoiler-not-in-december/>

## Part 3: The Inn, the Star, and the Magi

### Review from last week:

Last week talked about how information from the Bible, namely 1Chron 24:7-19 and Luke 1 verse 5 and verses 23-26 could be gleaned to point to just two times of the year in which Jesus could have been born, late March and late September; and furthermore how Luke 2:8 and a little knowledge of the evening temperatures in Judea could refine that to just one time of year: late September. Therefore, December 25<sup>th</sup> is not a possibility but was instead chosen in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century to replace a set of pagan holidays with a Christian holiday.

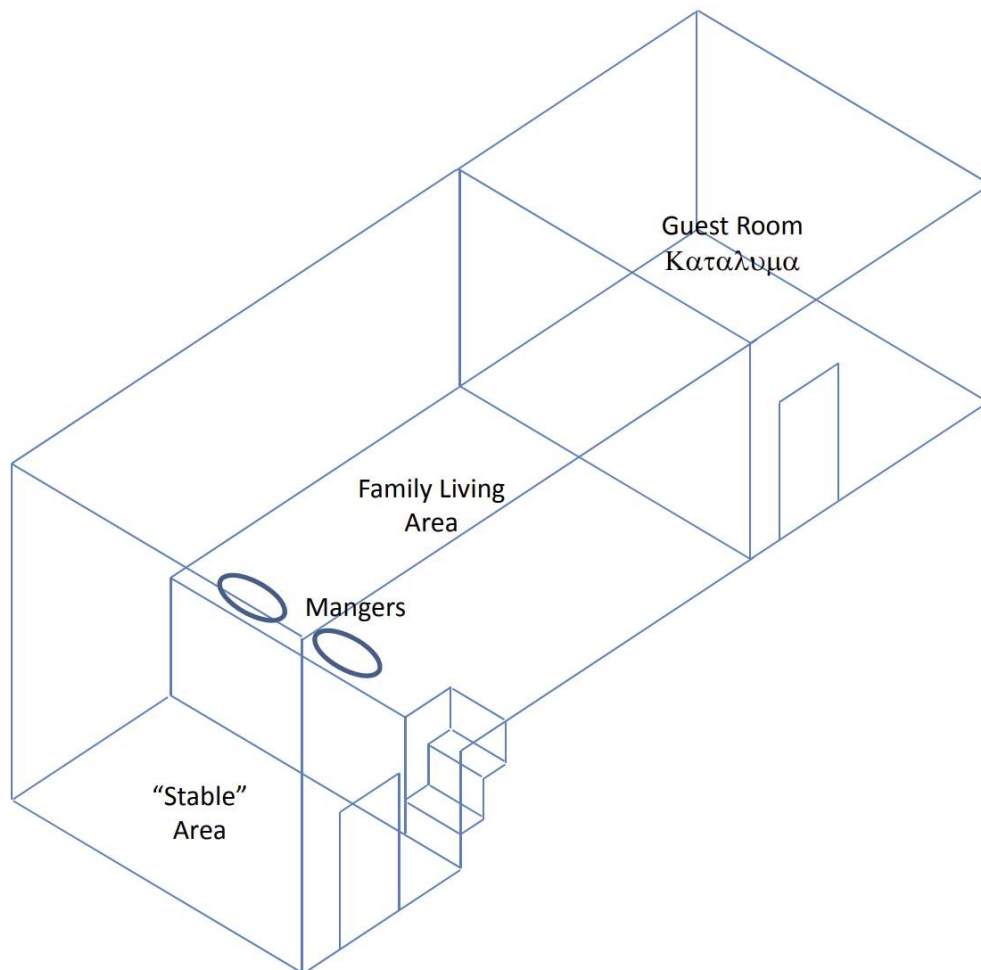
Today we're going to talk about three other elements of the Christmas story and see if we can apply 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture to understand them more clearly.

- I. The Inn with no room
  - a. The entire story comes from one obscure verse, Luke 2:7, "*and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no for them in the inn*" (NIV-1984).
  - b. Firstly, what is the current story told in Christmas books and movies? Mary is in labor. She and Joseph see an Inn (a small public lodging house serving food and drink to travelers) and approach it. A heartless innkeeper opens the door and tells them there is no room for them and—despite her being in labor—directs them to a nearby stable where she gives birth amongst the stable occupants (cattle, sheep, and maybe a donkey). Is this what really happened, or are we "Hollywoodizing" it a bit?
  - c. Were there even multi-room buildings built for the sole purpose of sheltering travelers in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? Actually, there were. The Greek word for these ancient hotels is πανδοχεῖον, pronounced pando-chay-on, and literally means "receives all". It's only used once in the Bible, not in Luke Chapter 2 but in Luke 10:34 in the story of the Good Samaritan.
  - d. The Greek word in Luke 2:7 is κατάλυμα (kata-luma). This word refers to the attached guest room of ancient houses. 6 popular but older Bible translations use "inn" (NASB, ESV, NIV, ASV, AMP, and KJV.), but 3 newer NIV variants correctly use "guest room" (NIV WS, TNIV, NIV). Kenneth E Bailey in his book, [Jesus through middle eastern eyes](#), describes ancient middle eastern homes. This same Greek word is used two other times in the Gospels and in both of those places (Mark 14:14 and Luke 22:11), where Jesus is telling his disciples what to say when securing a room for Passover, it is translated "guest room" by all the 9 translations given before. Why did translators choose "inn" in Luke 2? Likely because it doesn't make sense to our modern ears that Mary and Joseph would



go to some random person's house to give birth. But remember, Joseph is from Bethlehem because his family's ancestral land is there (verse 4).

- e. So, what really happened? Joseph and Mary went to a relative's home in Bethlehem. Other relatives were already there in the guest room, so they stayed in the main family room. While they were there, the time came for Jesus to be born. This is from verse 6 which doesn't say she was in labor as they arrived and gave birth that very night. The image is a drawing I made from the description of ancient houses in Kenneth Bailey's book. Note how the stable is in the house! We wouldn't dream of this in modern times, but in those times, while smelly, had several advantages: the animals were natural heaters, they would also benefit from being protected indoors and would be safe from thieves. The mangers were simply carved-out bowl-shaped areas to place hay. The put Jesus there because its natural basinet (assuming the animals use the other manger for food). Joseph and Mary remained there for a time while Jesus was a newborn, but we don't know for how long—perhaps a few weeks.



## II. The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi

- a. The story of the star and the Magi only appears in Matthew 2:1-12.
- b. The Greek word μάγος (mahg-os) simply means “magi” or “sorcerer”. In Acts 8:9, Simon practiced μαγεύω (mahg-oo-oh) or sorcery. Magi is often associated with a priestly class of individuals in ancient Persia and Arabia called the Zoroastrians. They were known for their expertise in astrology, astronomy, and dream interpretation.
- c. The story seems very out of place. Matthew, the Gospel aimed primarily at a Jewish audience, speaking of individuals from some other country recognizing the birth of the King of the Jews and traveling from afar to visit him. And Luke, written to a Gentile audience doesn’t mention it at all—very odd. Besides the fact that this actually happened, Matthew includes this because:
  - i. It emphasizes Jesus being born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of Micah 5:2, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”
  - ii. It gives the reason for why Joseph and Mary had to escape to Egypt and then return to Judea, fulfilling Hosea 11:1, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”
  - iii. It shows that Jesus was not just for the Jews, but a universal leader, which fulfills Isa 2:2-3, “In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob.’”
- d. In the beginning of the story, the star is able to awaken the Magi to the birth of the king of the Jews and direct them to Jerusalem; but at the end of the story, the star is able to direct the Magi precisely to the house where Jesus is.
  - i. The Zoroastrians did have a prophecy of a savior figure called Saoshyant, who was expected to bring about the triumph of good over evil, resurrect the dead, and be born of a virgin. This is found in their book, the Zend Avesta in Yasht 13 and 30.
  - ii. The Jewish priests and teachers (Mat 2:4) could have connected the star a prophecy of the non-Israelite prophet Balaam. Balaam was from Syria and his prophecies would have been known outside of Israel. In Numbers 24:

*<sup>1</sup>Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not resort to divination as at other times, but turned his face toward the wilderness. <sup>2</sup> When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him <sup>3</sup> and he spoke his message...<sup>17</sup> "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.*

- e. Whatever the star was, I don't think it was some conjunction or supernova, which astronomers like to ascribe it to. It had to have started with some astral phenomena that would have gotten the attention of the Magi, but then it turned into a stellar guide which first brought them internally to Jerusalem (to start a frenzy with Herod and the Jewish scholars) but then guided them directly to the house in which Jesus and his family were stayed.
- f. Regarding the gifts of the Magi, gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, much has already been written. It is because of the number of gifts that most depictions of the Magi show three of them, but we actually don't know the number.
  - i. The Magi likely brought these expensive gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh because they symbolized royalty, spirituality, and sacrifice.
  - ii. The Jews would have seen them as symbolic of kingship, the priesthood, and anointing, respectively. Myrrh was used to anoint bodies for burial. The Messiah was known as the "Anointed One", and the myrrh would foreshadow of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.

## Part 4: The Year of Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

### Review from last week:

Last week talked about three parts of the Christmas story: the inn, the star of Bethlehem and the magi. It turns out, even though there were inns in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it was not an “inn” that had no room—it was a guest room of a house, called a κατάλυμα in Greek, which was already full, likely with other relatives of Joseph's family who had come to Bethlehem for the census. As we learned in part 2, Jesus was born in September, a month with moderate temperatures, so the shepherds would stay out in the fields with the animals they shepherded. This left the main room of the 1<sup>st</sup> century house devoid of the animals which would stay in the “stable” part of the room for warmth and protection. Furthermore, this left the mangers, sink-like recesses made in the floor, open to be used as a makeshift basinet for Jesus when he was born sometime after they arrived. We also talked about how the magi may have been Zoroastrians from Arabia or Persia, who had a prophecy, possibly from the non-Israelite prophet Balaam, about a new star being a harbinger of a new king of the world.

Today we're moving on from Christmastime to Easter. As this series is devoted to the dates of Christianity, we'll talk about what year Jesus was crucified on. Originally, I thought this would be a 4-part series, but now it looks like it will be a 5-part series, where next week we'll talk about the day of the week Jesus was crucified.

- I. In what year was Jesus crucified relative to his birth year?
  - a. From Part 1, we know the range of years in which Jesus was born is 8 BC to 6 AD.
  - b. From Luke 3:23 we know Jesus started his ministry when he was “about” 30 years old. Let's give that a +/-1 year uncertainty (i.e. older than 29 but younger than 31).
  - c. Examining the chronology of events and holidays mentioned in the four Gospels, theologians have computed the length of Jesus' ministry to 3 to 3 and a half years. In the Gospel of John, Jesus starts his ministry in 1:35, records his first Passover in 2:13, a Passover/festival in 5:1, another Passover in 6:4, and the Passover on which he was crucified in 19:31.
  - d. This puts Jesus' death in the absolute range of 23 AD to 40 AD. That's a very large range based on the uncertainty of his birth year, his age when he started his ministry, and the length of his ministry ending with his crucifixion.
- II. In what year was Jesus crucified relative to the destruction of the Temple?
  - a. What if we could work backwards from another date with less uncertainty?
    - i. The dates of the destruction of the Temple are very well known: the 9 and 10<sup>th</sup> of Av, August of 70 AD.

- ii. If there were some sort of gauge as to how long before the destruction of the Temple that Jesus was crucified, that would be extremely useful. And, fortunately, there is. It comes from the Jewish Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma, pages 39b:

*The Sages taught: During the tenure of Shimon HaTzaddik, the lot for God always arose in the High Priest's right hand; after his death, it occurred only occasionally; **but during the forty years prior to the destruction of the Second Temple**, the lot for God did not arise in the High Priest's right hand at all. So too, the strip of crimson wool that was tied to the head of the goat that was sent to Azazel did not turn white, and the westernmost lamp of the candelabrum did not burn continually.*

- iii. What is this text talking about? It's actually quite amazing, and I'm surprised that more Christians aren't aware of it.
  - 1. For the 40 years prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a strange thing happened: the "lot for God", a white-colored coin/token (white symbolized purity) which was indicated the goat to be sacrificed, never came up in the priest's right hand.
  - 2. This means it always came up in his left hand, and therefore, in the years 30 AD to 69 AD, it was always the goat on the High Priest's left side that was sacrificed; and the goat on his right side that always had the black token, called the "lot of Azazel", which was set free with a red-crimson-dyed scarf tied around its neck that was set free into the wilderness.
  - 3. Furthermore, it was expected that the crimson scarf would turn white (either because of supernatural or natural reasons like weathering and sun-bleaching) because this was a sign that God had indeed forgiven the transgressions the Jewish people had committed in the prior year.
  - 4. While the Talmud doesn't explicitly state how often the lot for God came up in the priest's right hand, the text implies it most often did (i.e. it should be 50% of the time, but God's power, it was well above 50%), and that the scarf always turned white (even if by purely natural reasons).
- iv. Therefore, the odds that the black token would randomly appear in the priest's right hand 40 years in a row are astronomically low (one in a trillion). And the black token in his right hand just once was considered a bad omen because of verses like Exo 15:6, "Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy.", Psalms 16:11f, "with eternal pleasures at your right hand", and Psalms 110:1, "The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Imagine how ominously bad it would be 40 years in a row.
- v. In addition, the number 40 had symbolic meaning of judgement and transformation: It rained for 40 days and 40 nights during the Flood; Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai twice, fasting and receiving the

Law from God; the spies explored the land of Canaan for 40 days; and, most notably, the Jews wandered in the desert for 40 years. And I found at least 10 other references in the OT to 40 days, like the lengths of the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon.

- g. Therefore, the Jews would have known that the period of these omens was precisely 40 years—not about 40. This means the first ominous event would have occurred in Yom Kippur in 30 AD.
- h. Although there's no direct Jewish texts connecting the 40-year period with Christ, several early Christian writers, like Eusebius and Tertullian did make the connection. The Jews were only able to connect it to God being against them for some reason.
- i. Therefore, from a Christian point of view, there is great spiritual evidence (i.e. the omens at the Temple) that Jesus was crucified on the Passover of AD 30. We can then work backward from there to narrow in on the range of years of his birth. Depending on the length of his ministry (3 to 3 ½ years) and his age when he started his ministry (29 to less than 31), his age at crucifixion was 32 to less than 33 ½.
- j. However, if we know he was born in September and crucified in March, then there would have to be a half-year remainder at his death. In other words, some number of years and a half. This means his age had to be 32 ½ or 33 ½, and this puts his birth in late September of 5 or 4 BC.

Next week we'll talk about the day of the week Jesus was crucified. Traditionally, this is Friday, but could he have been crucified on a different day of the week?

## Part 5: The Day of the Week of Jesus' Crucifixion

### Review from last week:

Last week we talked about the year of Jesus' death and how it can be uniquely "reverse engineered" combining the solid date of the destruction of the Temple on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 70 AD, with the lesser known 40-years of omens at the Temple. These omens started the day of Jesus crucifixion and continued (at least) every Yom Kippur from 30 AD until 69 AD. These omens were written about in the Jewish Babylonian Talmud (Tractate of Yoma, page 39b), Josephus' The Jewish War (Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 3), and in Tacitus' Histories (Book 5, Chapter 13). I mentioned a few things last week, but here's list full list bizarre events:

- 1) Darkness came over Jerusalem for three hours while Jesus was on the cross.
- 2) The curtain of the Temple was torn in two.
- 3) There was an earthquake that split stones and opened tombs, and the bodies of many holy people came out of their tombs and appeared to people in Jerusalem.
- 4) A star or comet resembling a sword appeared over Jerusalem for a year.
- 5) A bright light shone around the altar in the Temple during Passover for half an hour.
- 6) The heavy eastern gate of the Temple (which required 30 men to open) would open on its own.
- 7) A vision of chariots and soldiers running through the clouds was seen across the sky.
- 8) A cow brought for sacrifice at the Temple gave birth to a lamb.
- 9) A man named Jesus of Ananus continuously prophesied doom over Jerusalem for years until he was killed during the siege.
- 10) At every Yom Kippur from 30 AD until 69 AD, the high priest randomly picked the white "lot for God", the token for the sacrificed goat, in his left hand.
- 11) At every Yom Kippur from 30 AD until 69 AD, the crimson thread tied to the scapegoat's horn did not turn white.

Therefore, given these miraculous omens given to the Jews (I believe to wake them up to the fact that the Law had ended, their sacrifices were no longer accepted, and Jesus was the Messiah), Jesus was crucified on the Passover of 30 AD.

### I. The Times of Jesus' last day

The NIV translates from "hours of the day" to modern timing. NIV1984 and all others keep the original timing. This is important because they mess up in John who uses Roman timing which is equivalent already to modern timing. Therefore, I will use NIV1984 below.

- Mt, Mk, and Lk use Jewish timing which started at sunrise.

- John uses Roman timing (likely because he covers the Roman court scene) which started at midnight.

### **Pilate's "special court" was at 6 AM**

John 19:14 It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

Jesus is then handed over to the soldiers, who flog him and then mock and beat him. Then they take him for crucifixion.

### **Jesus was crucified at 9 in the morning**

Mark 15:25 It was the third hour when they crucified him.

### **From noon until 3 PM there was darkness and then Jesus died just after 3 PM**

Mt 27:45-56 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ... And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Mark 15:33-41 At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. ... With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

Lk 23:44-49 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ... "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

Jn 19:28-30 – [John just says "later"] Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, ... Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

- Note: This timing (3 PM) corresponds with the daily Jewish sacrifices and emphasizes the fulfillment of Jesus as the ultimate sacrificial Lamb.

### **At Jesus' death**



Immediately upon his death, there is an earthquake, and the curtain of the Temple is torn in two.

### **Jesus' Resurrection**

Mt 28:1-8, Mk 16:1-8, Lk 24:1-10: On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. <sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. <sup>5</sup> In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen!

**Note:** Mt 27:51f-56 is not in chronological order. It really occurred at the morning of the resurrection: The earth shook, the rocks split <sup>52</sup> and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup> They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. <sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" <sup>55</sup> Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. <sup>56</sup> Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

## **II. The day of the Week of Jesus' Crucifixion**

- A. Was Jesus crucified on Friday, as is traditionally held? It has been this way because Mark and John say:

Mark 16:42 It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, ...

John 19:31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

- B. So that's it then, it has to be the day before the regular Saturday sabbath, right?
- C. No, because the day after Passover is the Festival of Unleavened bread, which is a special sabbath on which food could be prepared. This is the day that Sedar Meals are eaten. The Passover meal is simple: lamb with bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and wine.

Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23 talk about Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Exo 12:16 On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat; that is all you may do.

17 “Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

D. Mat 12:40: For as Jonah was **three days and three nights** in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

**April**

|           |           |            |              |             |           |             |           |
|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| 4 Sunday  | 5 Monday  | 6 Tuesday  | 7 Wednesday  | 8 Thursday  | 9 Friday  | 10 Saturday | 11 Sunday |
|           |           |            | Passover     | F. of U.B.  |           | Sabbath     |           |
| 11 Sunday | 12 Monday | 13 Tuesday | 14 Wednesday | 15 Thursday | 16 Friday | 17 Saturday | 18 Sunday |

Nisan

**April**

|           |           |            |              |             |            |             |           |
|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| 3 Sunday  | 4 Monday  | 5 Tuesday  | 6 Wednesday  | 7 Thursday  | 8 Friday   | 9 Saturday  | 10 Sunday |
|           |           |            |              | Passover    | F. of U.B. | Sabbath     |           |
| 10 Sunday | 11 Monday | 12 Tuesday | 13 Wednesday | 14 Thursday | 15 Friday  | 16 Saturday | 17 Sunday |

Nisan

**April**

|          |           |            |              |             |           |             |           |
|----------|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| 2 Sunday | 3 Monday  | 4 Tuesday  | 5 Wednesday  | 6 Thursday  | 7 Friday  | 8 Saturday  | 9 Sunday  |
|          |           |            |              |             | Passover  | Sabbath     |           |
| 9 Sunday | 10 Monday | 11 Tuesday | 12 Wednesday | 13 Thursday | 14 Friday | 15 Saturday | 16 Sunday |

Nisan

The Wednesday scenario is the only where you can get three 24-hour periods, but unless Jesus rose before the twilight of the beginning of Sunday, he would be in the grave 4 nighttimes.

The Thursday scenario is the only one where you can get 3 daytimes and 3 nighttimes.

The Friday scenario can have 3 daytimes, but only 2 nighttimes no matter how you do it.

Therefore, my belief is that Jesus was crucified on the Gregorian date of Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 70 AD.