



January 3, 2025

When was Jesus Born?

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Several have asked over the last few days “when was Jesus born?” - While it is still fresh on our minds, I thought I would answer that question so all can benefit.

Interestingly this year December 25, 2024 - January 2, 2025 was Hanukkah (or the Feast of Dedication) which takes place on the Jewish tenth month. It commemorates the cleaning of the Temple following the descriptions by Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

This past week or two has also seen the arrival of more winter weather across the U.S., the coming of the Winter Solstice on December 21, and the arrival of December 25. The song lyrics that ring throughout most stores “It’s the most wonderful time of the year” makes me wonder why for multiple reasons.

Many Christians simply accept the *tradition* that Christ was born on December 25, but the Scriptural indicators point to the autumn of the year for the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. Surprised?

In the ancient celebrations of the Roman Saturnalia and Brumalia, there was a “supposed birth” that took place around December 25th - the birth or rebirth of the sun. Mithra, the Persian god of light and sacred contracts, was supposedly born out of a rock on December 25. In the third century [274 AD] the Roman emperor Aurelian established the festival of *Dies Invicti Solis*, (the Day of the Invincible Sun) on December 25. "Yule" is a Chaldee word meaning infant or little

child. December 25th was called by the pagan Anglo-Saxons as "Yule day" and the night that preceded it - "mother night" long before any contact with Christianity.

There appears to be a connection of the biblical Nimrod and his wife Semiramis with the Egyptian gods Osiris and Isis. The Egyptian goddess Isis (queen of heaven) was claimed to have given birth to her child at the time of the Winter solstice. Semiramis connects with Rhea, the goddess of fortifications. Kronos or Saturn was the husband of Rhea and is traced back to the first king of Babylon, Ninus or Nimrod. Historians trace the tradition of a special birth on December 25 with the mysterious legend of an evergreen tree growing up overnight on December 25.

In sermon messages over the years I have reviewed the several indicators of an Autumn birth of Christ, the King of the Jews, as the Magi described Him (Matthew 2:2) and as Jesus acknowledged before Pilate. (Matthew 27:11)

The most significant clues relate to the record in Luke that Jesus was conceived very close to 6 months following the conception of John the Baptist (Luke 1:26-36)

The year of the birth of John and Jesus is controversial with many. I lean more towards 5 B.C.E. for various reasons I don't have time to cover in this brief letter. One reason though is that I favor the date of Spring 4 B.C.E. as the date of the death of Herod the Great. The conception of John likely took place approximately a month following the completion of the priestly duties of his father Zecharias who served in the course of Abijah. The course of Abijah was the eighth course, with the first course serving at the beginning of the first month Abib. (1 Chronicles 24:7, 10) Each course served for week starting on the weekly Sabbath. (2 Chronicles 23:8) All the courses served for a week on the festivals of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Zecharias would have completed his duties following the week beginning with Pentecost in 6 B.C.E. near the end of May. Allowing several weeks to return home and engage in fulfilling the vision and prediction of John's birth would place John's conception near the end of June 6 B.C.E. and his birth near the end of March 5 B.C.E.

Considering that Jesus was conceived around the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy would place the conception of Jesus near the end of December 6 B.C.E. and his birth near the end of September 5 B.C.E. Depending of the calendar construction used then, the Feast of Tabernacles took place close to that time.

We can't be sure about the exact date or even the exact year, but this analysis can be applied to various years and the result still always show that it was in the Autumn when Jesus was born, not in the dead of winter in the month of December.

Let's look at other factors that indicate an autumn season for the birth of Jesus.

An enrollment or census was decreed by the Caesar Augustus for the area involving Judea and this required travel to ones' birth city. (Luke 2:1-3) Joseph and Mary (who was pregnant with the child Jesus), traveled to Bethlehem where Jesus was to be born. (Luke 2:4-6) These events were scheduled when travel conditions would be good, not during the rainy season of November to March. This would reinforce the time of year of the journey to Bethlehem and birth of Jesus during the autumn season when travel conditions would usually be ideal. This would also point to the priestly rotation as the one that began in Nisan and not the one that began in Tishri.

At the time Jesus was born, there were many other visitors to the area because the "inn" (Greek "katlauma" or guest room) did not have the room to allow privacy. (Luke 2:6) The lower area of many houses were often used to winter animals. The house where Jesus was born was not occupied by animals at the time of his birth and the manger could then be used as a makeshift crib with some straw and blankets. The many visitors in the area would indicate that the time was near the Feast of Tabernacles when the area would be overflowing with those attending the Feast. The unoccupied manger would indicate a time other than winter. (Yet, we see the opposite of this depiction in many lawns this time of year).

Luke records that there were "shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night" at the time of the birth of Jesus. (Luke 2:8) Not only were the sheep out in the fields, but the shepherds were out there as well. This would indicate a time of year that was not in winter.

Notice this comment from "The Bible as History, Werner Keller, 1981 Edition, pp. 331-332" "The temperature readings show over the period of three months [December, January, and February]... the incidence of frost... The first two months have also the greatest rainfall in the year: approximately 6 inches in December, and nearly 8 inches in January. According to all existing information the climate of Palestine has not changed appreciably in the last 2,000 years...At Christmas-time Bethlehem is in the grip of frost, and in the Promised Land no cattle would have been in the fields in that temperature. This fact is borne out by a remark in the Talmud to the effect that in that neighborhood the flocks were put out to grass in March and brought in again at the beginning of November. They remained out in the open for almost eight months."

So, although it's true that the Scriptures do not tell us the exact date of the year of the birth of Jesus, the Scriptural clues still lead us to conclude that the time of year was in the Autumn and not in December or Winter.

Oh yes, and a final thought, the Scriptures neither instruct us to celebrate the event nor the time of the birth of Jesus. - They do however instruct us to recognize the time and circumstances of the death of our Savior at the time of Passover. The apostle Paul instructed, "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*" (1 Corinthians 11:26) You and I are to observe the appointed times specified by the Eternal God, not holidays invented by human beings that all too often contain pagan overtones.

I hope I answered some questions, and caused you to ask the hard questions, one like "Should we be observing Christmas?" ...just because the world tells us it was Christ's birth.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Scott Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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