

*The Birth of*  
**JESUS**  
*on*  
**YOM TERUAH**  
TISHRI 1 - SEPTEMBER 29, 2 B.C.

Dr. David Newton

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*“In the same region of Bethlehem  
there were some shepherds  
staying out in the fields  
and keeping watch  
over their flocks by night.”*

**Luke 2:8**



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Thanks to everyone at Calvary Chapel in Santa Barbara for encouraging me to convert my regular teaching on this topic into a detailed book. I have done this presentation over 30 times since 1985, usually on or around September 29<sup>th</sup> - the date in 2 BC for the Jewish feast Yom Teruah. It is a blessing to review again the Biblical narrative and extra-Biblical historical accounts to home in on this highly probable date for the birth Jesus.

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And finally, thanks always to my family as we prepare to welcome person number 16 to the ever-expanding crew. I appreciate your love and support as I continue to research, write, and teach on important topics from God’s Word. I am truly a blessed man.

# PREVIEW

“When was Jesus born?” remains a provocative topic. There are dozens of proposals across hundreds of books and websites. This book aims to fit everything about the birth of Jesus and His life after into one fully-integrated timeline. Thirty years of research have always pointed to early fall in 2 BC. It is incredibly compelling that over a dozen separate clues from the Bible align best with the last few days of September in that year. It is even more exciting to find that in 2 BC *Yom Teruah*, the Feast of Blowing Trumpets, occurred on September 29<sup>th</sup>. This was the first of Tishri, New Year’s Day on Israel’s calendar.

It was very exciting to realize that those last few days of September fit with a Jewish feast that began at sunset with the blowing of shofar trumpets all over Judea. This could not merely be coincidence. The coordination of so many Biblical references and historical clues is so perfectly logical. Yahweh would not have the promised Messiah born on a random day. Instead, the birth of Jesus on *Yom Teruah* was ordained with finely-tuned precision. This book walks readers step-by-step through the evidence to support that amazing Christmas Day.

# INTRODUCTION

This book presents a comprehensive synopsis of more than 35 years of independent research reviewing videos, hearing others teach in person, as well as podcasts, cassettes, CDs, DVDs, and my own analysis into various source materials [library holdings and online] while developing models relative to the wealth of Biblical references about the birth of Jesus. It is truly an exciting pursuit, because there are so many “touch-points” throughout the Bible that align very well with historical accounts across a wide range of extra-Biblical writings. It is not as if the Bible has a couple of interesting stories but the names, dates, and places do not line up with anything from generally accepted world history, politics, and geography. If that were the case, it would be very easy to discount the birth of Jesus Christ as a fanciful legend or simply quaint folklore on par with Greek mythology. But the exact opposite is the case and it is a very compelling pursuit.

The book is set up to do a logical walk-through of all the various narratives while focusing on several obvious clues that are detailed in the Biblical accounts – that these can only have happened within a very specific and limited window of time in the

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history of our world. For example, our global calendars in both the Julian and Gregorian formats have been based upon the times prior to Jesus' birth. The generally accepted "B.C." is for "before Christ", although most atheists prefer "B.C.E." for "before the common era". The time since His birth is referred to as AD, "anno Domini", the "year of our Lord", while others use "C.E." for "common era". It is quite profound to see that generally speaking, the world's references to past, present, and future dates hinge on the birth of one man who lived 20 centuries ago. That alone presents significant intrigue. It is worth noting there are still various cultural-ethnic calendars such as the Chinese 'year of the rat' that began on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2020 and ends February 11<sup>th</sup> 2021, the Jewish-Hebrew calendar that started with the creation in 3,761 BCE so that 2019-2020 it is the year 5,780 or the Indian-Hindu year that begins in late March, with the year being 78 days less than the contemporary Gregorian calendar.

Chapter Three will examine more closely the key points regarding how we got to our standard global calendar, and how that relates to the Roman version [the Julian calendar, named for Julius Caesar, started in 45 B.C.] and the Gregorian version [named for Catholic Pope Gregory XIII who introduced it in October of 1582]. But the primary issue is that today, our global business, transportation, government, education, and telecommunications activities are all logging time relative to a pivotal year that balances BC and AD due to one man's birth: Jesus of Nazareth. It will be very interesting to review the way

"December 25<sup>th</sup> in the year zero" came into cultural thinking, even as we all chuckled to hear Doc Brown [in the movie *Back To The Future*] set the *DeLorean* time machine control panel for that date as he asked Marty McFly, "Say you want to go back and see the birth of Christ?" Yet, here we are in 2020 and our smartphones, tablets, smart-watches, laptops, desktops, Outlook, Google Calendar, and car dashboards all show Friday, December 25<sup>th</sup> as Christmas Day.

Let's say the most likely window of time for the actual birth of Jesus Christ lies somewhere within five years [plus or minus] of the casual notion "December 25<sup>th</sup> year zero". That means there should be several evidences from within the Bible and the non-biblical historical writers that can triangulate and home in on a fairly precise date that lines up with all accounts pertaining to the rest of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. If multiple clues could settle on a date that "fits" with every area being examined, that would be provocative and compelling. The book is organized to take on this very task one step at a time. Then the full coordination of the various steps will be summarized to see whether all the evidence aligns to one date that satisfies each of the major criteria pertaining to Jesus' life.

The starting point is Chapter One, with a detailed examination of the dozens of promises God made throughout the Torah, the book of Psalms, and the many Old Testament prophets regarding the literal person of Messiah. These will be followed up in Chapter Two with a host of Biblical matters that are each a very

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clear foreshadowing [as a “type”] related to specific details about God’s plan for Messiah and mankind. Chapter Three provides a foundational overview for the historical bases of our modern calendars and addresses the reason the birth of Christ came to be celebrated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. Chapter Four compares two very detailed lineages of Jesus Christ from the Gospels. One genealogy is listed in Matthew’s records and the other is from Luke’s account written to Theophilus.

Chapter Five focuses on the matter of the virgin birth, and why it is such an incredibly important component of the narrative about Messiah. Chapter Six then introduces fourteen explicit clues that together must coordinate around one specific date for the birth of Jesus Christ – such that the content details that define each clue are able to remain 100% intact for that one common date. Chapter Seven pauses to review all of the dates and seasons in a single timeline that demonstrates the consistency of the way all fourteen clues come together in support of ONE common birth date.

Chapter Eight provides an overview of seven of the feasts in Israel’s calendar each year, and how these are in fact prophetic in relationship to the timeline for Messiah. Chapter Nine examines the identity and role of the Magi from the East, and how these Persian-Parthian priests fit into the birth story about Messiah. Chapter Ten then packages all the previous data, clues, Scriptures, timeline, and historical contexts into a unified narrative for what most likely happened on that very first Christmas, and

introduces a connection between Jesus and Hanukkah. The Epilogue provides a summary of the main points from the book. This is followed by two pages asking 'Why It Matters' and nine pages devoted to 'Other Views' that do not agree with most views presented by me. The last page provides some 'Resources' if you would like to dig deeper.

While it remains highly improbable for the Church [and the world at-large] to ever move Christmas Day observances to the date proposed in this book, that was never the intent for my commentary and analysis. The Biblical and historical basis for the birth of Christ happening in early fall [about 3 months ahead of the now-traditional December 25<sup>th</sup>] provides a much more consistent and accurate timeframe that matches both the Biblical narrative along with a wide range of extra-Biblical historical accounts. The annual Christmas season will certainly continue to be a wonderful time that brings attention to remembering God's gift of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want to go on the record that I do not disregard nor condemn December celebrations. But I trust it will be quite eye-opening for you to consider the large body of evidence supporting the date proposed in this book, and how it connects dozens of the Biblical "dots" from so many prophecies pertaining to the Advent and arrival of Messiah in the exact "fullness of time".

The summary position of this book confirms in my mind the encouragement of Romans 15:4 and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:11 that in the end, God's Word will always be incredibly precise in its

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description of events. It confirms the primary source of the Biblical narrative originates from outside of earth and time. In the former, the Apostle Paul reminds us *"what was written in earlier times was for our instruction, so by perseverance and encouragement of the Scriptures we have hope"*. This was my guiding principle: dig deeply and check everything within the robust encouragement of God's Word and great truth of His plans. In the latter passage Paul clarifies *"all that happened to Israel was an example [for us], written down for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come"*. It is so exciting to see how God clearly reveals His plan for Messiah through Israel. May the Lord richly bless your time reading through this book, and especially in the truth of His Word.

- Dr. Dave Newton  
July 2020  
Santa Barbara, California

# CHAPTER 1

## *God's Promised Messiah*

A child is born, a Son is given, He will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace, His government and peace will have no end,  
He will reign on David's throne from that time and forever.

**Isaiah 95**

### FIRST LOOK

The initial Biblical statement about Messiah comes in Genesis 3:15 describing Him as from the seed of a woman. And while the fallen angel Lucifer will bruise Him on the heel, He will in turn *crush the head* of Satan. This describes the temporary impact that death would have on Jesus [like a minor bruise], and the permanent victory Jesus' resurrection has had over Satan. In Colossians 2:15 Paul teaches that Jesus' finished work on the cross has actually disarmed rulers and authorities in the dark, sinful realm of the spiritual dimension, as *He made a public display of them, having triumphed over these by His completed work*. Ephesians 6:12 adds more details to the 'rulers and

authorities' as Paul states that Christians do not wrestle against flesh and blood in this world, but our *conflict is with rulers, powers, and world forces of this darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

#### **MESSIAH IN THE TORAH**

God's promise of Messiah continues throughout the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Perhaps one of the most interesting facets is in Acts 3:22 as Peter quotes from Deuteronomy 18:18 how the Lord spoke that He would "*raise up a prophet from Israel like Moses, put His words in His mouth, and He shall speak all that I command*". Then again, in Acts 7:37, Stephen also uses the same quote of Moses: "*God will raise for you a prophet like me from your brethren*". And in John 7:40, after the crowds listened to Jesus teach they responded, "This really is the Prophet" [referring to the words of Moses they knew so well].

Messiah is also noted in Genesis 3:15, as "her seed" [of a woman], which confirms Mary being pregnant by the Holy Spirit while still being a virgin. The 'seed' is associated with the man, but she had not yet known Joseph intimately. Then in Genesis 12:3, Abraham is given the prophetic promise that through him ALL the families of the earth will be blessed. This was Abraham's belief, that this promise from God would one day happen through his 'seed' [singular], not his seeds [plural]. This was clearly taught and referenced by Paul writing in Galatians 3:16 when he

explained this is *not referring to many* but just to One, and this is the Christ [Messiah].

In Genesis 22, Abraham [the Father] is set to offer his only son Isaac [a foreshadow of Jesus] as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Isaac carried the wood up to the exact place God showed to Abraham. As God intervened, noting that in fact Abraham believed and obeyed God, we read Abraham's prophetic statement in verse 14: "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided". Two thousand years later, that very same place just outside Jerusalem was known as Golgotha, the 'place of the skull'. Jesus carried the wooden crossbeam on His shoulders up that very same mountain as God the Father sacrificed His only Son on the same location foreshadowed by Abraham and Isaac. It is interesting that after Mount Moriah, Isaac is not mentioned again until he is joined to Rebecca, his Gentile bride [Genesis 24], brought to him by the "un-named servant" [a type of the Holy Spirit], as Jesus the Bridegroom is joined to His church, the bride of Revelation 19:6-9 and 21:9.

Also in Genesis 49:10 it speaks prophetically about the Messiah, that the scepter [sovereignty, autonomous reign] shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes. Shiloh is used in the Talmud as a personal name for Mashiach, and also interpreted the same way by the Essenes of the Qumran community in their '*Patriarchal Blessings*'. This will be covered in more complete detail later in Chapter Six.

Jesus the Messiah will literally fulfill being the Passover Lamb spoken of in Exodus 12. John the Baptist pointed to his second cousin Jesus of Nazareth when He came to the Jordan, *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* [John 1:29 and again in verse 36]. Their mothers Elizabeth and Mary were first cousins. Jesus was examined for four days on Nisan 10, 11, 12, and 13 [Sunday April 6<sup>th</sup> through Wednesday April 9<sup>th</sup> of 32 AD] and no blemish was found in Him, even as all the Passover lambs in Israel were being examined prior to being killed on Passover evening [Thursday afternoon]. Jesus was crucified and hung on the cross from 12:00 noon until 3:00pm, the 'evening' of Passover. And like the lambs in Exodus 12, no bone was broken in Messiah, confirmed by Psalm 34:20 and fulfilled in John 19:33-36 when the Roman soldiers find Jesus already dead and do not break His legs.

Furthermore, Moses wrote in Numbers 24:17 he could see Him [God's promised Messiah], but not now, not in Moses' lifetime. He could behold Him, but not near, as it would be farther off in the future. For ***a star shall come out of Jacob*** and a scepter shall rise out of Israel. Matthew 2:2 confirms the Magi came to worship Him who was born 'King of the Jews' for ***they saw His star as it rose***. Revelation 22:16 states Jesus is the 'bright morning star' [not to be confused with Isaiah 14:12 speaking of Lucifer the morning star and son of the dawn fell from heaven].

Moses also records that similar to how he lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness [Numbers 21:9] so that all in the

Israelite camp who looked upon it would be healed of their snake bites, so too John 3:14-18 states, *"as Moses who lifted up the bronze snake, the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever looks to Him and believes in Him will have eternal life"*. Jesus was lifted up on the cross so that ALL who will look upon Him and believe will have their sins forgiven.

### **MESSIAH IN THE PROPHETS**

God's promise of the Messiah continues throughout the writings of the prophets: Zechariah, Isaiah, Ruth, Malachi, Daniel, Hosea, Samuel, and Micah. For example, Jeremiah explains that a day is coming [31:31] when the Lord will make a brand New Covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah. And this will NOT be in accordance with the one the Lord did with their forefathers when God led them by the hand out of Egypt, for Jeremiah says that Israel broke that covenant. This confirms what Jesus said [Luke 22:20] as He took the cup with His disciples during the initial meal of unleavened bread at the Last Supper, *"This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood"*. Paul notes this commemorative meal in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:25, and refers again to it in Hebrews 8:8, while 8:13 clarified that the New Covenant has in fact made the original Covenant obsolete. In Hebrews 9:15 Paul further comments how the New Covenant by the death of Jesus has now redeemed all the transgressions committed under the original covenant. Finally in Hebrews 12 the New Covenant in Jesus' blood is better than

## *God's Promised Messiah*

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Abel's sacrifice and the fulfillment of the Passover lambs being killed [which were only symbolic, and never actually covered sin].

Zechariah 12:10 states that they will look upon Him whom they have pierced, referring to the Roman soldier who thrust his spear into the side of Jesus' chest, causing blood and water from the enlarged cardiac sack to flow out. This is the same thing Isaiah 53:5 says of Messiah, that He would be pierced for our transgressions. It also states in Isaiah 53:5 that by His stripes we are healed, referring directly to the lashing wounds across the back of Jesus from when Pilate had Him scourged [see Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 18, and John 19].

The prophet Zechariah also wrote [chapter 11:12-13] that Messiah would be betrayed for exactly 30 pieces of silver. Judas Iscariot was paid those same 30 pieces of silver by the Chief Priest [Matthew 26: 14-15] in exchange for telling where Jesus was so they could arrest Him. Later, Judas regrets his betrayal of the Lord and returns the silver to the Jewish leaders [Matthew 27:3]. Because it was then 'blood money' they did not want to accept it back into their treasury, so they used the funds to purchase a potter's field. This was then known in the Aramaic as the "*Akeldama*", *the field of blood*.

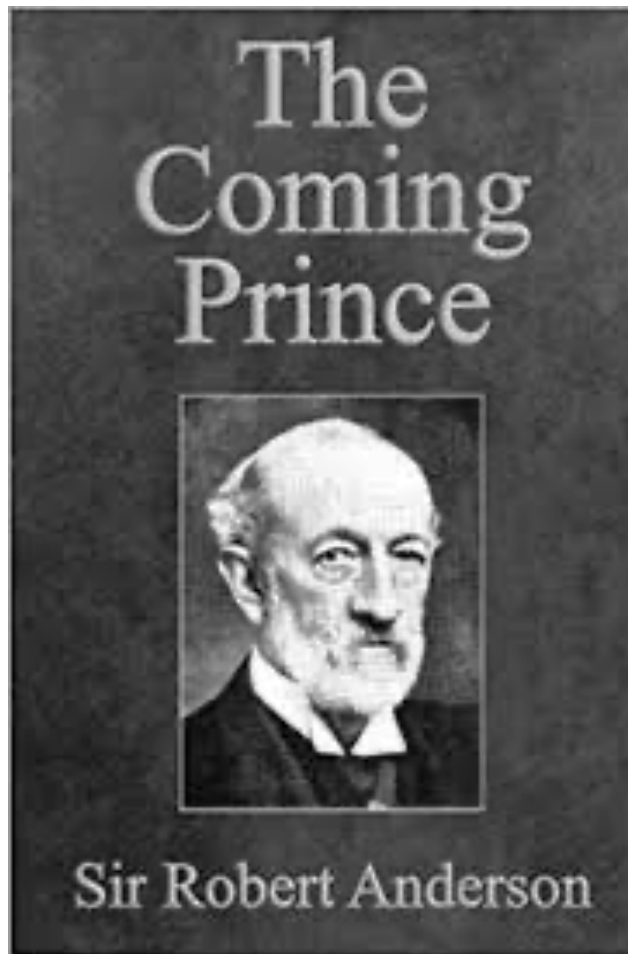
In addition, Samuel prophesied [2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 17:12-16] that Messiah would be a descendant of King David. This is consistent with both Isaiah 11:1, that "*a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse*" [who was David's father] "*and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit*", as well as in verse 10, that Messiah will be of "*the root*

*of Jesse who will stand as a signal for the peoples, and whose resting place will be glorious". These also match Jeremiah 23:5-6, that the Lord will raise from David a "Branch of Righteousness", a King who will reign and prosper to execute judgment and righteousness in the earth, in His days Judah will be saved and His name will be the "Lord of Righteousness". Jeremiah 33:14-15 agrees that the Lord will raise the true Branch of David's line. Finally, Isaiah 9:6-7 continues the same topic with how the Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace "will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of His ancestor David".*

In Malachi 3:1 it states Messiah will have a **messenger who comes ahead of Him**. Jesus clarified in Matthew 11:7-10 that John the Baptist was more than just another prophet sent from God, that he was in fact *"the one about whom it is written, 'Behold I send my messenger ahead of You who will prepare Your way before You'."* Isaiah 40:3 spoke about a voice calling, *"Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness, make smooth in the desert a highway for our God."* When some priests and Levites were sent to speak with John the Baptist at the Jordan River [John 1:19-24], they asked, "Who are you?" and he said, *"I am a voice crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord'.* In John 3:11-12 the Baptist also said, *"after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not even worthy to carry - and He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire".*

Daniel 9 states very clearly that Messiah will come at an EXACT time. There would be 69 'weeks of years' designated for God's

people Israel [69 times 7 = 483 years or 173,880 days]. This is a very specific period of time that commences with a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and culminates with "Messiah the King". That specific decree was given by Artaxerxes Longimanus on March 15<sup>th</sup> in 445 BC, the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan on the Jewish calendar. Thanks to Scotland Yard investigator Sir Robert Anderson, who worked with the Astronomer Royal at the Greenwich Observatory just outside London, he published *The Coming Prince* in 1894.



It showed those exact number of days landed precisely on Sunday April 6<sup>th</sup> in 32 AD. This was the very day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of a donkey, to fulfill Zechariah 9:9, *"Behold your King is coming to you, He is meek and humble riding on a donkey even a colt, the foal of a donkey"*. This was also the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan and the beginning of Passover week in Jerusalem [see Luke 19 for the details of that first Palm Sunday]. In fact, it was such an exact day that Jesus withdrew [John 6:15] to the mountain alone when they tried to make Him king prior to that Day, because it was not yet His time. This occurred again in John 7:30, as well as John 7:44, and each time He said that His hour had not yet come. The April 6<sup>th</sup> [Nisan 10] day was so precise that when the people hailed Him with the Messianic Psalm 118, the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke the people, for they knew this meant that Jesus was being received as the Anointed One. But Jesus replied [Luke 19:40], *"I tell you, if these people become silent, the very stones will cry out"*. That was literally Jesus' designated day as prophesied by Daniel.

Daniel wrote this prophecy around 600 years before Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled it. In fact it is so precise and remarkable in its accuracy that many critics try to claim that this portion of Daniel must have been written after the fact. But we know for certain there was a complete Old Testament with the book of Daniel in it at least 300 years before Jesus entered Jerusalem. The Septuagint [LXX] Bible in the common Koine-Greek language

was translated from the original Hebrew in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC, when 70 Jewish scholars finished this task in Alexandria, Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

In Ruth chapter 4, Boaz is clearly a foreshadow of the "Kinsman-Redeemer" [Goe] as he purchases a Gentile bride and marries Ruth, a Moabite widow. She is introduced to Boaz by an "un-named servant", who is a type of the Holy Spirit. This is similar to Genesis 24, as He who gets the Gentile bride Rachel for Isaac, who is an Old Testament type or foreshadow of Jesus Christ. Messiah also purchases His Gentile bride [the Church] by His death on the cross, and returns Israel to its promised lands. It is worth noting that the "un-named servant" is noted earlier in Genesis 15:2 as Eleazar, meaning Comforter.

Boaz then proceeds to redeem the homeland for the Jewish woman Naomi and returns her to her ancestral town. The provocative toast at the wedding of Boaz and Ruth [chapter 4, verses 11-12] first declares that Ruth "be like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel" [their sons are the 12 tribes]. Then it says may your house be like the house of Perez [the illegitimate son of Tamar who played a harlot with Judah] as the offspring the Lord will give you by this young woman Ruth. This is quite the marriage reception send-off because Deuteronomy 23:2 says at the birth of a child out of wedlock the lineage is cursed until the tenth generation. However, the tenth generation in Judah's line goes through Salmon [who is 6<sup>th</sup>] to Ruth's husband Boaz [7<sup>th</sup>], their son Obed [8<sup>th</sup>], and grandson

Jesse [9<sup>th</sup>], the father of David [the 10<sup>th</sup> generation], who is then freed from the curse to be anointed king. More details on the incredible two lineages of Jesus will be covered in Chapter Four.

The prophet Hosea made this interesting statement about Messiah [chapter 11, verse 1] *"when Israel was a youth I loved Him and out of Egypt I called my Son"*. This infers that even when Jacob, who is later renamed Israel, was only a youth and just two generations removed from the Promise to Abraham of Messiah, God already loved His Son. Jesus would not be born until about 2,000 years after Abraham, and yet at the time of Israel being a youngster, Yahweh already loved His Son. This same Son, would be called out of Egypt.

This is not speaking of Moses coming out of Egypt, but of *Him who is eternal*, loved hundreds of years before Moses was even born. In Matthew 2:13-14 Joseph is alerted by God in a dream to take his wife Mary with their newborn son Jesus to Egypt and remain there until the Lord tells them it is safe to return, because Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him. So in the middle of the night Joseph got up and took his family to Egypt. Then in verses 19-23, Matthew records that when Herod had died in early 1 BC, a little less than eight months after Jesus was born in September of 2 BC, an angel of the Lord appeared telling Joseph it was safe to return to Judea. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned as the Lord instructed, and settled in the Galilee city of Nazareth. The full details that place Jesus' birth in late September of 2 BC are still to come in Chapters Six and Seven.

It is worth noting that in the closing of Matthew 2:23 the gospel writer inserted the commentary, "This was to fulfill what was spoken of through the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'." The Old Testament has no mention of a Nazarene by any particular prophet. But that is entirely consistent with what Matthew wrote. This was *spoken*, so they knew this from the oral tradition being passed down verbally, and this is attributed to the prophets [plural], which means more than one had prophesied [spoken] that Messiah would be distinct as a Nazarene. And this is also consistent with the statement of Isaiah 53:3, that Messiah would be "despised and rejected", even as Philip told Nathaniel [John 1:45-46] that they had found Mashiach, Jesus from Nazareth the son of Joseph, and he replied, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*"

#### **MESSIAH IN THE PSALMS**

Perhaps the most provocative of the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah occurs in Psalm 22. Taken at its face value and most basic reading, it is a narrative stated in the first person singular that describes Jesus' crucifixion from the most convincing perspective, namely, that of the individual hanging on the cross. Jesus, who is the author of the Word of God, calls attention to this Psalm when He cries out from the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani" - My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?, exactly as this Psalm begins in verse one.

The next specific reference to Jesus on the cross comes in verses 6, 7, and 8 as the one crucified says, "*I am not a man, but*

*like a worm, a reproach of men and despised by the people – all who see me sneer at me and wag their heads saying, ‘Let’s see the Lord deliver you, let God rescue you’ ”. In Luke 23:9 we read that one of the two men crucified with Jesus hurled abuses at Him, saying: “If you’re the Christ save yourself and us”. Matthew 27:42 records that those watching Jesus hang on the cross mocked and scoffed with the taunt: “He saved others, but He can’t even save Himself?”*

The next section of Psalm 22 [verses 11, 12, 13] has the one on the cross saying, *“Be not far from me God, trouble is near, and none can help me”*. He continues, *“Many strong bulls have surrounded me, they open wide their mouths just like a ravening and roaring lion ready to attack”*. Matthew 27 says the onlookers hurled abuses at Jesus, making fun of Him.

Then in verses 14 and 15 comes the description of the one dying: *“I am poured out like water and all of my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax and melting inside me.”* He continues, *“My strength is dried up like a potsherd”* [an old broken piece of a clay pot that is brittle and cracked], *“and my tongue cleaves to my jaws”*. Jesus’ body was contorted, bent, His arms were dislocated from their shoulder sockets. He was dehydrated and called out, *“I thirst”* [John 19:28] so they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a stick and held it up to his lips [verse 29], but Jesus did not take a drink. In verse 17 He says He can see, and even count, His protruding bones from under His stretched skin, as they stare right at Him.

Verse 16 of Psalm 22 expressly states, *"They pierced my hands and feet"*. This is a most startling prophetic word as the Romans did not use crucifixion until around 200 BC, yet David wrote Psalm 22 about 750 years before then. Mark 15:24-26 records how the Romans nailed Jesus' hands and feet to the cross, as described in Matthew 27, Luke 23.

The prophecy of Messiah continues in verse 18, as the one on the cross sees those who divided up His garments among them by casting lots. Luke 23:34 records the Roman soldiers did cast lots among themselves for Jesus' clothing. In John 19:23 this is clarified with more details, as they divided up Jesus' outer garments into four equal parts, one for each soldier, but they cast lots [rolled dice] to see who would get the tunic, which was woven in one piece and had more value.

The final Hebrew word in Psalm 22:31 to close out this prophecy is Asah [pronounced "aw-saw"], translated either as *"he has done it"* or *"it is done"*. This points to John 19:28 as *"Jesus knew that all things on the cross had been completed"* so in John 19:30 He proclaims from the cross *"Tetelestai"* [in the Greek this means "it is finished"]. Taken together, these images and descriptions from Psalm 22 are truly remarkable. Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 in asking why God has forsaken Him. He endures those who sneer and mock Him [e.g.: *"why don't You save Yourself"*]. He can see His bones twisted and He is extremely parched, dehydrated. Both His hands and feet are pierced through with the nails. The soldiers divided His clothing and cast

lots for it. And Jesus concluded His death on the cross with the same word that concludes this Psalm, simply declaring "it is finished", as completed and all done.

The resurrection of Messiah is spoken of in Psalm 16 as Jesus dies and goes down to Sheol ["abode of the dead"] but His physical body does not experience decay as He is raised after 3 days and 3 nights. The Jews understood that the fourth day in a tomb was when the body began to decompose. This was clearly noted in John 11:39 when Jesus instructed the stone rolled away from the tomb of Lazarus, and there would be a "stench", for he had been dead in the grave four days.

David speaks of Messiah in Psalm 110:1-4 as he writes, *"The Lord says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool, you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'."* In Matthew 22:41-46 Jesus asks the religious leaders about this very Psalm by surmising, "If David calls Him Lord, how is it that He is his son?" and they could not answer Him. Matthew includes a side note that from then on no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions. Paul clarifies this Messianic content in Hebrews 5:6, 6:20, and 7:17.

Messiah is also named in Psalm 118:22 as the "Stone the builders rejected, Who became the Chief Cornerstone". Jesus confirms this in Matthew 21:42 when He comments on how the Jews will not believe in Him, and that the vineyard set aside originally for God's chosen Israel will be given over to Gentiles,

such that those who trip over and fall on this Stone will then be scattered to the wind like dust.

#### **QUITE A PLAN**

The "Anointed One" is by very definition an individual person, specifically designated by God to be the remedy for the sin of mankind. The entire Biblical account is focused on the singular theme: that a loving and all powerful God created mankind for relationship with Him, but mankind's disobedience severed that original relationship. God then makes a perfect substitute for mankind's spiritual death. The Genesis-to-Revelation narrative tells the specific story of God's preparations and plan for Messiah to save mankind and restore a personal relationship for all eternity. This was always God's plan and intention from the foundation of the world [Ephesians 1:4]. Jesus the Messiah was known for this specific purpose [1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:20] and He appeared in that exact time for our sake. He was with the Father before the world even was [John 17:5].

The preponderance of evidence that Jesus of Nazareth meets and fulfills each and every prophetic word from the Old Testament about Messiah is absolutely mind-boggling. To match up on just two or three of the specific conditions would require overwhelming statistical odds. Remember your math! The probability of one event followed by a second event is the product of the two individual probabilities. If there is a 15% chance the next car driving past our survey site is green, and there is also a 10% chance it is speeding, then together that is just

a 1.5% probability the next car is *both* green and going faster than the posted speed limit. If we include a 50% chance there is only one person in the car, as well as a 2% probability it is a convertible, the likelihood that the next car we see is a speeding green convertible with just the driver is calculated as  $[\text{.15} \times \text{.10} \times \text{.50} \times \text{.02} = \text{.00015}]$  which is just 15 cars out of ***one hundred thousand*** autos driving past our survey point.

Assigning probabilities to the top 10 prophecies about Messiah would result in such a tiny percentage, the odds of someone being the “Anointed One” completely defy random chance, meaning, if someone did meet several of those exact descriptions, we would have to conclude He must actually be Messiah, because there would be no other explanation.

#### **CONSIDER BETHLEHEM**

It is worth noting that the Old Testament prophecy written in Micah 5:2 says Messiah will be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, the “city of David” located about six miles south of Jerusalem. He will be a ruler for all of Israel, and He is eternal, as *“His goings forth are from long ago, the days of eternity”*. This is more amazing evidence about Jesus of Nazareth. Many gospel historians agree He is born in Bethlehem, and that His lineage connects directly to King David [this will be reviewed in detail later in Chapter Four]. They also note He is from the tribe of Judah [Matthew 1:1-6 and Luke 3:31-34]. These align Jesus as meeting critical requirements of Messiah.

Bethlehem is first mentioned in Genesis 35:19. Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin in Paddan, and was buried on the way to Ephratah, which is Bethlehem. Today the city has a population of about 30,000. Archaeologists infer that back in the first century AD as Judea was under Roman rule, the population of Bethlehem was well under 1,000 residents, and probably closer to around 600. When trying to count the births in Bethlehem, the time of Micah's prophecy was during the reign of King Hezekiah in Israel [715 to 696 BC], so that leaves around 700 years up until the turn of that millennium. Add in another 70 years until Jerusalem was conquered by the Romans under Titus Vespasian and that is 770 years total.

The reason for including births up until 70 AD is because when the Second Temple was completely destroyed, all the scrolls, codices, and written records were burned and lost forever regarding who in the Jewish population came from which of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. This means that today, no persons of Jewish descent have any way to know from which tribe they come. No persons today can definitively know that their lineage can be traced to one of the specific twelve tribes of either Benjamin, Reuben, Gad, Simeon, Dan, Levi, Issachar, Naphtali, Asher, Zebulun, Joseph, or *Judah*, the one defined in Genesis 49:10 as the tribe of Messiah.

Using sophisticated population-models with different assumptions for the 1<sup>st</sup> Century about ratios of men-to-women, average family size, infant mortality [perhaps as high as 30%], and

life expectancy [around age 35], there could be around 7 births per year on average that survived there. This means the total number of people born in Bethlehem between Micah's prophecy of Messiah [circa 700 BC] and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD is less than 5,400 total. Assuming half the births were males, that's roughly 2,700 boys born in those 770 years. Assume a somewhat even distribution of those 12 tribes among those baby boys, then only 225 boys were of the tribe of Judah. Jesus of Nazareth is then one male birth from among 225 boys of Judah born in Bethlehem during those 770 years. Think about that for a moment. There are likely less than 225 male candidates ever *in the entire history of earth who could be Israel's Messiah*; someone born in the city of David and able to verify being from the tribe of Judah and also born before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, when verifiable ancestry records were still accessible.

The *Population Reference Bureau* in Washington, D.C. [see [www.PRB.org](http://www.PRB.org)] calculates in its 2020 report that 108 billion people have ever been born on planet earth. This assumes homo sapiens [they say are similar to modern humans] going back 50,000 years. As such, the 7.6 billion current population represents just 7% of all the people who have ever lived. Graph that exponential curve from 50,000 years ago to today, and then mark the 770 years from 700 BC to 70 AD and it is reasonable to assume that 4% of everyone ever born on earth was born in that window of time [4.32 million people]. Those 225 males born in Bethlehem between 700 BC and 70 AD represent a 5-thousandth

of one percent probability [0.00005] – definitely provocative, considering how this is just one requirement of being Messiah.

When additional Biblical specifications about Messiah are folded into the equation, it becomes increasingly evident how difficult it is for one person to match the requirements of say, three or four facets, let alone be perfectly aligned on each facet of some 100-to-200 prophetic profile specifications about Messiah. Multiplying in all the probabilities for every prophecy covered earlier in this chapter would take that Bethlehem birth probability of 0.00005 and insert 90-to-100 more zeros to the right of the decimal. The *National Science Foundation* notes there are “ten to the 80<sup>th</sup> power” molecules in our universe, but the probability of someone being Messiah has even more zeros in the denominator. The probability that someone else has your exact same DNA signature [completely identical genome] is less than one in seven trillion. There are 7.6 billion people on Earth. The chance is so tiny it is essentially zero. The probability that one man could fulfill each of the Biblical prophecies from Chapter One of this book is even smaller. If that’s the case, there are only two positions for Jesus. It is an incredible coincidence to have matched so many conditions by purely random chance, OR He is in fact Messiah, that “Anointed One” spoken of in the Bible.

#### **WHAT JESUS SAID**

Just a quick review of Jesus’ own words about Himself provides additional context about the astronomical probability and precision of Him meeting a few dozen requirements to be

Messiah. In John 8:58 Jesus confirms that *"before Abraham was, I AM"*, meaning He is the pre-existent, eternal God. In fact, He is actually turning their attention to the claim that He spoke to Moses at the burning bush [Exodus 3:1-17].

In John 10:22-42 the Jews gathered around Jesus at the Portico of Solomon in the Temple and asked, "How long will you keep us in suspense, if you are the Christ, just tell us plainly". Jesus replies, "I told you, and you did not believe the works that I do in my Father's name, these testify of me". He plainly told them, but they did not believe Him because He said they were not His sheep. He made it clear that His true sheep hear His voice as their shepherd, and they follow Him. He then said, in verse 30, "I and the Father are one".

Jesus is also testified as Messiah [Matthew 16:13-17] when He asks his disciples, *"Who do people say that I am?"* and Peter replies, *"You are Mashiach, Son of the living God"*. Jesus clarifies that it was not simply Simon Peter's thoughts in his own mind that came up with that, but *"my Father in heaven revealed this to you"*. Jesus of Nazareth clearly states that He is in fact the Messiah, the "Anointed One".

#### **THE NAZARETH SYNAGOGUE**

Jesus begins His public ministry at age 30 [Luke 3:23] in line with Numbers 4:3 where the designated age to begin formal service to the Lord is 30 years. If He was born on September 29<sup>th</sup> of 2 BC, He was 30 on September 29<sup>th</sup> 29 AD. His second cousin John the Baptist was six months older [this is confirmed in Luke

1:41-44]. John was most likely born during Passover of 2 BC, so he turned 30 in March of 29 AD and was preaching for six months about preparing the way for Messiah while he was baptizing men and women in the Jordan River.

Jesus' first formal action as a 30-year old man starting His ministry was to stand and read aloud from the scroll of Isaiah in the Nazareth synagogue, as recorded in Luke 4:14-30. He opens up to the place we know as Isaiah 61:1-2 and reads: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted, He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord"*. Then He made this remarkable statement, *"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"*.

Can you imagine the shock and incredulity happening among all those gathered in that tiny synagogue? This is quite astonishing, in and of itself, that this man would claim that this prophetic word from Isaiah was talking specifically about Him. But what is even more provocative is that Jesus did not finish the full passage. He stopped at *"proclaim the favorable year of the Lord"* and left out *"and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn"*. This is how Jesus separated His first coming at that time, from His Second Coming that is still at a future date. Messiah comes first to die for the sins of the world, offering love, mercy, and forgiveness for sin. When He returns to earth at a still future date with the church at His Second Coming,

Jesus will exact judgment on sin in that “*day of vengeance*” [Jeremiah 46:10, Isaiah 63:4, Romans 12:19, and Hebrews 10:30]. In the passage Jesus reads, He says of Himself “*the Lord has anointed Me*” – the Hebrew word “*mashach*”, the root word for the formal name of “*Mashiach*” which means “*Anointed One*”.

Jesus continued that He brings “good news” to those who are “afflicted”, and not simply physical ailments, but the spiritual affliction of sin. The Hebrew word for good news is “*basar*” – translated in the New Testament as “*euaggelion*”. This becomes our now famous English word Gospel. Do you understand how incredibly profound this is? Jesus is specifically stating that He is the Anointed One [Mashiach] AND the One who brings the Good News [Gospel]. The entire Gospel message is about redeeming the afflicted. Sin is mankind’s spiritual affliction, so this is exactly what Jesus accomplished during His earthly ministry, and still does today.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

God’s promised Messiah was very clearly spoken about throughout the Torah, the prophets, and the Psalms. The entire Biblical narrative weaves a continuous theme that God made this promise and completed it in His perfect timing. It is so crucial that the full scope of the promised Messiah be addressed – and whether the birth of this one man Jesus is in fact the literal fulfillment of those Biblical prophecies.

There are literally over 200 prophetic passages in the Old Testament that refer to Messiah. It is arguably the very basis for

everything contained in the Bible leading up to the birth of Jesus. The purpose of this chapter was to establish a foundation from the Biblical texts that God's promise of Mashiach is without dispute. It is not fantasy, folklore, wishful thinking, or legend about a mythological character. Messiah is not a concept, state-of-mind, or "Christ-consciousness" but a real Person. The source texts confirm that this man, Jesus from Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, and put to death in 32 AD by the Roman occupiers of Judea, is in every way Messiah. He meets *all* the prerequisites recorded during the 1,500 years when the Torah, Psalms, and prophets were written.

The *Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* [J. Barton Payne] has 137 separate predictions from the Bible dealing with the coming of Messiah, from 3,000 verses in the Old Testament. Nearly 600 of those passages refer to the *person* of Messiah, not a concept or Jewish archetype. *The Complete Book Of Bible Prophecy* [Mark Hitchcock] is an excellent resource that clearly outlines the various passages in the Torah, Psalms, and prophets that contain specific prophecies about Messiah. There are also several excellent web resources with sound information from the Bible regarding God's promise to send the Anointed One [literal meaning of the Hebrew *Mashiach*]. Check T.A. McMahon and Dave Hunt at [TheBereanCall.org](http://TheBereanCall.org) as well as [JewsForJesus.org](http://JewsForJesus.org) and [JesusFilm.org](http://JesusFilm.org) for extensive lists of Old Testament prophecies about the promised Messiah. The next chapter carefully examines the role of Biblical foreshadows directly related to Messiah.

# CHAPTER 2

## *Biblical Foreshadows*

“These were but a shadow of things that would come  
but the substance belongs to Christ.”

**Colossians 2:17**

A favorite principle of mine during 40 years of Bible study and teaching God’s Word is this: *“The New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament, while the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament”*. For this book, there are specific statements from Matthew, Luke, Peter, and two from Paul that should immediately grab your attention about how God introduces core truths about Jesus as Messiah through the historical foreshadows rooted in the Torah, the Psalms, and the prophets. These introduce people, places, and different things as

“types” that parallel the ministry of Messiah and God’s overall plan for the redemption of mankind from sin.

#### **SIX KEY SCRIPTURES**

There are six specific passages in the Bible that each speak to how the writings of the Old Testament are designed as foreshadows, images, or “types”, that clearly show the ways God will confirm His promised Messiah at both His first coming [when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, grew to a man, and then completed His appointed ministry], and His Second Coming [at a still future date]. All that happened in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy was ordained by God to be both the recording of what Jehovah was actually doing with Israel in those times, while also foreshadowing the ways He would fulfill everything through His Mashiach.

The first key indicator is when Jesus tells the Pharisees [John 5:39], *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, but these actually are testifying of Me”*. He knew that the writings in the Torah, Psalms, and prophets were actually pointing out time and again God’s larger plan of redemption for mankind. The tabernacle and later the Temple, sacrifices, Shabbat, circumcision, ceremonial washings and purification rites, the feasts [see Chapter Eight], the bronze serpent, the Passover blood, the ark of Noah, the altar of incense, blowing the shofar, Joseph and Joshua, olive and fig trees, even the very specific arranging of the tribes as they camped around

the tent of meeting in the wilderness [the configuration made a cross] – *all* pointed to Jesus Christ.

Paul addresses a somewhat similar concept when he wrote in Ephesians 3:3-6 explaining that through the direct revelation from the Lord he understood the “mystery” with insight from the Old Testament, that *“in prior generations was not known, as it has now been revealed”*. He was speaking of the Gentiles who would become partakers alongside Israel in God’s plan of redemption, including receiving the Holy Spirit. The prophet Joel [2:28] was certainly looking ahead when he wrote God’s declaration, *“It will come about that I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind”*. Paul was then living that very fulfillment as he preached the Gospel and saw first-hand how the Gentiles came to faith in Jesus and received God’s Spirit.

#### **ROAD TO EMMAUS**

The second key passage is when Luke writes [24:13-35] that while Jesus walked seven miles to Emmaus with two of His followers [one of them is Cleopas], *“that beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures”*. Picture for a moment that particular teaching by Jesus. The very Son of God who had just recently been raised from the dead is providing a first-hand monologue about who Messiah is and why He had to suffer and die. This means that there were probably dozens of passages, topics, and foreshadow “types” written into the Hebrew Scriptures [our Old Testament] that Jesus was able to draw from, and these explicitly

pointed in a prophetic manner to all of the events, actions, and testimony of Himself.

### **JESUS FULFILLS THE LAW**

The third statement is from Matthew 5:17-18 where Jesus teaches a rather lengthy sermon on the mountain. Chuck Missler always referred to this as “the manifesto of our King”. The underlying theme is to expand and amplify whatever was spoken of in the Law of Moses. Jesus is expounding on the specific details of how this should look in everyday life. Having just told His listeners they are to be as salt and light in the world, He states in verse 17, “Do not think I come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, I did not come to abolish but to fulfill, for truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of the pen shall pass from the Law until ALL is accomplished”. Jesus is expressly stating that His ministry will literally FULFILL the entirety of what was written by the prophets regarding Messiah. This is quite provocative, as it lays out a template through which we should interpret the true meanings of everything from God’s Law.

Jesus was asked by the religious leaders which of the commandments is the greatest. They meant it as a test to trap Him. In Matthew 22:36-40 His reply was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, while the second is to love your neighbor as yourself [He’s quoting from Leviticus 19]. Then Jesus further states that the entire Law and prophets

depend entirely on these two commandments. Here the Lord is focusing on the heart, and not the actions or duties.

Jesus' sermon defined what true Godliness looks like. Those who follow Him should recognize they are poor in spirit and mourn over their sin, are meek with a hunger and thirst for righteousness, are merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers who will be persecuted by the world. The Law is not about the list of things to *do*, but identifying with the character of God. That's why Paul's commentary on this in Romans 10:4 is "*Christ is the END of the Law for righteousness to all who believe*". This does not mean Jesus nullifies the Law of Moses as having no value. Instead, He is the only One to FULFILL each specific enactment of the Law. Jesus literally fulfills this as the Anointed One.

Paul's letters to the Romans and Galatians define how the Law shows us our sinfulness and that our trespasses have increased. It continued until the 'Seed' [from Genesis 3] had come as promised. The Law was placed in charge of us to lead us to Messiah, so that now through faith we are no longer under that Law of Moses. Bearing another's burdens, as Jesus did for us, is then fulfilling the Law of Christ [Galatians 6:2].

#### **THE PROPHETS INQUIRED**

The fourth key Scripture is from the Apostle Peter's first letter [1:10-12] when he writes, "*regarding this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry seeking to know what person or*

*time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow”.*

It is incredibly thought-provoking to consider that the writers of the Old Testament, while fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, were also human just like you and me, with a natural curiosity about the content of what they wrote. Peter explains they did understand that what they were writing was not serving them, but was intended *for future generations coming after them*. In verse 12 he clarifies this point about this Gospel [good news] from the Holy Spirit containing *“things into which angels long to look”*. Think of that; even the messengers of God looked at the unfolding plan of redemption with a sense of wonder as to what the Almighty was doing with regard to mankind.

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you and me made careful search and inquiry about this plan about which they wrote. The promised Messiah [from Chapter One] was always at the forefront of each prophecy pertaining to God’s redemptive intentions for sinful mankind. This Anointed One would fulfill the foreshadow [“type”] of the priest who intercedes for the people with the Father. He would heal the brokenhearted, loose the captives, and rule on David’s throne in a kingdom with no end. But He would also be rejected, suffer, and die to fulfill every detailed aspect of the Passover Lamb by shedding His own blood as the sacrifice to cover the sins of the world. It is an absolutely fascinating endeavor to see these

different men, from across hundreds of years, moved by the Holy Spirit to write about God's Messiah.

#### **WHAT WAS WRITTEN EARLIER**

Paul writes about the fifth signal in Romans 15:4 when he declares that *"whatever was written in earlier times was for our instruction"* [those alive during and especially after Jesus had come] *"so that by perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we would have hope"*. The "earlier times" is a direct reference to the Torah, Psalms, and prophets laying out a comprehensive and systematic plan of God to redeem mankind from the disobedience of Adam [in Genesis 2 and 3]. This then provided a strong basis for *hope* coming directly from the perseverance and encouragement of God's Word to man. Hebrews 11:1 is a great reminder that faith is then that tangible assurance of things *hoped* for, and a conviction deep inside our hearts that the things not yet seen are true.

This is what characterized the prophets of old as they wrote about God's Messiah, who was still to come at a future date they would not see in their lifetimes. One great example is Moses writing in Genesis 14 about Melchizedek the priest, and confirmed in Hebrews 7:1 as the "King of righteousness" and "King of Salem" [Shalom means 'peace', also used in the city named *Jeru-Salem*]. He brought out bread and wine as He blessed Abraham [Genesis 14:17-19]. The one who bestows the blessing is always greater than the one being blessed [Hebrews 7:7]. Abraham paid Him a tithe [one-tenth] of the spoils of war.

David wrote [Psalm 110:4] He was a foreshadow of Messiah, while in Hebrews 7:3-4 Paul explains that Melchizedek has no father or mother, is without genealogy, with no beginning of days or end of life, but is made like the 'Son of God' as a priest perpetually. Paul had previously confirmed [Hebrews 5:6] that Jesus is truly *"a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"*.

### **THESE ARE FORESHADOWS**

The sixth marker also comes from Paul and is noted on the opening title page of this chapter [Colossians 2:16-17], *"no one should be your judge regarding food or drink in the Law, or feasts, a new moon, or a Shabbat day, these being mere foreshadows of what was to come, and the substance of these belongs to Christ"*. This is such a powerful statement about the Anointed One. The foreshadow is the Greek word 'skia' which means *"an image cast by an object representing the form of that object"*. Paul is drawing attention to the reality that God meant for those things written about in Israel's past regarding the Law, were intentionally earthly representations of the truth about Messiah and God's plan for mankind.

A well-schooled Pharisee from Tarsus who studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, Paul states four specific matters of the Law as being foreshadows: 1] dietary requirements of food and drink, 2] the feasts, 3] the new moons, and 4] the Sabbath days. It is quite profound to attribute the substance of these foreshadows directly to Jesus, using the Greek word *"soma"*, which means body. His commentary could then be read in this way, *"The*

images you see in Scripture represent an actual Person, the body of these is Mashiach". Literally, everything pertaining to the food, drink, feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths is completely about Jesus, the Anointed One.

The first foreshadow of food and drink links directly to Old Testament references to 'bread and wine' and certainly has its actual substance fulfilled in Jesus. Consider the last supper as the primary remembrance of His sacrifice for the sins of the world [Luke 22:19 and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:24-25]. The second foreshadow then speaks of the true meaning of Israel's seven feasts: 1] Passover, 2] Unleavened Bread, 3] First Fruits, 4] Pentecost, 5] Yom Teruah, 6] Yom Kippur, and 7] Succoth [covered in Chapter Eight]. Each of these seven celebrations contains specific representations of Messiah fulfilled by Jesus.

The third foreshadow refers to the "new moon" on the first day of the lunar months for Israel. This was considered a holy day, as when a prophet would hear the word from the Lord [see 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 20:5, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 4:23, Ezekiel 26:1, 29:17, Psalm 81:3, Isaiah 66:23, and Amos 8:5]. The 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishri on the Jewish civil calendar [late September] would have been a new moon time for the people to hear the Word from the Lord. This book will build the case that Jesus was in fact born on the First of Tishri, as Jehovah sent the Word [logos] to His people in the form of a boy born in Bethlehem. The last foreshadow noted by Paul is about Sabbath days. The Jews understood Shabbat to be for them to commemorate how Elohiym [as used in Genesis 1] rested on the

seventh day from creating the heavens, earth, and mankind. Keeping the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments and was often a hot topic discussed by Jesus with the religious leaders. They tried to trap Jesus with questions about whether His disciples should be casually picking a few wheat kernels [Matthew 12:1 and Mark 2:23] because that was 'working on Shabbat'. He made the ruler of the synagogue very upset because He had healed someone during Shabbat [Luke 13:14].

While they debated how to keep Shabbat and what it meant to "work" on Shabbat, Jesus made it clear: *"the Sabbath was made for man and it was not man who was made for the Sabbath"* [Mark 2:27]. Then Jesus really delivers the clincher saying that He is *Lord of the Sabbath* [Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, and Luke 13:15]. He is saying two things. First, the Sabbath day of rest was made for man and man was not made for the day of rest, so that the creation of mankind was actually for Jesus. Second, He is clearly explaining that Messiah is over the Sabbath and far more important than the Law of Moses. Jesus had eternal authority to overrule Pharisees, priests, scribes, Sadducees, and the Chief Priest because He was the One who initiated the Law in the first place. Keep all of these in mind as you get into Chapter Six and the 14 coordinated clues of Jesus birthday, and also for Chapter Eight covering the prophetic meanings of Israel's feasts.

#### **ONE OTHER PASSAGE**

Because the number 7 is "the number of completion" [according to the rabbis], it is worth a closer look at a seventh

passage that presents a truly awe-inspiring foreshadow about the entirety of God's redemption for His creation. It can be argued that it encompasses the full range of the prior six Bible passages' capacities to foreshadow information about "types" related to Mashiach – from Adam's fall to the birth of Jesus.

At first glance, the fifth chapter of Genesis reads like a footnote-citation that lines up the lives of Adam, his son Seth, and the subsequent offspring through to Noah [he is the ninth generation from Adam]. Each man is listed relative to his father and his age is noted for both when he had his own son and when he died. The research of Chuck Missler provides an invaluable insight from the birth order of these ten men.

While a typical Hebrew lexicon for proper names is not always able to simply translate a Biblical name into English, the examination of the roots within the Hebrew proper name does open the door to a fascinating prophetic message that was no doubt placed there intentionally by the Holy Spirit. Consider Noah's grandfather [Genesis 5:25-27] Methuselah. There are many references to him in pop-culture because he is noted as having lived longer than any other person ever [969 years]. His name is a combination of root words *Muth*, meaning "death", and *Shalach*, meaning "to bring". It is interesting to see that the death of Methuselah [Muth-Shalach] happened in the same year the great flood began. Genesis 5 says that Methuselah was 187 years old when he had his son Lamech, who was 182 when he had Noah, so Methuselah was 369 [187 + 182] when his grandson

## *Biblical Foreshadows*

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Noah was born. The flood started when Noah was 600, so Methuselah was 969, the age at which he died.

What is really profound is to consider the meaning of the names for these ten men in sequence from Adam to Noah.

| <i><b>Hebrew</b></i> | <i><b>Translation</b></i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| ADAM                 | Man                       |
| SETH                 | Is Appointed              |
| ENOSH                | Mortal                    |
| KENAN                | Sorrow                    |
| MAHALAL-EL           | The Blessed God           |
| JARED                | Shall Come Down/Descend   |
| ENOCK                | Proclaiming/Teaching      |
| METHUSELAH           | His Death Shall Bring     |
| LAMECH               | The Despairing            |
| NOAH                 | Comfort/Rest              |

Seth was named by Eve: “the Lord ***has appointed*** me another son” after Abel was murdered. Enosh [root word Aanash] means ‘mortal’, ‘frail’. Kenan means ‘sorrow’. Mahalal-El is a conjunction of ‘blessed’ and God ‘Elohiym’. The name Jared is from *Yaradh* meaning ‘shall come down’. Enoch means ‘teaching’ or ‘proclaiming’ like a commencement address. This matches Jude 14-15, as *Enoch proclaims* his prophecy for “*the Lord comes with His myriads and myriads, to execute His judgment*”. Genesis 5:24 states that Enoch did not see death, as he walked with God and then he was not, for God took him. He is a distinct foreshadow or “type” of the sudden snatching away known as the rapture of the church prior to God’s judgment on earth. Methuselah has already been covered. Lamech is the root of our English words lament

and lamentation, while Noah comes from the root Nacham which means comfort or rest. There you have it, the story of the Gospel clearly laid out in Genesis 5, that: *Man is appointed mortal sorrow but the Blessed God shall come down teaching that His death shall bring the despairing comfort. An accident? Interesting coincidence? Or this is a very specific foreshadow of what was to come, and the substance of this is Christ.*

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Reading through the Old Testament uncovers various people, events, and practices that each foreshadow different aspects of who Messiah is, as well as when and why He came to earth. The entire history of Israel is arguably an on-going barometer of God's overall redemptive plan for mankind.

The Biblical accounts are so well-integrated with their messaging content and context that they cross-reference with each other and match up in every detail. The origin of the narrative, with its hundreds of images and "types", could not have come about by coincidence. The entire process-flow has clear purpose and laser-focused intention. Such precision in structure and sequence can only be attributed to an overriding design by a Designer from outside Earth's temporal realm. The Jewish rabbis have stated they will not fully comprehend the Scriptures until Mashiach comes and explains everything. And when He does, He will not only interpret each passage of the Bible, but also the meanings behind every word and each letter, and the spaces between the letters.

These intentionally positioned models, images, and “types” all provide distinctive foreshadows of not only the big picture of God’s redemptive plan, but also the smallest details regarding people, places, and times. These will be sourced to build a case for Jesus being born at the Feast of Yom Teruah, on the First of Tishri, where the content and context of Israel’s seven main feasts together form a clearly prophetic sequence of foreshadows whereby God discloses imagery, or glimpses, of His overall plan for mankind. Consider Paul’s commentary in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:12, *“for now we only see through a glass dimly, but then face-to-face, because then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known”*. Right now, we do get to see God’s plan and process, even though it is not 100% fully revealed in every aspect and detail. But when we see the Lord face-to-face person, we will then know everything in its entirety, in the exact same way that He right now knows everything about us. The next chapter examines all the events that contributed to Christmas being thought of and placed on the calendar as the 25<sup>th</sup> day of December in the year zero.

## CHAPTER 3

### *December 25<sup>th</sup>, Year Zero?*

Christmas was not widely observed until Emperor Constantine declared Christianity his “favorite religion”. In 336 AD, Christians in the western Empire began celebrating Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> at the Roman winter solstice, 9 months after the vernal equinox of March 25<sup>th</sup>, the assumed conception of Jesus.

**History.com**

As a kid growing up in New Jersey in the 1960s, it was a presumed fact and indisputable axiom that Jesus was born on a snowy December 25<sup>th</sup> in a wooden barn-like stable like the nativity sets on the lawns of homes and churches in our town. If it was the year 1965 as I was opening presents, then it was also a fact that Jesus had been born exactly one thousand nine hundred and sixty-five years before that day. And that starting point is “year zero” on the calendar, right? While that young version of me was inherently trusting [and ignorant] of any underlying

## December 25<sup>th</sup>

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concerns about the actual date of Jesus' birth, it remains very intriguing that today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the overwhelming majority of people are completely unaware that Jesus was definitely *not* born on December 25, 0000. You will likely remember the classic scene from the 1985 movie *Back To The Future*, where Doc Brown [Christopher Lloyd] tells his young sidekick Marty McFly [Michael J. Fox] as they check the digital control panel in the DeLorean time machine: "Say, you want to



go back and see the birth of Christ" and Doc sets the Destination Time gauges to Month: DECEMBER, Day: 25, and Year: 0000 [notice above it's also 'AM']. This was a fun visual effect that most moviegoers smiled about and laughed at because everyone presumed that Jesus was of course born on Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, in the year zero.

It is as if that birthday for Jesus is etched into the rich folklore of typically Western Civilization. Christmas shopping begins “Black Friday”, the day after Thanksgiving. Protestants and Catholics attend Christmas Eve services on December 24<sup>th</sup> and the NBA has a full line-up of games all day long. It’s a national holiday and many people are off from work. The New York Stock Exchange is closed for trading. So then, where did December 25<sup>th</sup> in the year zero even come from?

Most people are unaware that through the 1<sup>st</sup> Century after Jesus’ death and resurrection and continuing through to the 100s and 200s AD, there exist no written records or oral traditions celebrating the birth of Jesus. It is not mentioned in the New Testament and all the historians of the early church era such as Polycarp of Smyrna [he died in 155 AD], Papias of Hierapolis [died in 163], Irenaeus [died in 202], Tertullian of Carthage [died 220], Origen of Alexandria [died 253], and Eusebius of Caesarea [died 339] have no definitive writings or oral commentaries on this subject. Follow closely the next six points that explain the origins of the December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas.

### **1: MODERN CALENDARS**

The place to start is with a thorough review of how we ended up with the calendar that hangs on your wall, sits on your desk, and of course ticks along each day on your Alexa, smartphone, smartwatch, or other web-connected device. The early calendars of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Sumerians, and Assyrians were all solar-based on an assumed 360 days for the

earth to rotate once around the sun. These were then divided equally into twelve months of thirty days each. While the overwhelming majority of nations today operate using a solar calendar based on the earth rotating around the sun once every 365.2422 days, the Chinese and Muslim lunar calendars are based on the moon's rotations around the earth. The Jewish calendar is 'lunisolar' with months based on the moon's cycles and years based on earth's orbit around the sun. These will be referenced later in the book regarding other dates and calculations.

There are three key events that resulted in the calendar used today by the vast majority of people on planet earth. The first happened in 46 BC as Julius Caesar proposed the reform of the existing Roman calendar, with an assist from the Greek astronomer Sosigenes of Alexandria. This was aimed at a more precise solar year of 365 days for a three-year period followed by 366 days each fourth year [leap year] to replace the prior calendar based on a lunar year. Every fourth year added an extra day, so the average was 365.25 days per year. However, this is still slightly off from the actual 365.2422 days per solar year. That .0078 days difference equals 11 minutes.

This stayed in place for more than 1,600 years until 1582 when Pope Gregory XIV replaced the Julian calendar to adjust for the seasonal equinoxes happening ten days too early [the Julian calendar was off one day every 128 years]. So then, ten days were dropped from October 1582 to adjust for the difference between 365.25 days and the observed 365.2422 days by the

Vatican astronomers. The Gregorian calendar then removed three days every fourth turn-of-the-century cycle, or 3 days every 400 years. This yielded average years of 365.2425 days, and was off just one day every 3,300 years, compared to the Julian gap of one day every 128 years. England and its colonies were not part of the predominantly Catholic continental Europe, so the entire British Empire remained on the 1,600 year-old Julian calendar.

In 1750, the British Parliament moved that in 1752 the calendar across the Empire would be adjusted to coincide with the rest of Europe because England and its colonies on the Julian calendar were eleven days off with the Gregorian dates. New Year's Day was moved from March 25<sup>th</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup>. It had been at the Spring equinox since the 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD, the day chosen by the Roman historian Sextus Julius Africanus for Mary bring told by the angel Gabriel she would be pregnant with Jesus. December became the 12<sup>th</sup> month [traditionally it was the 10<sup>th</sup> month]. December 31, 1751 was then followed by January 1, 1752. Later that year on September 2, 1752 the next day became Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup> when 11 days were dropped to get in sync with the widely-used Gregorian calendar. It is interesting that George Washington was born within the former British-Julian calendar on February 11, 1731 [the 12<sup>th</sup> month]. But after the conversion his birthday was officially changed to February 22, 1732 and now in the second month on the new British-Gregorian calendar.

## 2: EARLY FOURTH CENTURY

Constantine came to the throne of the Western Roman Empire in 312 AD and then the entire Empire in 324. In 311, his predecessor Galerius issued the *Edict of Toleration* that allowed Christianity to be legal. This was further agreed to by Constantine [west] and Licinius [east] in the 313 Edict of Milan.

Rome had celebrated *Sol Invictus* ["unconquered sun"] on December 25<sup>th</sup> after the *Feast of Saturnalia* to honor Saturn, known as Cronus or Tammuz. From December 17<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>d</sup> leading to the winter solstice, Nimrod is the father of Tammuz, Semiramis his mother, and their son dies at the winter solstice and is memorialized by burning a special log known by the Chaldean word "Yule" for youth. His rebirth is celebrated the next day by adorning him as now a living tree with lights, jewelry, and similar royalty ornaments. This solstice is the shortest day of the year so candles and other lights were lit to help guide Tammuz through the darkness of that long day.

The Romans and the Greeks worshipped many gods. It was common to attribute seasonal changes in the positions of the sun, moon, and star-constellations to annual celebrations aligned with the darkest day of the year at the winter solstice. Similar traditions remain quite common today throughout Europe, including the Mediterranean [Greeks and Romans] and into the northern regions, including all types of pagan celebrations of feasts, gift-giving, and drinking among the Celtic, German, and Scandinavian festivals in late December.

### 3: THE 354 CHRONOGRAPHY

In 354 AD, a wealthy Roman named Valentinus who was also a Christian compiled his own personal chronology of key dates, and counted through the Roman history records of his day. He concluded it had been 284 years since Vespasian ascended the Roman throne when he conquered Jerusalem. He also presumed Jesus was crucified 40 years before that, so it had been 324 years since Calvary. He also assumed Jesus was 30 years of age when He died on the cross, making it 354 years since the birth of Christ until the days of Valentinus. He "christened" [for Christ] those 354 years as "Anno Domini" [Latin for "year of the Lord"]. About 90 years later in 440 AD, the Catholic Church officially adopted his 354 Chronography also known as the Calendar of Philocalus. This put in place the precedent that in the year 1 AD Jesus was one year of age, so essentially His birth occurred at the "zero point" after which occurred the first "year of the Lord" AD. Following his logic, Jesus died at the end of His 30<sup>th</sup> year *Anno Domini* and then Jerusalem fell to Titus Vespasian in the 40<sup>th</sup> "year of the Lord" which would have to be 70 years after the birth of Christ.

The first record of an official recognition of the birth of Jesus occurred within the 354 Chronography as a detailed list of Roman bishops included the following Latin notation for the year 336 AD: "*25 Dec natus Christus Betleem Judeae*". This is translated "25<sup>th</sup> December Christ born in Bethlehem Judea". This is the first record associated with Jesus being born on December

25<sup>th</sup>. Using the Valentinus logic, Jesus had been born at the zero point to start the first “year of our Lord” and this is the basis of the first Christmas on December, 25:0000. The 6<sup>th</sup> Century monk Dionysus Exiguus developed another chronography of world history using the December 25<sup>th</sup> date.

#### **4: THE TERM ‘CHRISTMAS’**

While it has become a cultural part of the American year-end holidays, not many people even know what the word “Christmas” actually means or where it comes from. It is the old English words *Christes-maesse* from Christ-mass, literally “*the Anointed One in body*”. Our word “Christmas” is then all about reminding us how the Biblical Mashiach [Hebrew], the long anticipated Anointed One [English], the Christos [Greek] became human just like us. It calls attention to the day when the Promised Messiah [refer to Chapter One] came to earth and was born physically of woman and human in every way. The Latin was referred to as *Incarnatio* [the Incarnation]. The Bible teaches “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” [John 1:14]. The Lord willingly emptied Himself and became a bondservant, *made in the likeness of a man* [Philippians 2:7]. Paul reminds us Jesus was *born of a woman* under the Law [Galatians 4:4]. A Christmas carol dating back to as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> Century AD is “O Come O Come Emmanuel”. The angel told Mary [Matthew 1:23] her child’s name is Immanuel, “God with us”. Many other popular carols sing of Jesus being *born* to Mary in Bethlehem [Luke 2:7] – an actual baby physically born into this world. *God Rest Ye Merry*

*Gentlemen* [1755] remembers Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day. The 1735 hymn *Hark The Herald Angels Sing* tells of a newly born King. The same is in *Away In A Manger, Silent Night, O Little Town Of Bethlehem, O Holy Night*, and *What Child Is This?* As each celebrates a literal *birth* of the Christ child.

John begins his first letter explaining that he and the other original disciples heard Jesus speak and teach, they saw Him in person with their own eyes and touched Him with their own hands. Jesus was not an image or hologram. He was not some fanciful group-apparition or spiritual mass delusion. Then in chapter 4 verse 2 of 1<sup>st</sup> John it states the true confession of the Holy Spirit is: *Jesus came in the flesh*. Paul also reminds us in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:16 that Jesus was clearly revealed *in the flesh*. For thirty years from September 2 BC until September 29 AD, Jesus lived, ate, drank, slept, worked, and “increased in stature” as He grew from a newborn infant to a young boy, to a teenager, and then became a man [Luke 2:52]. Isaiah 53:3 notes Jesus was a MAN of sorrows and acquainted with grief just like any other human. And John 11:35 states that “Jesus wept” when He heard that his dear friend Lazarus was dead, just [like any human would do with such sad news. It is easy to assume Jesus lived a life different from typical people. But He was entirely human in every way, just like you and me.

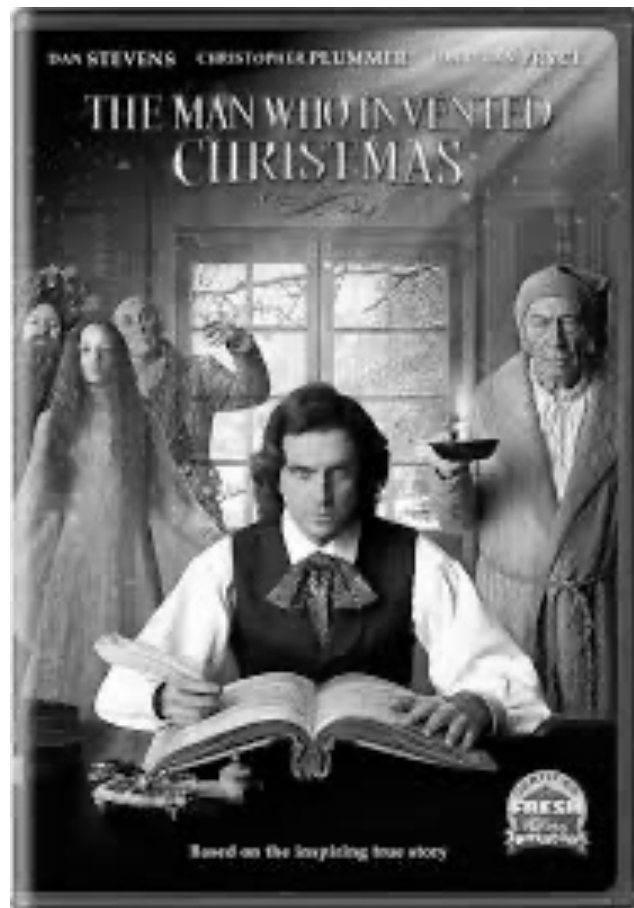
## **5: THE DICKENS CHRISTMAS**

In November 2017, a lighthearted movie hit theaters to usher in the holiday season. *The Man Who Invented Christmas*

*December 25<sup>th</sup>*

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starred Dan Stevens as Charles Dickens, the renowned British writer struggling to come up with his next great novel. He gets an



idea for a ghost story to happen at Christmas. This results in a miserly old curmudgeon named Ebenezer Scrooge [played by Christopher Plummer] having a profound change of heart for the better with his newfound perspective culminating on Christmas Day amidst cheer and goodwill toward men.

The Dickens book *A Christmas Carol* was published December 19, 1843 and sold 6,000 copies in the first week. We were introduced to the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future, Bob Cratchit and his crippled son Tiny Tim, Mr. Fezziwig, and Scrooge's deceased partner Jacob Marley. My personal favorite of this tale stars Albert Finney in the 1970 musical film *Scrooge*. There is also the classic black-and-white 1951 version starring Alastair Sim, the 1984 television special with George C. Scott, the 1992 *Muppets Christmas Carol*, the 2009 Disney animated feature with Jim Carrey, and even Bill Murray as Frank Cross in the 1988 movie *Scrooged*. Each version and telling of Dickens' book is beloved in its own way.

The recent 2017 film with Dan Stevens and Christopher Plummer amusingly makes the case that dozens [if not all] of the iconic images, sounds, tastes, smells, and traditions of modern day Christmas are a direct result of Dickens essentially *inventing* the Christmas that has now become part of western culture and the world over. Holly ivy, red berries, evergreen wreaths with red bows, stockings hung on the fireplace, candles on the Christmas tree, figgy pudding, frosty windows with snowfall, bells, horse-drawn sleighs, and carolers singing door-to-door or under the streetlamps are mainstays of a "good old fashioned Christmas".

These have persisted through the last 180 years while expanding into electric lights on homes and businesses, candy canes, snowmen on lawns, and a star on the top of the tree. There are ubiquitous Christmas cookies, peppermint lattes at

Starbucks, Christmas wrapping paper and bows, gingerbread houses, Christmas cards, and pinecone postage stamps. Even cousin Eddie sipping eggnog with Clark, who drove miles into the forest to cut down the Griswold family Christmas tree [see Jeremiah 10:3-5 for provocative comments about decorating a tree cut from the forest with silver and gold]. I have enjoyed strolling through the Marché de Noël on the Champs Élysées in Paris with all kinds of food and vin chaud [hot spice-mulled wine], craft shops, rides, and ice-skating [open mid-November to New Year's]. Then add in green and red stocking caps, scarves, sweaters, fur-trimmed jackets, and mittens to the attire that is now synonymous with Christmas.

The tragic reality is that more and more things associated with Christmas in today's world have actually resulted in celebrating the birth of Jesus less and less. Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, elves [and Will Ferrell as Buddy], the little drummer boy, Jack Frost, the Grinch, Ralphie, and George Bailey have all become the most popular iconic Christmas characters. Nat King Cole immortalized chestnuts roasting on an open fire while "turkey and mistletoe help to make the season bright". And of course today, Christmas *cannot* be considered complete without that jolly, rotund, and bearded Santa Claus wearing the red suit with white fur-trim and matching hat.

## 6: SAINT NICHOLAS

The development of Santa as perhaps the primary man associated with Christmas is a very interesting story. Today he is adult height and heavy-set with a white beard, cheery smile, red cap, and pipe. The much beloved poem, *The Night Before Christmas*, first published anonymously in 1823, then credited to Clement Moore in 1837 as *A Visit From St. Nicholas*, shows Santa as diminutive elf riding in a miniature sleigh with eight tiny reindeer. He is the one who sees everyone while they are sleeping and knows when they are awake, including when they are either bad or good. This mythical figure circumnavigates our planet in one evening delivering presents by sliding down chimneys, while eating milk and cookies left for him at each stop. He lives at the North Pole and oversees a toy workshop staffed by elf-workers. He is married to Mrs. Claus who has to ensure Santa stays plump so he'll fill out his red and white fur suit. We owe that iconic suit to the American cartoonist Tom Nast who in 1881 first depicted Saint Nicholas in his now very famous Santa outfit with the black belt and matching boots.

Over the years Santa has also been referred to as Saint Nicholas, St. Nick [used by Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys], or Kris Kringle, as popularized by Edmund Gwenn in the 1947 movie *Miracle On 34<sup>th</sup> Street*. The Brits affectionately call him *Father Christmas*, the French *Père Noël* [who delivers presents either on the eve of December 23<sup>rd</sup> or Christmas morning], the Spanish *Papa Noel*, and the Dutch *Sinterklaas*. Literally dozens of singers

have recorded "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus", "Here Comes Santa Claus [right down Santa Claus Lane]", "Father Christmas", and "Jolly Old St. Nicholas". Eartha Kitt swooned for "Santa Baby", while everyone from Kenny G. and Bing Crosby, to Frank Sinatra and Bruce Springsteen have put their own mark on "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town".

The actual historical Saint Nicholas was Greek and an elder-overseer 'bishop' in the Christian church during the 4<sup>th</sup> Century of the Roman Empire. He lived in Myra, Asia Minor in modern day Turkey between 270 and 343 AD. Nicholas attended the first Council of Nicaea and about 200 years after he died, a church was built bearing his name in his hometown. He openly defied the Roman Emperor during the persecution of 303 and spent time in prison until the Edict of Toleration in 311 recognized Christianity. So how did this Greek bishop from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD become modern-day Santa Claus?

There are two primary tales to consider. The first is the more credible: that he rescued three young sisters from a life of prostitution by delivering to their father three bags of gold coins for their respective dowries. The girls are then married and saved from that 4<sup>th</sup> Century way of life for many poor gals. The second is less credible and was popularized during the Middle Ages. It credits Saint Nicholas with resurrecting three young brothers who had been murdered. Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries he became *Patron Saint* to young children while December 6<sup>th</sup> became "Saint Nicholas Day" in dozens of countries around the

globe. The Norse and Celtic cultures slowly added in the long white beard, his sleigh drawn by arctic reindeer, and his ability to fly from place to place – a common themes among the many Scandinavian gods. It was then contrived that he would continue to bring gifts to the children of the world as he had with the gold dowries. When the Protestant Reformation diminished the attributes and roles of many venerated “saints” recognized by the Roman Church, his gift-giving attribute was transferred to Jesus and popularly moved from December 6<sup>th</sup> to December 25<sup>th</sup> right alongside the gifts that were brought to Jesus by the Magi.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The way we ended up landing on December 25<sup>th</sup> for Christmas Day is quite a confluence of speculations, paganism, and the momentum of popular traditions over time. Virtually every topic and detailed point of discussion dealing with Christmas as described in this chapter did not originate from the Bible. Literally centuries after Jesus’ birth the celebration of that event has persisted, even though all the calendars, dates, and seasons were surmised, packaged, and declared without a thorough examination of what God’s Word actually had to say about when Messiah was born. Traditions of men, folklore, myths, legends, and the conjectures in made-up notions of Christmas happening December 25<sup>th</sup> in the year zero are now etched permanently into the minds of contemporary society. But there cannot even be a “year zero” if 1 BC represents the twelve months prior to Jesus’ birth and 1 AD is the twelve months that follows.

Isaiah did declare [9:2] that all the world's people who were walking in darkness would see a great light. John said [1:9] that the one true Light came into the world to enlighten everyone. But lights have become now strands of plastic or glass, colored or white, blinking or fixed, and often timed in be in sync with specially-themed Christmas music that has nothing in the lyrics about Jesus the Messiah. Having reviewed the Biblical foundations for God's promised Messiah and the various ways the Old Testament provides specific foreshadows about the Person, birth, and ministry of the Anointed One, this chapter has hopefully shed clarity on the various issues about our calendar past and present, and how it is December 25<sup>th</sup> became the date for celebrating the birth of the Christ. The next chapter reviews and compares the lineages of Jesus from both Matthew's and Luke's gospels, providing much needed insights about His incredible ancestry that goes back directly to King David, and then to Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham.

# CHAPTER 4

## *The Lineage of Jesus Messiah*

There are 14 generations from Abraham to David, and 14 from David to the Babylon exile, and then 14 until Messiah.

**Matthew 1:1-17**

Jesus was 30 when he began His ministry, perceived to be the son of Joseph – through to Nathan, David, then to Isaac and Abraham, to Shem and Noah, then Enosh, Seth, and Adam.

**Luke 3:23-38**

As previously covered, the birth of Jesus was not a random event. It was not by accident or simple happenstance. The God over all the universe, who created everything we see in this world, and through telescopes that make us aware of other planets in our solar system, along with literally billions and billions of other solar systems and galaxies, knew from before the foundations of this world the exact day His Messiah would be

born. God exists outside of our physical realm and the properties that define our time as we understand it. His foreknowledge allowed Him to see that man's free will [as we are created in His own image] would result in disobedience to God's Word. As such, the personal fellowship and relationship of mankind with a perfect and holy God would be broken. The wages of that sin [Romans 6:23] would be spiritual death.

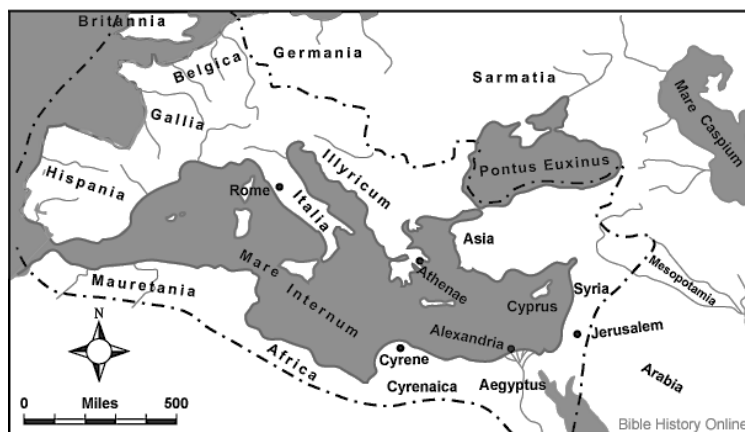
God already knew this would occur so He also made a provision for covering mankind's sin through someone who would take that just penalty on Himself in place of mankind having to bear the consequence for sinfulness. The altogether holy and true God declared His plan for this "Anointed One" [Mashiach] right after the disobedience happened [this was covered earlier in Chapter One]. God orchestrated His very specific plan to occur so that it would be known as the:

#### **FULLNESS OF TIME**

The Bible explains that Jesus was born *in the "fullness of time" when God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them under the Law to receive redemption* [Galatians 4:4-5]. And in this fullness of time [also translated the "time that had fully come"] God would deliver on the exact promise He made in Genesis 3. The incredible prophecy spoken by Daniel [9:20-27] would have many Jewish rabbis aware that the time of Mashiach Nagid was close as they counted 69 groupings of seven years from the well-known "decree to restore and

rebuild the city of Jerusalem” given from Artaxerxes Longimanus in Nehemiah 2:1-10]. This was in the Jewish month of Nisan in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the Persian king’s reign [refer back to Chapter One]. For almost 400 years there had not been a prophet speaking the Word of the Lord to Israel since Malachi around 397 BC. With Jerusalem and Judea firmly under Roman rule there was much anticipation that God would finally send Messiah to oust the occupiers and rule on David’s throne to restore the Jewish nation.

Another key facet of this “full time” was that the Greek language had become the common tongue spoken by every person throughout the Roman Empire, from modern day Spain and Portugal in the west to what is now Turkey, Israel, Syria to the east. The Romans also ruled the north African coast from what is today Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt, and across central Europe to what is now lower Britain, France, parts of Belgium, Holland, as well as south Germany into Switzerland, Austria, Croatia, and Greece, out to the Black Sea. The legal and military



## *Lineage of Messiah*

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language was Latin, while lands and peoples were connected by speaking everyday Greek. It was an opportune time to have the Gospel spread readily all throughout the Mediterranean basin.

The fully ready time for the birth of Messiah included a unified government at peace and no major wars in progress, so it was safe for overland travel or well-charted sailing. The Gospel would move easily through this vast Roman Empire. Some 3,000 came to faith in Jesus at Pentecost in Jerusalem in the second week of May in 32 AD. Luke writes [Acts 2:5-11] these new believers “*were devout men from every nation under heaven*”. And while that language was clearly a figure-of-speech rather than literally every nation on planet earth, these visitors to Jerusalem did represent these places:

### **1<sup>st</sup> Century**

Parthia  
Media  
Elam  
Mesopotamia  
Judea  
Cappadocia  
Cretans  
Arabs  
Pontus  
Asia  
Phrygia  
Pamphylia  
Egypt and Libya  
Cyrene  
Rome

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Iran and Turkmenistan  
Azerbaijan and Kurdistan  
Iranian Khuzestan and Ilam  
Iraq, Syria, and parts of Turkey  
Israel  
northeast Turkey  
Greek island of Crete  
Arabian peninsula  
southern Black Sea coast  
Turkey, Georgia, and Armenia  
northwest Turkey and Bulgaria  
southern Turkey  
Egypt and Libya  
western Libya and Algeria  
Italy

## THE LINEAGE IN MATTHEW

Over the last several years it has become provocative and quite popular for individuals to pay \$99 and have their genetics decoded based from the DNA in a small drop of blood provided to hi-tech scientific research firms such as HomeDNA.com, MyHeritage.com, 23andMe, or Vitagene. It is also fascinating to initiate online searches of digitized files at Ancestry.com to trace and build one's family tree.

The Bible records multiple genealogies within the five books of the Torah, covering the Hebrew patriarchs and the various descendants in the twelve tribes of Israel. These are typically skipped over by most Bible readers. One account of Jesus' life and ministry was compiled by Matthew [also called Levi] who was a tax collector for Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee. His gospel begins with: "*the record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham*". This very Jewish [Levite] writer spent almost three years with Jesus and presents Him boldly as the Lion from the Tribe of Judah. Matthew wants his readers to know that Jesus is clearly in the legal-royal line of the Jewish nation.

He then lists each generation starting with the beloved father Abraham, then to David going through King Solomon, reminding us he was born from Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah, the army general whose death was arranged by David to try and cover their adultery. This royal line continues to Uzziah [refer to Isaiah 6] as well as Ahaz, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Jeconiah

### *Lineage of Messiah*

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who was king at the time Israel was led away into captivity by Babylon. It includes Zerubbabel, Zadok, on to "*Eleazar the father of Matthan, the father of Jacob, whose son was Joseph, husband of Mary*" [Matthew 1:15-16]. With Joseph as the legal father of Jesus the Messiah then has legal lineage under Jewish law to the throne of King David. Matthew finishes off by explaining this line had 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the deportation into Babylon, and another 14 generations going from the captivity until Jesus was born of Mary [42 in total].

### **THE LINEAGE IN LUKE**

The account of Jesus' life and ministry as compiled by the Greek-Macedonian Luke, often referred to as the "beloved physician", is not focused on the Jewish royal line of kings, but instead the bloodline of Messiah's ancestry in the humanity of Jesus *born in the flesh*, as expected from one with a medical background. Luke first examines this detailed account of Zacharias and Elizabeth being parents of John the Baptist, the second cousin of Jesus. Then he writes of the angel Gabriel speaking to Mary that she will *physically conceive in her womb and give birth to a son*, all very much to emphasize Jesus the Messiah will be fully human. He then tells of Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, the birth and prophecies of the Baptist, the birth of Jesus after Mary's nine-month pregnancy, and Jesus' circumcision on the eighth day as per the Law of Moses. He tells of the beginning of John's ministry as one proclaiming the arrival

of Messiah and how he baptized Jesus in the Jordan. Then Luke gets the genealogy of Jesus starting with *"when Jesus began His ministry He was 30 years of age, being the supposed son of Joseph the son of Eli"*. Eli is Mary's father and it was culturally acceptable to refer to the woman's father as now father to his daughter's husband [his son-in-law Joseph]. Eli is the patriarch of his family [his daughter, her husband, and their newborn son]. However, this lineage moves in the opposite direction of Matthew's account from Abraham to David to Joseph's actual father Jacob. Luke describes the lineage bottom-up, starting with Jesus the supposed son of Joseph whose legal father-in-law was Eli and then goes back up to King David through his son Nathan.

#### **ALIGNING TWO GENEALOGIES**

There is one major issue to be resolved between the lineage from Matthew compared to that from Luke. The former recorded by Matthew [who is Jewish] focuses on the royal line for his beloved nation of Israel down through the centuries. It is entirely logical and seems fine except for a very interesting prophecy from Jeremiah 22:30 speaking on behalf of God to King Jeconiah [also called Jehoiachin]: *"Write this man as childless, for no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on David's throne or ruling in Judah"*. Wait a minute. Jeconiah is the son of King Jehoikim so that his royal line goes straight to King Solomon and his father King David. How can Jeremiah say from the Lord that none of Jeconiah's heirs will prosper on the throne of David while ruling Judah? If Jesus is Messiah He will one day rule and reign on

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David's throne in Jerusalem at His second coming. His kingdom will include Judah. This prophetic word from Jeremiah seems to contradict Jesus being Messiah – but this is the way God proves His incredible foresight and Providence in all He says and does.

In addressing this matter I want to clearly recognize the insightful work of Lambert Dolphin. He completed graduate studies in physics and electrical engineering at Stanford and was formerly a Senior Research Physicist at *Stanford Research Institute*. Since 1946, SRI has been a prestigious hi-tech lab in Silicon Valley that developed innovations like SRI for iPhones, the computer mouse, liquid crystal displays, and was one of 4 nodes on the original ARPANET in 1969, the basis for "www" and email. The detailed remedy to the perplexing situation of Jeremiah's prophecy draws on various papers, articles, and teachings I have enjoyed from him over the last 30 years.

Mr. Dolphin notes that Abraham is the 20<sup>th</sup> man in the line from the first man Adam, so he is number-21 in order. When we get to David we are at man number-34 [he is the 14<sup>th</sup> from Abraham] and then the genealogy splits into two distinct lines, one from Solomon [Matthew 1:6], the other by Nathan [2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 5:14]. The 14 generations in the Solomon line have Jehoikim 14 men removed from David. Joseph the Nazareth carpenter is the 13<sup>th</sup> from Jehoikim, with Jesus [his presumed son] number-14. This is the "legal title" lineage of royalty through the famous kings of Israel. Jesus then has every right to be called the

King of the Jews as confirmed in Matthew 2:2 when Magi arrive in Jerusalem, also by Jesus in Matthew 27:2. It is also stated that Mashiah will rule on David's throne [2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:12-13, Isaiah 9:7 and 16:5, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Amos 9:11-12, Zechariah 9:9, Psalm 132: 11-12, Zephaniah 3:14-20, and Luke 1:32-33]. Jesus can trace his family heritage 14 generations to King Jehoikim, 14 generations to King David, and then 14 generations to Abraham.

The legal title line and the physical bloodline intersect at Zerubbabel [1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 3:19]. Jehoikim has a son named Jeconiah whose son is Shealtiel. He dies without an heir so his brother Pedaiah married the widow to legally raise up an heir for his dead brother as per to the Levirate marriage provision in Deuteronomy 25. This son was Zerubbabel. The physical bloodline seems to end at Shealtiel [son of Jeconiah] because he died without fathering his own heir. Pedaiah is the physical father of Zerubbabel and does not appear in either lineage from Matthew or Luke because the son was the legal heir of Pedaiah's dead brother Shealtiel. Zerubbabel is in the Messiah's lineage. He was a major figure [Ezra chapter 3] in rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem after he was released from captivity by Cyrus the Persian, who had defeated Babylon. Zerubbabel had children [1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 3:19] but his sister Shelomith inherited his title and carried the bloodline. These were passed to her firstborn son Abiud who passed these to his son Joseph. So while there is no direct physical bloodline between Joseph and Jesus, Mary does

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have a direct bloodline to Jesus direct from her father Eli, who was the second son of Shelomith, the sister of Zerubbabel.

This amazing sequence of events provides two distinct guarantees for Jesus directly to the throne of King David. The bloodline comes by his physical mother Mary, while the legal-title royal line comes by his earthly-adopted father Joseph. The word of Jeremiah that cursed the legal-royal line is then remedied by a direct line from Jesus to King David. And with the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection, both guarantees are locked in forever to Jesus alone. No other person can ever lay claim to the throne of David as a direct legal heir or by a direct blood ancestry. But Jesus the Promised Messiah can!

#### **GRAPHIC OVERVIEWS**

The two lineages have been prepared in various forms in books, magazines, and on dozens of websites. Each of these presents an easy-to-follow overview that summarizes the order of fathers-to-sons starting with King David. The chart below is from [ApologeticsPress.com](http://ApologeticsPress.com) and traces the common line of Jesus from Abraham to David. It shows on the left side the paternal lineage to Joseph's father and on the right side, the maternal lineage to Mary's father Eli. Then the Matthew line goes from David's son Solomon through to Joseph's father Jacob [Yakob]. Luke's line goes from David's son Nathan and ends with Mary's father Eli.

## MATTHEW

Abraham  
Isaac  
Jacob  
Judah  
Perez  
Hezron  
Ram  
Amminadab  
Nahshon  
Salmon  
Boaz  
Obed  
Jesse  
David

## LUKE

Abraham  
Isaac  
Jacob  
Judah  
Perez  
Hezron  
Ram  
Amminadab  
Nahshon  
Salmon  
Boaz  
Obed  
Jesse  
David

### Paternal Line

Solomon  
Rehoboam  
Abijah  
Asa  
Jehoshaphat  
Joram  
Uzziah  
Jotham  
Ahaz  
Hezekiah  
Manasseh  
Amon  
Josiah  
Jeconiah  
Shealtiel  
Zerubbabel

### Maternal Line

Nathan (Solomon's brother)  
Mattathiah  
Manan  
Melea  
Eliakim  
Jonan  
Joseph  
Judah  
Simeon  
Levi  
Matthat  
Jorim  
Eliezer  
Jose  
Er  
Elmodam  
Cosam  
Addi  
Melchii  
Neri

Intermarriage

{ Shealtiel  
Zerubbabel

Abiud ← (Zerubbabel's sons) → Rhesa  
Eliakim  
Azor  
Zadok  
Achim  
Eliud  
Eleazar  
Matthan  
Jacob  
Joseph \* Son-in-law to Mary

Joannas  
Judah  
Joseph  
Semei  
Mattathiah  
Maath  
Naggai  
Esli  
Nahum  
Amos  
Mattathiah  
Joseph  
Janna  
Melchi  
Levi  
Matthat  
Heli

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

The lineage of Jesus from Nazareth is truly fascinating. God used sons born to Rebecca, Rahab, Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba in the ancestry of His Promised Messiah. Rebecca was a Gentile bride for Abraham's son Isaac and she bore Jacob whose name became Israel. Rahab was a Canaanite harlot from Jericho who helped two spies [Caleb and Joshua], was then saved from death at the invasion, and later gave birth to Salmon, the father of Boaz [his wife was Ruth and they were the great-grandparents of King David]. Tamar pretended to be a harlot, got pregnant by her father-in-law Judah [Joseph's brother], and so gave birth to Perez. Ruth was a Gentile from Moab who married into Naomi's family but her husband died soon after. So Boaz filled the role of the kinsman and married her even though the law of Levirate marriage would not have applied to her as a non-Jew. Bathsheba was married to Uriah the Hittite, the top general in David's army, but she had an adulterous affair with King David and their first child died soon after his birth. David then married her after he had Uriah murdered and she gave birth to several more sons. Her third son was Nathan and her fourth son was Solomon who became the king after David died.

Jesus was thoroughly Jewish with a rich heritage in a family line that went back to David through both his mother Mary and legal father Joseph. And these are also direct lines from David to Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, to whom the

promise of Messiah was originally given in Genesis 12 [confirmed in Acts 3:24-26]. Later on in Genesis 22, God recognizes the faith and trust of Abraham and intervenes on Mount Moriah with a specific prophetic oath [verses 14-16] that *"the Lord will provide"*. God did provide the perfect sacrifice for sin roughly 2,000 years later on that same mountain just outside Jerusalem on Golgotha, known as the *"place of the skull"* during the Roman 1<sup>st</sup> Century.

This exceptional lineage was supernaturally designed by God to fulfill the requirements for Jesus to be Mashiach as He is a direct descendent of Abraham, in the line of King David by both blood through Mary, as well as the legal-line of Joseph. He is from the tribe of Judah and we will see in Chapter Six that He will be born in Bethlehem Ephratah, the city of David, exactly as the prophet Micah [5:2] said of Messiah's birthplace. Jesus also traces His line back to the first man Adam, because *"through the first Adam, man became a living soul, while the second Adam became a life-giving Spirit"* – noted in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:45. [See also Romans 5:12-21 as Paul directly compares Adam and Jesus.]

The next chapter will examine the doctrine of the virgin birth and why that is such a key component in the prophetic word regarding Messiah, explaining the sinless nature of Jesus setting Him apart as the perfect sacrifice, the Passover Lamb without blemish for the sins of the world [1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:18-19].

# CHAPTER 5

## *The Virgin Birth*

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign,  
behold a virgin will conceive and be with child, and  
bear a son, and she will call his name ‘God with us’.”

**Isaiah 7:14**

The most important aspect of the very first Christmas is the incredible miracle of the literal physical birth of Messiah to a young woman who conceived in her womb while still being a virgin with regard to her fiancé and then husband Joseph. Mary was most likely around 14 years of age when she was visited by God’s messenger Gabriel with news that she would become pregnant by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. This would specifically fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 that “*a virgin will conceive and bear a Son, and she will call His name Immanuel, God-with-us*”. Matthew 1:18 is clear that Mary was betrothed to Joseph but before they had consummated their actual wedding she was with child. Joseph knew first-hand that he was not the

father of the baby inside Mary's womb. He was an upstanding young man who did not want to bring any shame upon his fiancée so his plan was to send Mary away secretly so she could complete her pregnancy outside the purview of friends and neighbors. The Lord spoke to him in a dream [Matthew 1:20-25] that the baby was not illegitimate but was "conceived of the Holy Spirit". The narrative states that Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary so she remained a virgin until the birth of Jesus. Once they settled in Nazareth Mary gave birth to at least six other children.

### **THREE KEY REASONS**

The virgin birth is a significant theological topic for three key reasons. First, Jesus' origin is eternal from heaven with God the Father. Jesus is not simply another man conceived from the *natural* process of a man and woman. Rather, He is from a *supernatural* process ordained by God, physically born of a woman but conceived by the Holy Spirit [Matthew 1:20]. In the beginning was the Word, who was with God and was God [John 1:1]. Second, Messiah does not have an inherent sin nature passed down to Him from Adam. Just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world and death through sin, death spread to *all mankind* for all have sinned. Death reigned through Adam and from his one transgression condemnation to everyone [Romans 5:12-20]. The prophets Moses, Samuel, Daniel, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Amos were all born like us with innate sinfulness that shows itself at the earliest age. Jesus was manifested to *take away our sin* so in Him there is no

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sin [1<sup>st</sup> John 3:5]. He committed no sin, nor was any guile in Him [1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:22]. And third, Messiah must be the perfect sacrifice without sin to be the spotless and unblemished Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world [Exodus 12:5 and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:19]. Jesus, who knew no sin was made sin for us [2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21]. He is 100% unique from every other person born on earth. Jesus is set apart from any prophet, teacher, Apostle, or wise man. The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of the virgin birth. And if Mary was not truly a virgin with regard to the physical relationship with her betrothed [Joseph], then the Bible would be in error in its content and doctrine.

This was always the plan of God's promised Messiah going back to the Word from the Lord in Genesis 3:15. After the sin of disobedience by Eve and then Adam's subsequent decision to join her, the Lord declared that enmity would be between Lucifer's seed and "her seed". Chuck Missler referred to this biological contradiction as "the first hint of the virgin birth". This is provocative because offspring naturally come from conception through the woman's egg and the *man's* seed. Jehovah God is introducing a truly miraculous means for His perfect plan of salvation. It will fully enable the eternal God to come to earth in *entirely human flesh and born of a woman*, but He will be conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Refer back to Chapter Four and the detailed lineage of Jesus that includes King David whose kingdom and throne are

“established forever” [2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:16]. This speaks to the eternal posture of Messiah who was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but who appeared in these last times for our sake to redeem mankind [1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:20].

#### **LINEAGE MAINTAINED**

The curse of Jeremiah 22:30 on Jeconiah [also covered in Chapter Four] meant the royal line of kings ruling after David appeared as if they could not fulfill the prophecy of Nathan, to be a house and kingdom that shall endure before God and a throne established forever. Remember the legal line went to David and then Solomon, then on to Joseph’s father Jacob whose family line was in Bethlehem, the city of David [see Luke 2:4]. It was the physical bloodline from David through his son Nathan that went to Mary’s father Eli, such that Mary carried the royal DNA in her genes to transfer to her son Jesus. So while the Holy Spirit was the One who miraculously conceived Messiah in Mary’s womb, the egg of her body contained the genes of her ancestral line traced all the way back through Nathan to King David himself.

It cannot be understated just how important the two lineages of Jesus are as presented by Matthew and Luke, and previously reviewed in detail within Chapter Four. Tracing Mary’s ancestry through her father Eli is an extraordinary narration for a Hebrew woman, given that lineage was always referred to through the men. Recognizing Joseph as the legal-adoptive father of Jesus complements the explanation of both Joseph’s lineage through his father Jacob and Mary’s ancestral line through

her father. This is especially true within the context of Moses' provision in the Torah for a daughter to be a legal heir to her father's inheritance. Both lines lead back directly to King David through the tribe of Judah and then right to Abraham the father of the Promise [Romans 4:16].

#### **ZELOPHEHAD #FATHER-OF-GIRLS**

The late Los Angeles Lakers all-star basketball player Kobe Bryant made popular the social media hash-tag "Father of Girls" to recognize his four daughters [and no sons] born to him and his wife Vanessa. As a father to three grown daughters of my own [all married and now having their own families] I do appreciate a similar joy we can call attention to using Bryant's moniker [although I also have a son, the older brother to his three sisters]. This reminds me of an interesting legal matter in the Old Testament that begins with a man named Zelophehad. In Numbers 26:33 it says he had no sons but he did have *five* daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hogla, Milcah, and Tirzah [see also 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 7:15]. He was in the direct family line of his patriarch Manasseh who was the son of Joseph whose father was Jacob [remember his name was changed to Israel].

These five sisters were granted a formal audience with Moses [Numbers 27:1-11] where they made the case that their father Zelophehad who died in the wilderness [he was not part of the conspiracy sin of Korah] had no son as his legal heir. So the five daughters asked to be given his inheritance in the Promised

Land. Moses brings their petition to the Lord who agrees the five sisters will be able to continue the hereditary name of their deceased father. In Numbers 27:8, their unique case becomes legal precedent for an amendment to the Law of Moses as God says to the nation of Israel, *"If a man dies without a son, you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter and it is now a statutory ordinance to the sons of Israel, just as the Lord has commanded Moses"*. The details of the new legal provision were laid out further in Numbers 36:2-12.

When it was time for the people to enter Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, the case law derived from the unique precedent of Zelophehad was referenced by the five sisters [Joshua 17:2-6]. As these gals approached Eleazar the priest along with Joshua the son of Nun and all the leaders of Israel, they simply said, *"The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers"*. As such, ten portions of the land were granted to the Manasseh family line beside Gilead and Bashan, beyond the Jordan River. This law of inheritance is then in place to support the virgin birth of Jesus to Mary.

It is quite provocative that Jesus stated to the religious leaders [John 5:39] *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, but I tell you this, they testify of me"*. He was making direct reference to Psalm 40:7, *"Behold in the scroll of the book it is written of Me"*. The full Messianic claims of Jesus from Nazareth may seem to hinge on this seemingly obscure legal provision that emerged from the case of

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the Zelophehad daughters. Jesus' physical mother Mary was the only child of Eli [she did not have a brother to be the typical male heir to Eli's inheritance, name, and lineage]. The legal rights of Eli's ancestry among the 12 tribes were passed to his daughter Mary in the same way the five sisters of Zelophehad were able to legally inherit from their father's ancestral right for possession of land in Canaan along with the rest of the sons of Israel.

### **CRITICS CHALLENGE**

The concept of the virgin birth is now widely ridiculed as folklore, mythology, wishful thinking, and even worse, the blind belief by those who have thrown all forms of logic to the wind. An August 15, 2003 article in the *New York Times* titled, "Believe It Or Not" ridiculed Christians for holding belief in the virgin birth of Jesus. But it noted that "Americans are three times as likely to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus [83 percent] as in evolution [28 percent]". The author then mocks believers by saying this reflects how American Christianity is less intellectual and more mystical.

The British newspaper *The Guardian* published "The Virgin Birth Runs Against The Grain of Christianity" [written by Giles Fraser] claiming legitimacy to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century story by Celsus that Jesus was an illegitimate son of Mary when she had sex with a Roman soldier named Panthera. The virgin birth story was then devised by early church leaders as a way to completely re-define Mary in a more Godly picture of purity.

A March 2016 article in *Patheos* by Kyle Roberts has six reasons the virgin birth should either be disposed of or drastically revised. The first is because Joseph wanted to secretly 'put Mary away' in her pregnant condition as she was part of a scandal in her sexual liaison with Panthera. The article concludes that so much of the Christmas story's dates, places, and names are completely irreconcilable, therefore a virgin birth is just one more facet that does not fit the facts.

The December 2017 issue of *Christianity Today* also had an article, "The Virgin Birth: What's The Problem Exactly?" Within this narrative the author states four primary criticisms about the virgin birth. The first criticism is that Paul never mentions it. The second is that both Matthew and Luke were referring to Isaiah 7:14 in the Greek Septuagint version that simply says "a young woman will conceive" so they speculated and contrived the story about Mary being a virgin. Third, this is nothing more than copying the Jewish and pagan myths of that time which focused on virgins giving birth to super-spiritual heroes. And the criticism is that it is just not possible for a human being to be conceived without sperm from a man plus an egg from a woman. This grossly contradicts science.

The best responses to each of these four criticisms are: 1] It was widely-accepted and not controversial so Paul did not have to cover it like the gospel writers. 2] Isaiah understood Mary being "young" as unmarried, a "maiden", so still a virgin. 3] Because it shows up in pagan literature of the day does not negate it within

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the gospels. And 4] God is certainly capable of doing this *miracle*. If Jehovah cannot accomplish this it would seriously call into question the power and ability of the Holy Spirit to raise Jesus from the dead [a direct contradiction to Romans 8:11]. Remember also that Mary says plainly to the angel-messenger that *she is still a virgin* [Luke 1:34]. Had Jesus been born of human seed with a human egg, He would not be fully human and fully God [Colossians 2:9, Philippians 2:7].

### **BEHIND THE SCENE**

The virgin birth of Jesus is inherently miraculous in its process of supernaturally melding a physical conception with a metaphysical “overshadowing” of God’s Holy Spirit. But there was also an added dimension that was incredibly profound just behind the scene of what occurred in the natural world. The declarations of Elohiym in Genesis chapter 3 addressed an underlying and inherently complex spiritual dimension that would come to fruition through the literal birth of Jesus.

Revelation 12:1 describes a woman clothed with the sun having the moon at her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head. She is specifically identified in Genesis 37:9-10 as the nation Israel. Verse 2 of Revelation 12 says she is pregnant and ready to give birth [to Messiah] even as Lucifer [Satan] is poised in verses 3 and 4 to devour the newborn Child [a direct reference to Herod’s order to kill all the young boys age two and under in Bethlehem]. Verse 5 confirms that Mary did give birth to the Son, the male

Child, who will rule the nations with a rod of iron, and he is then caught up to God and His throne. The detailed explanation of this portion from the Revelation of Jesus given to the Apostle John extends beyond the scope of this book [it will be covered within a future book in the Figure It Out series titled *Heaven, Earth, And Time*]. However, the first six verses from Revelation 12 present an encapsulated historical summary of Israel and Messiah happening on Earth but viewed from the realm of God's perspective outside of our physical time-space. Verse-1 identifies the nation of Israel. Verse-2 is the birth of Jesus. Verses 3-4 show Satan positioned against Israel and the attempt to destroy Messiah. Verse-5 confirms the start of Messiah's earthly life and ministry, and the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father when the purpose of His first coming was completed. Verse-6 jumps ahead to the still-future time of tribulation here on earth when God will have a place of protection specifically prepared for His people Israel until the Second Coming of Jesus.

The efforts of Lucifer [Satan] within the spiritual realm of what Paul confirms are *principalities, powers*, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places [Ephesians 6:12]. These have remained strategically aligned against God's plan since the curse was declared in Genesis 3. As Jesus declared Tetelestai ["It is finished"] from the cross, it was there on the cross He completed His victory over death. Paul explains in Colossians 2:15 that Jesus wholly divested [stripped away] those very same *principalities and powers* when He made a

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spectacle of them [as an example] in His triumph over them when He made the perfect sacrifice for sin. It finished the work of Messiah's first coming with victory over sin and spiritual death [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:55] and Paul could ask rhetorically, "Hey death, where is your sting; hey grave, where is your victory?" The virgin birth was foundational to the entire ministry of Jesus as God's promised Messiah.

### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The matter of the virgin birth is not a minor footnote in the Christmas narrative. It defines the very theology of God's character in His plan of redemption. The statement in Genesis 3:15 about the enmity between the *seed* of Lucifer and Mary's *seed* shows the nature of Messiah. Isaiah 7:14 confirmed "a virgin will conceive". The Hebrew words *almah* [young woman having not known a man] and *hareh* [pregnant, conception, with child] are that "sign" from Adonai. Messiah will be a true miracle at conception [Colossians 1:19]. The next chapter describes 14 separate clues of Jesus' birth that must, and do, coordinate to confirm one common date.

# CHAPTER 6

## *Fourteen Coordinated Clues*

"A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be done of the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria."

**Luke 2:1-2**

This book has examined strong Biblical evidence of the Messiah promised by God throughout the writings of the Old Testament [Chapter One]. It has made the case that there are multiple, intentional foreshadows in the Old Testament that all point to one man, Jesus of Nazareth [Chapter Two]. Key points were reviewed about how we arrived at our modern calendars and the underlying rationales for a December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day in the year zero, including background on how we got to various cultural icons related to celebrating Christmas today [Chapter Three]. In Chapter Four the Biblical lineages of Matthew and Luke make an incredibly strong case for Jesus being Messiah, while also showing it is essentially impossible for anyone else to claim

to be the Anointed One spoken of throughout the Bible. And Chapter Five defined the three key points regarding the importance of the virgin birth.

#### **COORDINATED CLUES**

This chapter will now focus on several specific details from the Biblical narrative, clues about the dates, persons, and events indelibly related to the birth of Messiah. Individually they make their own contextual points for defining exact times, historical people and places, as well as significant occasions that add definition to the “fullness of time” into which Messiah was born. Together however, these 14 clues will coordinate an incredibly narrow and precise window for when the Christ would *have to be born*, because each of the 14 clues must fit with every one of the other clues into a coordinated narrative. This is the same as using three transmission frequencies to triangulate someone’s geographic position on a map based upon the intersecting location where all three signals overlap. This however will be far more detailed and sophisticated than aligning three points to find a single location point. We will be coordinating 14 separate clues – different pieces of evidence – that *must* all fit into the same context and timeline for them to be seriously considered as legitimate. They will then confirm the entirety of this ‘information portfolio’ that supports a single common date for when Jesus was most likely born.

These must all collectively coordinate to converge on a single, cohesive alignment. No clue can contradict the others.

For example, we cannot have Jesus at age 30 starting His ministry prior to John the Baptist, because his second cousin was born six months prior to Jesus. Jesus cannot enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday at the age of 25 or 26, which would not coordinate with Numbers 4:3, which says the acceptable age for a Jewish man to begin ministry is 30 years old. There must be overlapping, well-documented alignment and context for Augustus as Emperor, while Quirinius is in Syria, with Herod in Judea, at the same that fits with when Pontius Pilate will be procurator when Jesus is an adult at the crucifixion.

**CLUE-1 *Decree of Caesar Augustus***

The first clue comes from the Gospel records [Luke 2:1] starting the time-context of Jesus' birth when Caesar Augustus was Emperor of Rome. Luke writes, "*A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken. This first census was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria*". This census would ensure all inhabitants of Rome were paying their taxes. Augustus was born Gaius Octavius on September 23, 63 BC. He rose to prominence in 42 BC when he and Rome's top general, Marc Antony, chased down and defeated the army of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi after they had murdered Julius Caesar [the two conspirators committed suicide]. Fifteen years later in 27 BC at age 36, Gaius Octavius was crowned Rome's first Emperor with the title *Divi Filius Augustus* ["Divine Son of August"]. He ruled 41 years until he died in 14 AD.

## *Fourteen Clues*

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The census was not a one-time event but a first and likely annual head-count started by Augustus. It is logical that with Augustus being the first “Emperor” he would initiate this new periodic census of those living throughout the Empire. The discovery in Egypt of a papyrus that describes the Roman census



of 104 AD used the same word from Luke’s gospel [ἀπογράφω *apo-grapho*], meaning to tabulate, list, or graph. This lends credibility to the decree of Augustus being the “first census”. Luke adds this came at the time when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Luke later records in Acts 5:37, “In the days of the census” regarding the Judas uprising, because he knew the regular routine of the Romans doing their periodic census in Judea. Luke also lived closer in time to these actual events around the birth of Jesus, so he adds excellent credibility on top of what Flavius Josephus records. This first contextual point in time for the birth of Christ is between 27 BC and 14 AD – a span of four decades.

**CLUE-2 Quirinius Governor of Syria**

Having already placed the birth of Jesus within that initial context of when Caesar Augustus was Emperor of Rome, the second clue is at the time of the census from Augustus, that *Publius Sulpicius Quirinius* was overseeing Syria. Born in Linuvium near Rome, he lived from 51 BC until 21 AD, and was appointed



Legate Governor of the Syrian Province after Herod Archelaus was removed as Tetrarch of Judea in 6 BC. Quirinius then served for nearly seven years, from 6 BC until 12 AD, with the Roman Province of Judea added in as part of the overall census planning and land allocation. This particular window of time fits exactly within the overall reign of Caesar Augustus and narrows the timing for the birth of Jesus to sometime within the 18-year appointment of Quirinius. This is a more narrow subset of time within the 40-to-41 years of Augustus.

**CLUE-3 *Death of Herod The Great***

The third clue that must coordinate with the prior two clues involves the life of Herod. The historical Herod is well-documented in the various annals of the recorded Middle East. He was born in 73 BC in Edom. Flavius Josephus writes His death in Jericho was "preceded by a lunar eclipse, and was before Passover". Scholars have assumed this is the eclipse that occurred in 4 BC, so they put Herod's death in 4 BC. But archived astronomical tables show another lunar eclipse visible in Judea on



January 10<sup>th</sup> in 1 BC. Passover that year was on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Herod's death sometime in 1 BC after January 10<sup>th</sup> and prior to April 11<sup>th</sup> fits very well with the time described by Josephus and also aligns with two additional reference points noted by Josephus. First, his death was "34 years after he obtained the kingdom". He conquered and executed the Hasmonean king Antigonus in 35 BC. Second, the death of Herod the Great was

37 years after the Roman Senate granted him the title "King of the Jews". He conquered Antigonus in 35 BC. Subtract 34 years puts his death in 1 BC. He was granted "king" title by Rome in 38 BC. Minus 37 years also puts his death in 1 BC. Both of these align with the 1 BC date between the lunar eclipse and Passover. Taken together, the late winter/early Spring of 1 BC is a good fit with the two previous clues. Caesar Augustus ruled from 27 BC to 14 AD. Quirinius was governor within that time from 6 BC to 12 AD. Herod's death between late January and early April of 1 BC means these three clues narrow the scope of Jesus' birth to between 6 BC and 1 BC as they *all* fit with the rule of Augustus while Quirinius was in Syria.

#### **CLUE-4 Zacharias in the Temple**

With the contextual timeframe starting to take shape, the fourth clue involves another event that must fit within this same 6 BC to 1 BC window of time. Early in the gospel of Luke the circumstance of the birth of John the Baptist are explained. The added details about John's father may seem trivial at first glance. But his service in the Temple is a major clue about Jesus' birth.

Zacharias [Luke 1:5] was in a regular rotation schedule of priests taking turns serving in the Jerusalem Temple. These 24 "courses" each consisted of a team of priests per month, so a complete cycle was every 24 months [1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 24:7-19]. Luke explains Zacharias was "of the division of Abijah". This rotation service schedule is outlined below. He also "had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, her name was Elizabeth".

### 24 DIVISIONS of PRIEST'S SERVICE

[1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 24:7-19]

|               |                  |               |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1- Jehoiarib  | 2- Jedaiah       | 3- Harim      |
| 4- Seorim     | 5- Malchijah     | 6- Mijamin    |
| 7- Hakkoz     | <b>8- ABIJAH</b> | 9- Jeshua     |
| 10- Shecaniah | 11- Eliashib     | 12- Jakim     |
| 13- Huppah    | 14- Jeshebeab    | 15- Bilgah    |
| 16- Immer     | 17- Hezir        | 18- Happizzes |
| 19- Pethahiah | 20- Jehezkel     | 21- Jachin    |
| 22- Gamul     | 23- Delaiah      | 24- Maaziah   |

The Lord sent an angel-messenger [Luke 1:13-17] to the Temple at the time it was the turn of Zacharias to enter the holy place and burn incense [Luke 1:9]. The angel told him that he and his wife Elizabeth were going to have a son and they would name him John [the Baptist was the forerunner of Messiah]. The records of the priests' service rotations were chronicled in the Temple archives. The Roman Titus Vespasian conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Talmud records that the first priestly division of Jehoiarib [see the table above] had recently started its regular service-rotation at the time Titus came into the city in August and destroyed the Temple.

Using the three previous clues, it is possible to count backwards in 24 cycles every 24 months to find the 8<sup>th</sup> division of *Abijah* serving so that John would be born before Jesus, which needs to be sometime before Herod died in 1 BC. The priests of *Abijah* would have started serving July 13, 3 BC and John would be born nine months later in April of 2 BC. The next clue further

links Jesus' birthday directly to the birth of His second-cousin John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

**CLUE-5 *Pregnant Cousins***

The fifth clue is related to Clue-4. The gospel writer [Luke 1:26] explains that after Mary was told by the angel Gabriel she would become pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit, she visited her cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, who was six months along in her pregnancy. When these two pregnant cousins saw each other Elizabeth felt her son leap inside her womb [Luke 1:41]. Mary would wait for nine months [40 weeks, or 280 days] until Jesus was born.

If Zacharias was in the Temple serving in the regular rotation-schedule of the Levitical priests' eighth division of *Abijah* on July 13<sup>th</sup> of 3 BC, then after the announcement from the angel, John would be born 40 weeks later in April of 2 BC. It is very provocative to consider that in counting out 40 weeks from the second week of July in 3 BC, John could very easily have been born at Passover on April 19<sup>th</sup> of 2 BC. Luke [the "beloved physician" as referred to by Paul in Colossians 4:14] wanted to explain the 6-month difference between Elizabeth's and Mary's pregnancies. From John's birth, counting out 24 or 25 weeks to the birth of Jesus, that would add on 180 days [six months] and put Mary giving birth to Jesus in the Fall of 2 BC, specifically in late September. This window of time once again fits very well within the established range of 6 BC to 1 BC.

**CLUE-6 *Bethlehem Ephratah***

This next clue relates the birth of Jesus directly to the book of Ruth and the transaction that transpires between a “kinsman-redeemer” [in Hebrew, the *Goel*] named Boaz and the Gentile widow from Moab named Ruth. The ability to lay claim to being Messiah intertwines not only having a direct lineage in the royal line to King David, and being able to prove one’s ancestry in the tribe of Judah, but also having a birth certificate that says “Bethlehem Ephratah of Judea”.

It is absolutely fascinating that God used the decree of Caesar Augustus to fulfill yet another Old Testament prophecy about Messiah from Micah 5:2 *“But you Bethlehem Ephratah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be Ruler in Israel, and His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity”*. Even though Joseph lived in Nazareth of Galilee, he had to return to his ancestral hometown to be counted in the census. He then takes Mary there to Bethlehem where she gives birth, resulting in Jesus being born in Bethlehem Ephratah exactly as Micah stated.

This is the ancestral home of Boaz. He and his wife Ruth had a son, Obed, who had a son Jesse, who in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:1 was still living in Bethlehem. Jesse had ten sons of his own. The youngest was David who was anointed King of Israel by the prophet Samuel at the time Saul was king. Had it not been for the landmark decree of Augustus, Jesus would not fulfill this requirement of Messiah. But God used Boaz to redeem Ruth and

secure all of the family lands in Bethlehem Ephratah [Ruth 1:1, 4:7-14] which then became well-known as the city of David [1<sup>st</sup> Kings 2:10, 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 6:10, 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 15:1, Luke 2:11].

**CLUE-7 *Shepherds Outside With Flocks***

The seventh clue is not so much a specific year within a context of prior evidence, but rather an implied “season” that happens each year. Remember that Clues 4 and 5 put the birth of John the Baptist in mid-April 2 BC so that his second cousin Jesus is born six months later in Fall 2 BC. Luke 2:8 clarifies that when Jesus was born *“there were in that same region shepherds staying out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night”*. Local sheep herders of Bethlehem being out at night in the fields provides an interesting insight that also fits very well with the findings of Clues 4 and 5, that Jesus was born six months after his second cousin John was born. That would be in the Fall of 2 BC.

While the folklore traditions of the Dickens Christmas noted in Chapter Three have deeply inculcated quaint images of snowflakes gently falling on a chilly December morning, the reality is that the local Bethlehem shepherds actually spent the night out in the fields with their flocks. A quick online review of TripAdvisor.com or Weather.com has typical temperatures in Bethlehem during late December with a daytime high of just 13°C [55°F], while the low can drop to “freezing” at 0°C [32°F]. With an elevation of 2,500 feet [775 meters], it sometimes snows during December. In fact Jerusalem [6 miles away] had 20” of snow in January 1992. Shepherds would not be out in the fields with their

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flocks during the day on December 25<sup>th</sup>, and *certainly not at nighttime* with temperatures near freezing. However, those same online weather sites for Bethlehem show typical temperatures in late September to be 22°C [72°F] with daytime highs reaching up to 28°C [82°F], while average evening overnight lows are a balmy 19°C [67°F]. It is so much more reasonable that with these temperatures, shepherds would not have to bring in their flocks of sheep, goats, cows, cattle, and camels each evening to the warmth of a shelter. Instead, they could leave them out all day as well as overnight in the typical balmy climate of early-Fall.

### **CLUE-8 *Egypt and Herod's Decree***

This eighth clue involves the order by Herod to kill all the males in the Bethlehem region who were two years old and younger. Herod met the Magi [details in Chapter Nine] and asked them to find the newly-born child in Bethlehem and return to tell him where the child is. However, the Magi were warned by God in a dream to not go back to Jerusalem, so Herod was enraged and felt betrayed by these Persian-Parthians [Matthew 2: 16]. He enacted a decree to ensure the child will be killed. Prior to his order [Matthew 2:13-15], God instructed Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt *"and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him"*. The Biblical account [Matthew 2:16] explains, *"Herod saw he had been tricked by the Magi and was enraged and slew all the male children in Bethlehem and its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time determined from the Magi"*. Herod killing

all the little boys age two and under may infer that the Magi first become aware of Jesus' coming birth perhaps 15-to-20 months earlier, as Herod wanted to be absolutely sure he would destroy this newly-born "King of the Jews".

Soldiers dispatched to Bethlehem and the surrounding areas killed the young males. Matthew clarifies [2:17-18] that this fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15, *"A voice is heard in Ramah [Bethlehem region], lamenting and bitter weeping as Rachel weeps for her children, she refuses to be comforted for her children because they are no more"*. It is so sad to picture perhaps six or eight young boys up to the age of two were murdered by Herod's soldiers [as noted earlier, Bethlehem probably had population around 600]. Rachel was Jacob's [Israel's] wife. She died in childbirth *"on the way to Ramah, on her way to Ephratah [Bethlehem] and she was buried there"* [Genesis 48:7]. This was clearly prophetic of Messiah to come.

The Roman philosopher Ambrosius Auerilius Theodosius Microbius [395-423 AD] wrote of the infanticide, "On hearing that the son of Herod had been slain, when Herod ordered all boys in Syria [the common name for the area in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century that included Judea and Samaria] under the age of two be killed, Augustus said, 'It is better to be Herod's pig than his son,'" [Dicta 56, Malci]. Flavius Josephus [Antiquities of the Jews, 17.6.5] said Herod was so concerned that when he died no one would mourn him [the Jews would cheer the news], he ordered dozens of prominent Jewish leaders rounded up into the hippodrome and

had them executed after he died “so he shall have the honor of memorable mourning at his funeral”.

God foreknew Herod’s angry reaction and provided a protection for Jesus in Egypt. Matthew 2:19-22 recounts when Herod died [soon after the eclipse of January 10<sup>th</sup> and prior to April 11<sup>th</sup> Passover in 1 BC], the Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream to go back to Israel “*for those who sought the child’s life are now dead*”. Joseph does and this fulfills the prophecy of Hosea 11:1 that Messiah would be called out of Egypt.

It is incredible that Magi with historic roots dating back to Daniel in Babylon recognized the significance of a newly born king. They made the long westward trek to formally recognize His birth while providing for Joseph, Mary, and Jesus materially and prophetically. The young family then settled in Nazareth [Matthew 2:22-23] as was spoken through the prophets “Messiah shall be called a Nazarene” [this was not a written prophecy but part of the Jewish oral tradition].

#### **Clue-9 Death of Cleopatra VII**

The next clue involves the writings of two prominent Roman historians who aligned the birth of Jesus relative to the suicides of Cleopatra with Marc Antony. The first is Tertullian [Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus], a renowned Christian apologist from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. He was born in 155 AD and died in 240. Often referred to as “the founder of Western theology” he was the first to use the Latin term *trinitas* [Trinity] to describe God. His commentaries and

essays include the provocative information that Jesus was born "*28 years after the death of Cleopatra VII in Egypt*". She was the last ruler of Ptolemaic Egypt. Her well-documented death happened on August 10, 30 BC. Adding 28 years after that puts Jesus' birth in the range of the **Fall in 2 BC**.

The second historian is Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Caesarea Maritima, which is located north of Jerusalem on the Mediterranean coast. He was born in 265 AD and died at age 79 in 339. He also records Jesus was born "*in the 28<sup>th</sup> year from the death of Cleopatra*". The 28<sup>th</sup> year covered twelve months from the Fall of 3 BC until the **Fall in 2 BC**. Tertullian and Eusebius overlap with the prior clues to align Jesus' birthday in the timeframe of **Fall in 2 BC**.

#### **Clue-10 The Reign of Augustus**

Irenaeus was a Greek Christian originally from Smyrna [modern day Turkey]. He is known for helping to spread the gospel into what is now the region around Lyon in southeast France. He was born in 130 AD and died at age 72 in 202. He was discipled by Polycarp who knew the last living Apostle, John bar-Zebedee in the late 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Irenaeus says Jesus' birth was "*in the 41<sup>st</sup> year of Augustus*". History clearly shows that Caesar Augustus started his reign in August of 43 BC, so his 41<sup>st</sup> year went from Fall 3 BC to **Fall 2 BC**.

The two prior historians also used Caesar Augustus as a reference point. Eusebius wrote Jesus was born "*in the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of the reign of Augustus*". The 42<sup>nd</sup> year went from the **Fall 2 BC**

to Fall 1 BC. Tertullian also stated Augustus began his reign 41 years before Jesus was born AND *"died 15 years after the birth of Jesus Christ"*. He started his reign in the Fall of 43 BC, so 41 years after is **Fall 2 BC**. Augustus died August 14<sup>th</sup> in 14 AD – that minus 15 years is again **Fall in 2 BC**. There is only one overlap among all three writers: **Fall in 2 BC**.

#### **Clue-11 Until Shiloh Comes**

The Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and priests of Israel all knew that there was one crucial context-point regarding the arrival of God's promised Messiah. It had been etched into their collective understandings going all the way back to the book of Genesis [49:10] as Israel [who had been born Jacob, son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham] called his sons together to tell them what was still to come in their futures. He spoke over his first-born Reuben and then Simeon and Levi. Next up was Judah whom he likened unto a lion, *"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh has come"*. It was understood by the rabbis that Shiloh referred to Messiah who would be of Judah's tribe. The formal government of Judah is the "scepter", referring to sovereignty of the nation, and would not be removed until God's Messiah had come to earth.

Flavius Josephus records that in 6 AD Rome replaced Judea's king Herod Archelaus with the new military prefect Coponius, who remained in that position until 9 AD. He was followed by Marcus Ambivulus [9-12 AD], Annius Rufus [12-15], Valerius Gratus [15-26], and then Pontius Pilate from 26-36 AD.

Josephus emphasized that Rome was granted “supreme power over the Jews” and their national sovereignty had been removed. Israel was no longer a nation but was now merely part of the province of Syria within Rome’s eastern territories. With this subjugation completed and the nation was no longer officially recognized as its own sovereign political entity, the previously ruling king and his legal-advisory council [the Sanhedrin] were entirely stripped of their legislative power to administer trials for capital offenses. They could not perform executions. Rome was the primary law as judge, jury, and executioner – with its infamous and tortuous crucifixion for all capital crimes. You will remember that the religious leaders had to bring Jesus before Pilate for trial and sentencing of death because they did not have the political-legal authority to do so [Matthew 27:1-2 and Mark 15:1].

Josephus writes that when their national sovereignty had been nullified, the Jewish leaders went out in the streets of Jerusalem and wept aloud with great wailing and tearing their clothes. They understood that moment to be “the scepter departing from Judah” and yet Messiah had not come as Yahweh promised in Genesis 49:10. Their incredulity extended to the point of asking, “Could Jehovah lie?” They were not aware that 100 km north in the village of Nazareth Messiah had already come as promised. He was seven years old living with his mother, adopted father, and siblings. Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3, John 7:3, Acts 1:14, and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:5 all note Joseph and Mary had four other sons: James, Joses, Simon, Jude, and at least two

unnamed “sisters”. Yahweh had kept His word and Messiah had come prior to the scepter and ruler’s staff departing from Judah.

**CLUE-12 Ministry at Age 30**

The twelfth clue fits the context for when Jesus began His ministry. Luke 3:23 says Jesus was age 30, which fits with Numbers 4:3 as the designated age for a Jewish man to begin service to the Lord. Jesus said He came to fulfill every facet of the Law [Matthew 5:17] so it is very logical that He would start His public ministry at that prescribed age. With Jesus born in the Fall of 2 BC He turned 30 in the Fall of 29 AD. Clues 4 and 5 placed the birth of Jesus’ second cousin, John the Baptist, in April of 2 BC, six months before Jesus. If John also waited until he was 30 years old to begin his ministry, then he started baptizing people in the Jordan River in April of 29 AD. Six months later in the Fall of 29, Jesus would leave Nazareth and arrive at the Jordan River where John declared, “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*” [John 1:29, 36]. The next clue shows that Jesus entered Jerusalem for that first Palm Sunday on April 6, 32 AD. This would also be during His third year of public ministry.

**CLUE-13 Daniel’s Exact Day**

This thirteenth clue folds in the prophecy of Daniel 9. Chapter One reviewed the work of Sir Robert Anderson that had Messiah riding into Jerusalem on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April in 32 AD. The previous Clue-12 has Jesus begin His ministry at age 30 in the Fall of 29 AD. This fits with the underlying evidence that Jesus’ ministry went into its third year as John’s gospel records three

separate Passovers in the Life of Christ. John 2:13 was Jesus' first Passover in the Spring of 30 AD. John 6:4 was the second Passover in Spring 31 AD. And John 11:55 refers to the third Passover in 32 AD when He was crucified on Passover evening for the sins of the world. These have Jesus' ministry happening from September of 29 to April of 32 AD.

If Jesus was born in 4 BC as many positions speculate, He would have been 35 years old when He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday – April 6, 32 AD. If His ministry covered those recorded three years this would not fit with Numbers 4:3 and Jesus would have delayed the start of His ministry until age 32. The 4 BC date also does not match with the timing for the birth of John the Baptist based on the dates Zacharias was serving in the Temple with the priests in the Abijah rotation.

#### **CLUE-14 Pontius Pilate**

Previously in Clue-11 it was shown that Rome removed Herod Archelaus as king over Judea in 6 BC and replaced him with the *prefect* Coponius, who stayed in office until 9 AD. He was followed by Marcus Ambivulus [9-12 AD], Annius Rufus [12-15], and Valerius Gratus [15-26]. In 26 AD the fifth prefect [“procurator”] Pontius Pilate was appointed. His Latin name *Pilatus* means “skilled with the javelin”. He was a military appointee who had commanded a cavalry and quashed a rebellion in Samaria with such brutality that he was recalled to Rome to account for his actions. The Roman code of *Cursus*

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*Honorum* [started by Caesar Augustus for men with equestrian rank] required military credentials for appointment to *Prefect*.

Pilate is such a central figure in the Biblical account of Jesus' trial, scourging, and the crucifixion on Golgotha that he *has* to be in place during Spring of 32 AD to provide this 14<sup>th</sup> clue, that coordinates with *all* the prior 13 clues, to complete the context for Jesus to be in his early 30s so he could be born during the Fall 2 BC. Critics of the Biblical narrative typically wondered where was the tangible evidence that proved there had ever been a Pontius Pilate overseeing the Roman province of Judea. Then in 1961, Italian archaeologists digging in the sports stadium of ancient Caesarea Maritima [on the Mediterranean coast south of modern day Haifa] came across a piece of limestone roughly five feet square that not only showed the clear inscription of 'Pontius Pilate', but also the title that had been bestowed on him by Caesar: *Praefectus Judaea*, meaning "Prefect of the Judaeans".

Pilate was stationed in Judea from 26-36 AD during the reign of Tiberius, confirmed in Luke 3:1 "*Now in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanius was tetrarch of Abilene*". Tiberius was the stepson of Augustus and ruled from 14 to 37 AD. If Jesus was born in the **Fall 2 BC**, He would have been about five months prior to his 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday when He stood before Pilate on Passover in 32 AD.

The other names in Luke 3:1 also fit within this historical time. Philip II the Tetrarch was born in 26 BC as half-brother to Herod Antipas and Herod Archelaus. He ruled Ituraea and Trachonitis after King Herod's death in 1 BC, and was in power until Matthew 14 and Mark 6 write that Herod Antipas married Herodias [she was Philip's wife]. John the Baptist called out their adultery as sin and Luke 3:19 states Herod the Tetrarch [Philip II] had John thrown in prison for this. Josephus writes that the first Lysanias [or Lysanias] was Tetrarch over Abila [also Abilene] in 36 BC. This provincial realm continued using his name after his death [the "tetrarchy of Lysanias"]. His son the prince [Luke 3:1] had that same name and was then a contemporary of Philip II the Tetrarch in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius. Coins and inscriptions from ancient Abila with 'Lysanias' also fit with the time *after* Herod's death.

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The preponderance of evidence among these 14 clues confirms a distinct window of time for the birth of Jesus. While other dates for Jesus' birth may line up with a few of the 14 historical clues, they cannot deliver the same consistency as the **Fall of 2 BC**. The next chapter summarizes these 14 clues into a common timeline depicting the overlap of evidence for Jesus' birth in the Fall of 2 BC, when September 29<sup>th</sup> was Tishri 1 on the Jewish calendar – Yom Teruah, the Feast of Blowing Trumpets. New Year's Day [Rosh Ha'Shana, the head of the year]. Additional details about the prophetic aspects of this feast as well as the other feasts of Israel will then follow in Chapter Eight.

# CHAPTER 7

## *Review All Dates*

“But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son  
born of a woman, born under the Law.”

**Galatians 4:4**

The evidence presented so far may be overwhelming as you process how everything fits into a fully aligned case-file with a well-coordinated narrative that ties it all together. It is interesting to hear the Bible speak about God sending His Son, the promised Messiah, “in the fullness of time”. That date when Jesus entered Jerusalem and was hailed as Messiah when the crowds shouted out Psalm 118 “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” was an exact date. The first chapter of this book introduced the invaluable work of Scotland Yard’s Sir Robert Anderson in calculating that first Palm Sunday being on April 6<sup>th</sup> in 32 AD. That was Nisan 10 and the start of Passover week. The prior chapter discussed 14 overlapping clues that support one specific time for the birth of Jesus. The plan for this chapter is to put all 14 clues into an easy-to-reference overview format.

**CLUE-1 Decree of Caesar Augustus**

He rules for 40 years **between**

**27BC**

**14AD**

**CLUE-2 Quirinius, Governor of Syria**

He serves for 17 years **between 6BC and 12AD]**

27 BC

**6**

**12** 14 AD

**CLUE-3 Death of Herod The Great**

Dies in **1 BC** after Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> eclipse & prior to April 11<sup>th</sup>

27 BC

**6**

**1**

**12** 14 AD

*Died 34 years after he obtained the kingdom [in 35 BC]*

*Died 37 years after Rome title "King of the Jews" [in 38 BC]*

*This first stage of review begins with the 41-year window of time for Augustus. Within those years, the overlap of Quirinius as governor of Syria is 17 years. When Herod died between mid-January and mid-April in 1 BC, a timeframe for these three clues was narrowed down to 6 BC and no later than April 1 BC.*

**CLUE-4 Zacharias in the Temple**

6 BC

**July 13, 3**

**April 19, 2**

April 1 BC

*The Abijah cycle starts July 13, 3 BC*

*John the Baptist born after 9 months [40 weeks] in April, 2 BC*

*This could potentially have been Passover on April 19, 2 BC*

## *Review All Dates*

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### **CLUE-5 Pregnant Cousins**

Jesus born **6 months** after John in September of 2 BC

6 BC    **April 19, 2 BC   [180 days]   Sept. 29, 2 BC**                      1 BC

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*The July of 3 BC window of time for the Temple service of Zacharias fits right within 6-to-1 BC range. John the Baptist, born the following April of 2 BC, also fits within 6-to-1 BC. The added six months [180 days] from John's birth to the birth of Jesus in late September 2 BC also fits between 6-to-1 BC.*

### **CLUE-6 Bethlehem Ephratah**

*Augustus' decree makes Joseph go to Bethlehem.  
Jesus is born in the city of David and not Nazareth in Galilee.*

### **CLUE-7 Shepherds Outside With Flocks**

*December 25<sup>th</sup> averages a cold 32°F with just a 55° high.  
Late September Bethlehem averages 67°F to 82° high.  
Moderate early Fall temperatures in Bethlehem also support the late September date for the birth of Jesus.*

### **CLUE-8 Egypt and Herod's Decree**

*Magi learned about Jesus' birth 15-to-20 months prior, so  
Herod killed all males two years old and under just to be sure.*

**Sept. 29, 2 BC   [perhaps 6 months]    Spring 1 BC**

---

*Joseph, Mary, Jesus in Egypt perhaps 6 months until Herod dies  
after eclipse of January 1 BC and before Passover in April.*

### **Clue-9 Death of Cleopatra VII**

*She died August 10, 30 BC.*

**Aug. 10, 30 BC    [28 years/28<sup>th</sup> year]    Sept. 29, 2 BC**

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Tertullian says Jesus was born 28 years after [**Fall of 2 BC**].  
Eusebius says Jesus was born in the 28<sup>th</sup> year from her death.  
The 28<sup>th</sup> year is from Fall 3 BC until **Fall of 2 BC**.

#### Clue-10 The Reign of Augustus

Irenaeus says the birth was "in the 41<sup>st</sup> year of Augustus".

Fall 3BC                      until                      **Fall 2BC**

---

Eusebius says the birth was "in the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of his reign".

**Fall 2BC**                      until                      Fall 1BC

---

Augustus began his reign 41 years before Jesus was born.  
Augustus died 15 years after the birth in 14 AD.  
The overlap of the 41<sup>st</sup> year and 42<sup>nd</sup> year is **Fall of 2 BC**.

Fall 43 BC                      until                      **Fall 2 BC**  
**Fall 2 BC**                      until                      Fall 14 AD

---

Overlap of "41 years before" and "15 years after" is **Fall 2 BC**.

#### Clue-11 Until Shiloh Comes

In 6 AD, Rome replaced Herod Archelaus as king of Judea  
with the military Prefect Coponius over the Syrian province.

Sept. 29, 2 BC      [Jesus is 7 years old]      6 AD

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#### CLUE-12 Ministry at Age 30

Numbers 4:3 says 30 is the age to begin service to the Lord.

April 19, 29 AD      [6 months]      **Sept. 29, 29 AD**

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John turns 30

Jesus turns 30

### *Review All Dates*

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Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Eusebius *all* put the birth of Jesus in **Fall 2 BC**. Jesus is then 7 years old when the Romans remove Jewish sovereignty in 6 AD. John turns 30 in April, 29 AD and begins his ministry six months before his second cousin Jesus, who turns 30 on September 29<sup>th</sup> of that same year, 29 AD.

#### **CLUE-13 Daniel's Exact Day**

From Daniel 9, Sir Robert Anderson calculates Jesus in Jerusalem on April 6, 32 AD. He is then age 32 and a half in the third year of His ministry *and* this is His third Passover.

#### **CLUE-14 Pontius Pilate**

Pilate was the 5<sup>th</sup> Prefect of Judea [26-36 AD]. It was his sixth year in office when he met Jesus and compromised to have Him crucified on Passover – Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup> in 32 AD.

The birth of Jesus on September 29, 2 BC fits this timeframe:

- Augustus is Caesar of the Roman Empire.
- Quirinius is governor of the Syria Province [Judea].
- Herod dies five-to-six months after Jesus is born.
- John the Baptist born nine months prior in April 2 BC.
- Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the city of David.
- Shepherds are outside with flocks in September.
- Jesus is called out of Egypt after Herod's death.
- Jesus is born 28 years after Cleopatra VII dies.
- Jesus is born between 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> year of Augustus.
- Jesus is born 14 years before death of Augustus.
- Jesus [Shiloh] born before Judea lost its sovereignty.

- Jesus began ministry at age 30, six months after John.
- Jesus was 32 ½ years old on the first Palm Sunday.
- Pilate was in his sixth year when he had Jesus crucified.
- September 29 2 BC is the first of Tishri, *Yom Teruah*.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

This logical sequence fits with Tishri 1 on September 29<sup>th</sup> in the year 2 BC – the most likely date for the birth of the Jesus. Other websites, books, seminars, lectures, CDs, DVDs, and podcasts present alternative dates. An online search: “When Was Jesus Born?” yields lots of results, from 8 BC [Urantia.org], to 7 BC [National Catholic Register], to between 6 and 4 BC [John P. Meier, 1998], during planetary alignments of 6 BC [National Post], at the nova of 5 BC [Imprimis], in 4 BC [BiblicalArchaeology.org], or 3 BC [Catholic Answers Forum], and even 1 BC [Dionysius Exiguus]. But these stand-alone dates have not been put through the full rigor of having to reconcile with the evidence for dates associated with Augustus, Quirinius, Herod, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Cleopatra, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Pilate. And most have not been aligned with the calculations of Sir Robert Anderson from Daniel-9. The process-flow presented here does however meet all of those additional requisite details. The next chapter examines the seven primary feasts of Israel and how they are each Biblical foreshadows of God’s overall plan for Messiah, at both His first coming, as well as looking ahead to the literal fulfillment of His still-future Second Coming.

# CHAPTER 8

## *Israel's Prophetic Feasts*

"No one is to be your judge with regard to food or drink or Feasts, or new moon, or Shabbat, which are shadows of things to come, the substance of these is Christ."

**Colossians 2:16-17**

We are all deeply indebted to Chuck Missler who developed exceptional research insights and commentary on the prophetic significance found within the Feasts of Israel. His numerous publications from the 1980s until his passing in 2018 provided the very best coordination of Old Testament foreshadows with New Testament fulfillments as these relate to Jesus Christ. The adage, "*The New Testament concealed in the Old Testament, the Old Testament revealed in the New Testament*" points to how prophecy in the Torah, Psalms, and prophets spoke of Messiah still to come. Then the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, plus the accounts in Acts and the epistles of the newly-launched church provide 20/20 hindsight that reveals how Messiah had come and fulfilled what was spoken about Him.

That is why Peter can say, *"The prophets of old who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating, as He [Holy Spirit] predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow"* [1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:10-11]. Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Micah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Malachi, Hosea, Zechariah, Samuel, Nehemiah were all led by God's Spirit as they wrote about Mashiach – whom they never got to see or hear in person. The Spirit of Christ within them gave hope and excitement for you and me who would see and understand with 20/20 hindsight who Messiah is and *all* He has accomplished.

Yahweh established the feasts for Israel as precursors of key events that would take place in time on earth. These were celebrated for dozens of centuries prior to the birth of Jesus. Each is prophetic in substance, as each depicts another facet of God's plan to bring Messiah into the world in the "fullness of time". God even instructed Moses to change the order of the months in the Hebrew calendar to further communicate His insights and intentions regarding the unfolding of the plan for redeeming mankind and creation. As the opening Scripture for this chapter states, the dietary matters, new moons, Feasts, along with the weekly Sabbaths and special "high days" all come into better focus as their *substance* is together always about the Christ.

#### **ISRAEL'S CALENDARS**

The Hebrew calendar was originally set up with the civil year beginning in Tishri. Then in Exodus 12, God instructs Moses

### *Israel's Feasts*

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that Nisan, the original 7<sup>th</sup> month, will now become the first month in His newly-instituted Covenant for Israel. This calendar will accommodate the sequence of the seven feasts beginning with the three Spring feasts in Nisan and conclude with the three Fall feasts in Tishri. The remaining feast was roughly seven weeks after the final Spring feast. The feasts were seven annual times of

| <i><b>Name of Month</b></i> | <i><b>Original<br/>Civil Year</b></i> | <i><b>New Covenant<br/>Religious Year</b></i> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Tishri [Ethanin]            | 1                                     | 7                                             |
| Cheshvan [Bul]              | 2                                     | 8                                             |
| Chisleu                     | 3                                     | 9                                             |
| Tevet                       | 4                                     | 10                                            |
| Sh'vat                      | 5                                     | 11                                            |
| Adar                        | 6                                     | 12                                            |
| Nisan [Aviv]                | 7                                     | 1                                             |
| Ilyar [Zif]                 | 8                                     | 2                                             |
| Sivan                       | 9                                     | 3                                             |
| Tammuz                      | 10                                    | 4                                             |
| Av                          | 11                                    | 5                                             |
| Elul                        | 12                                    | 6                                             |

formal remembrance for Israel to look back and be reminded of God's care for His chosen nation. But they also have prophetic significance as foreshadows intended to look ahead to how Yahweh would fulfill all His promises through Messiah. Each of the seven feasts fits a very specific timeline and sequence for messaging truths about God's unfolding plan for redeeming mankind. The main focus of this chapter will be on the significance of the opening Fall feast of Yom Teruah. This Feast of Blowing Trumpets occurs at sunset on the first day of Tishri and is

also called “the head of the year”. New Year’s Day for the Jewish people had trumpets blowing all across the cities, towns, and villages of Israel to herald the birth of God’s promised Messiah.

The entire creation was originally orchestrated with design and purpose in every facet of finely-tuned precision of lights in the heavens [stars], a light to rule the day [our sun], and a light to rule the night [the moon reflecting the sun]. This heralds back to Genesis 1:14 when during His creation of the world, Elohiym declared *“Let there be lights in the expanse in the expanse of the heavens, to separate the day from the night, and let them be for **signs**, and for **seasons**, and days and for years”*. It was always God’s intention for precise order in the way His creation functions. The Feasts of Israel are in fact those very **signs and seasons** that each point to different aspects of the promised Messiah. Paul elaborates on this same theme in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:11 when he reminds us that *“These things [in the history of our nation] happened to the Israelites **as an example** and were written down for our instruction upon whom the end of the ages has come”*. Paul recognized that there were insights for him as well as for us today in understanding the prophetic content and context of Israel’s feasts, and how they point directly to Jesus Christ.

#### **BASED ON SEVEN**

The details of Israel’s religious calendar were recorded by Moses across the five books of the Torah. It is uncanny how many provisions are established relative to the number seven. In the Hebrew numerical system, seven is *holy* and *complete*. This is

## Israel's Feasts

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extended in meaning when multiplied by ten to get the number **70**. The starting point for examining **seven** is arguably the creation week when God worked masterfully for six days and then He rested on the **seventh** day [Genesis 2:2]. This was instituted as a model for mankind to also rest on the **seventh** day Sabbath [Sabbath] of Exodus 20:8. When Israel was in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, the people were told to gather manna for six days but no manna would come on the **seventh** day [Exodus 16:26]. Even the religious year now had **70** total days of rest:

|                |                                        |
|----------------|----------------------------------------|
| 52 days        | Regular weekly Sabbaths                |
| 7 days         | Shavout                                |
| 7 days         | Passover                               |
| 1 day          | Feast of Weeks                         |
| 1 day          | Yom Teruah [Feast of Blowing Trumpets] |
| 1 day          | Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement]          |
| 1 day          | The 8 <sup>th</sup> Day of Assembly    |
| <b>70 days</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>                           |

Israel was instructed by God to plow their land for six years but leave it fallow in the **seventh** year [Leviticus 25]. Then after **seven 7-year** cycles [49 years] they were to enjoy a special 50<sup>th</sup> year Jubilee honoring the Lord for His provisions to the nation. And yet, in Leviticus 26:18 God says that if His people will not listen to His commands "*Then I will punish you **seven times** more for your sin*". In 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:20-21 this did occur as the nation was taken into captivity by Babylon "*until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths, for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath to fulfill **70 years***". For 490 years Israel had become greedy and did

not obey the Lord, not allowing the land to remain fallow every **seventh** year. The people owed God **70 Sabbath years**, one year for every missed fallow-year in those 490 total years.

These **seven**-year periods were literally referred to as Shabua ["weeks of years"], similar to marking time based on ten years as a decade or 100 years as a century. The plan for Israel is based on **70 Shabua**. Daniel 9 writes of, "7 Shabua and 62 Shabua 'til Messiah the King" [see Sir Robert Anderson in Chapter One for the exact day Jesus rode into Jerusalem]. That completed and fulfilled the first 69 weeks of years. The remaining **70<sup>th</sup>** Shabua is still a literal **seven** year future time period when God will deal with His people Israel, as explained in Revelation chapters 6 through 19.

#### **FEASTS ARE FORESHADOWS**

The Bible has many detailed accounts about the **seven** feasts that comprise Israel's religious year. It is so interesting that the original **seventh** month Nisan in the civil calendar became the first month in God's new religious calendar given to Moses. This new religious calendar switches over and starts with: 1] Passover, 2] Unleavened Bread, and 3] First Fruits in Nisan followed fifty days later by 4] Pentecost. Then the month Tishri had 5] Yom Teruah, 6] Yom Kippur, and 7] Sukkot. This new alignment appears to represent a time-sequence that follows the overall history of God's plan for mankind, from the sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the world on Passover, to the lesson of leaven, to the resurrection of Jesus on First Fruits as a model of the inheritance

believers look ahead to in their new bodies. Then comes the incredible gift of the Holy Spirit given to all believers at Pentecost in May of 29 AD. The remaining three Fall feasts seem to point to the future events of the rapture of the church [blowing trumpets], God's plan for His Jewish remnant [Day of Atonement], and then the millennial kingdom of Jesus here on earth [Feast of Booths].

#### **FEAST-1 PASSOVER**

This first feast is noted in Exodus 12 as the new first month on the religious calendar, and happens on Nisan 14 [in March]. Four days earlier on Nisan 10 the *entire congregation of Israel* [plural] takes the lamb to observe it [singular] through the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan to confirm it has no blemish. Notice the passage says lamb [singular] and observe it [also singular]. Later it describes how all the congregation of Israel shall kill it [once again singular]. It could have said all those lambs [plural] in Israel, to observe all of them [plural], and kill them [plural]. However it prophetically points to one Lamb [Jesus], as He was observed without blemish prior to His crucifixion on Passover and He alone was killed [sacrificed] for the sins of the world.

Moses records in Leviticus 23:4-8 that Passover is for the nation of Israel to remember that when they were about to depart Egypt, the angel of death would "pass over" any home that had lamb's blood brushed on the two side doorposts and the lintel crossbeam above. They would dip hyssop branches in the blood from the lamb and sprinkle it on the entryway to their home, symbolic of the heart as the doorway to a person. The blood

would be an outward symbol of their faith and belief that those inside the had house put their trust in the Word from God, that He will deliver them from death. Some theologians note the hyssop branch motion is up-and-down then side-to-side which seems to draw a cross pattern.

The Feast of Passover presents a clear foreshadow of the crucifixion of Jesus. His blood was shed as *the Passover Lamb of God* who takes away the sins of the world [John 1:29]. That sacrifice covers the sin of those who put their trust in Jesus so that the judgment [death] which is due for sin will pass over even as the angel did pass over in Egypt. This is a strong prophetic imagery. In Hebrews 5:1, Paul explains how the priest offers sacrifices for the sins of the people. But then in 7:23-25 he notes that the earthly priests were prevented by death from continuing in their duties, whereas Jesus is now a priest *forever* [permanently] and is able to save all those who draw near to God through Him. Hebrews 8:5 continues that those priests who served were a copy [shadow] of the heavenly things. And with Christ as our High Priest [Hebrews 9:11-12], Jesus saves not as an earthly priest or “type” with the blood of goats, heifers, and bulls who are defiled, but in the *actual* heavenly realm with His own blood as the one perfect sacrifice for our sin – undefiled and *once for all*.

#### **FEAST-2 UNLEAVENED BREAD**

The second Spring feast on the religious calendar is found in Exodus 12:18. The Lord instructs Moses that on the start of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan [Passover] at sunset the congregation of Israel

shall eat unleavened bread as the initial meal of this feast day. Moses also writes in Leviticus 23:6 that on the day after Passover [Nisan 15], all of Israel will eat unleavened bread for 15 days as another reminder of how the Lord delivered them from evil. John 19:31 notes this is a special "high day" during Passover week to precede the regular weekly Shabbat at Friday sunset, creating the unique situation of back-to-back Sabbaths prior to Sunday.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a clear foreshadow of Jesus buried in the tomb. Leaven is a "type" for sin because it puffs up. Jesus referred [Matthew 16:6] to the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Paul also spoke about the leaven of immorality [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:7], to "*Clean out the old leaven so you may be a new lump of dough, as you are unleavened, for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed*". Jesus specifically said, "*Watch out, beware of the leaven of Herod*" [Mark 8:15]. Paul again taught [Galatians 5:7-9] on the leaven of legalism as he explained how "*a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough*" just as sin in one person can spread quickly to others.

Jesus in His physical body is that unleavened bread. He is without sin and literally fulfills this foreshadowed feast. Jesus is the bread of life [John 6:35]. The unleavened bread [Matzah] has the burnt char-marks [dark stripes] from the oven and puncture-mark holes that release hot air to keep the bread flat – both as fulfillments of Isaiah 53:5 that "*by His stripes we are healed*" and "*He was pierced for our transgressions*".

### **FEAST-3 FIRST FRUITS**

When Passover and Unleavened Bread are concluded, the new week begins Saturday at sunset with the Feast of First Fruits as noted in Leviticus 23:10. This was all about bringing in the initial harvest to the Lord as a way of expressing thanks for God's provision. This was a "type" of tithing as the first of the fruits from their agricultural labor were devoted to the Lord.

The Feast of First Fruits is a clear foreshadow of the resurrection of Jesus. Remember from Chapter One, the holy week began on Palm Sunday, April 6, 32 AD as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the exact day prophesied by Daniel. That was the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan on the Jewish religious calendar and the start of Passover week. The lambs [and Jesus] were examined for four days to see if there was any blemish. He was crucified on late Passover Nisan 14 [the afternoon of Thursday April 10<sup>th</sup>] at the same time all the symbolic lambs were being killed for the Passover meal. They were eaten later that afternoon [Passover evening before sunset]. Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights to fulfill His own words about the "one sign" of His resurrection [Matthew 6, Matthew 12, Luke 11]. When the women get to the tomb at first light [6:00am] Sunday morning April 13<sup>th</sup>, it was Nisan 17. The Feast of First Fruits had started 12 hours earlier at sunset on Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>.

Paul clearly teaches [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:20] that Jesus was raised from the dead and has "*become the Firstfruits of all those who died*". Paul taught a similar word [Romans 8:22-23] that the

resurrection of Jesus *is the Firstfruits* for all of creation to be renewed and restored, as believers have the Firstfruits of the Holy Spirit while we groan within waiting for our adoption. This is the redemption of our physical bodies. We will be given a new body like the Lord's. Paul says Jesus is the first fruits [first resurrection], after which all who believe will be coming with Him at His Second Coming [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:23].

Another provocative note is that Jesus being raised on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan was also the anniversary for the end of God's judgment on the world with the flood of Noah [Genesis 8:4]. Remember back earlier in this chapter that on the original civil calendar for Israel, Nisan was the **seventh** month of the year. It later became the first month as God directed Moses in Exodus 12:2. The Genesis 8 account of the flood says, "*In the **seventh** month on the seventeenth day of the month the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat*". That **seventh** month was Nisan before the time of Moses. How fitting that the raising of Jesus who put an end to the judgment of sin for all who believe also commemorates as a foreshadow of Noah coming out of the ark and being figuratively raised to new life after the judgment.

#### **FEAST-4 PENTECOST**

Fifty days after Passover is Pentecost, also known as Shavout or the Feast of Weeks. This is after **seven 7s** [49 days], literally seven Sabbaths so day 50 ["pente"] begins this fourth feast as recorded in Leviticus 23:15-16. The focus was on being delivered from Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, and God giving the

Law to Moses. It is also linked to the bringing in of the **wheat harvest**. Jesus says in Matthew 9:37 and Luke 10:2, "The **harvest will be plentiful**" so this feast foreshadows the Lord pouring out His Spirit to dwell full-time in all believers. Luke's [Acts 2:1-47] records a **harvest of 3,000 new believers**. This giving of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost at the end of May in 32 AD fulfilled Jesus' words that "I will be with you always even to the end of the age" [Matthew 28:20]. Jesus surely promised [John 14:23, 26] "If anyone loves me, he keeps my Word and my Father will love him and WE will come and make OUR abode in him; the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that I said to you".

#### **THEN A BREAK**

The Spring feasts occur within a 60-day window of time for Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits [three in a row] with Pentecost seven weeks later. Together these foreshadow the key events that define Christianity. Jesus died on the cross [Passover], was laid in the tomb [Unleavened Bread], and was resurrected [First Fruits] exactly in the way Paul defines the Gospel [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:3-4] "That Christ died for our sins **according to the**

| <b>FEAST</b>     | <b>FULFILLED</b> | <b>FORESHADOW</b> |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Passover         | Crucifixion      | Justified         |
| Unleavened Bread | Burial           | Sanctified        |
| First Fruits     | Resurrection     | Glorified         |
| Pentecost        | Holy Spirit      | Power             |

**Scriptures**, *He was buried and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*". Then the Holy Spirit was given to dwell full-time in all believers.

There is then a 4-month break until the first of Tishri which is usually toward the end of September, and then come the last three feasts. This *interim* period seems to fulfill the current Church Age, foreshadowing this period of Grace. But Jehovah has not finished the plan for His chosen people Israel. Remember, there is still the 70<sup>th</sup> Shabua from Daniel 9, a still future period of seven years for Israel. The first four feasts present a case for having been fulfilled in the historical events of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, resurrection, followed by the giving of the Holy Spirit. There is good evidence that the remaining three feasts point prophetically to future events still to come.

| FEAST       | TO FULFILL                    | FORESHADOW      |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Yom Teruah  | <i>Rapture?</i>               | Marriage Supper |
| Yom Kippur  | <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Coming?</i> | Jewish Remnant  |
| Tabernacles | <i>Millennium?</i>            | Jesus' Kingdom  |

It is not that the rapture of the Church, the Second Coming, and the Millennial kingdom will happen on the exact dates for each feast. Jesus said [Matthew 24:36] *"The day and the hour no man knows, but the Father alone"*. However, the substance of the final three feasts do belong to Christ [Colossians 2:17].

#### **FEAST-5 TRUMPETS**

The three Fall feasts begin with Yom Teruah, the Feast of Blowing Trumpets on the first day of Tishri [the new seventh

month on the religious calendar]. Described in Leviticus 23:23-25, at sunset as the new year begins, all of Israel blows the shofar trumpet made from a ram's horn. These are not the silver trumpets used in the Temple. There are two versions of the ram's horn shofar. Below is the 'classic' shape.



The other version of the shofar is the longer, curved, twisted ram's horn also referred to as the "Yemenite" shown below.



The musical tone-note is the long, drawn-out, and sustained blowing that signals victory, rather than the short bursts that would typically sound an alarm.

This book makes the case that Jesus was born on Yom Teruah in 2 BC. Earlier chapters had extensive review and details, with all the evidence laid out in Chapters Six and Seven. If Jesus was born in late September on the first of Tishri in 2 BC [which in that year was September 29<sup>th</sup>], then at sunset on the start of the new year, all throughout Judea trumpets would have been blowing in three sets of ten long blasts followed by a rousing crescendo of ten sustained blasts to signal a significant victory. Imagine that balmy September evening with sustained echoes of triumph resounding from Jerusalem and all the towns and villages, including tiny Bethlehem. Picture some priests finishing up their duties at the Temple, completing some sacrifices at the altar or washing at the bronze basin in front of the Holy Place. Maybe others were handling their duties inside the Holy Place near the seven gold lampstands, the table of shewbread, or altar of incense in front of the veil that concealed the Holy of Holies. As shofars begin to blow near the Temple and throughout the city of Jerusalem, those trumpet sounds would reverberate all across the skies. The priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, Temple guards, and general populace would pause to look up at the early evening sky and ponder Yahweh's promised Messiah. Perhaps they wondered if this new year might be finally be when the long-awaited Anointed One will be revealed.

The same “happy new year” blowing of the shofar would happen up north in Caesarea Philippi, and in Caesarea Maritima on the northwest coast. All across the Galilee region trumpets are resounding in Nazareth, Tiberius, Capernaum, Cana, Bethsaida, and Gennesaret. The shofars fill the sunset by the Dead Sea in Bethany, Masada, and the Essene community at Qumran. Jericho, Hebron, Emmaus, and the fields around Bethlehem Ephratah also have the trumpets echo throughout Judea and Samaria. Imagine what Mary and Joseph might have thought hearing those.

Yahweh was using one of the feasts He instituted to announce the birth of His only begotten Son into the world. Consider this as the “*first*” trumpet, while Yom Teruah is also prophetically aligned with a still-future announcement. Paul wrote about the ‘*last*’ trumpet when the dead in Christ will be raised imperishable and those believers who are alive on earth will be instantly transformed in the time it takes to blink an eye [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:52]. This is when the Lord quickly takes His church out of the world to be joined with Him for the marriage of the Lamb. The Latin term *rapturo* [in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Vulgate translation of the Catholic Bible] comes from the Greek term *harpazo* which means “caught up” or “rapidly snatched away”.

Paul teaches [1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17] that the Lord as the Bridegroom will one day quickly snatch away those believers who are alive on earth, and His Church [the Bride] will meet Him in the clouds. Yom Teruah first speaks prophetically of the trumpets being blown all over the Promised Land in 2 BC at the start of

Israel's new year. Jesus was being born in Bethlehem as God planned this 'first' trumpet announcement before the foundation of the world. At a still future date, the 'last' trumpet will be heard by believers when Jesus comes to catch up those who are alive to meet Him in the air. The Bible only refers to a "trumpet of God" twice [Exodus 19:13 when the Law is given to Moses on Mount Sinai and 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16 at the harpazo]. How interesting there are trumpets blown at the giving of the Law and as God snatches away His church, while in between the two bookends is the birth of Jesus the Messiah on Yom Teruah.

There must have been great conversation around the opening meal of Yom Teruah. As the sun set and the shofars finished blowing, it is provocative to consider God's people meticulously following the Law of Moses with the prescribed food, drink, Shabbat, and new moon on this new month Tishri exactly as mentioned in Colossians 2:16-17. In Bethlehem, people begin their opening meal of Yom Teruah. But on the first floor "guest quarters" [the Greek *katalyma*] of one home, Mary from Nazareth is giving birth to her firstborn Son, wrapping Him in swaddling cloths, and laying Him to rest in the manger [the recess in the floor where straw was stored for the animals]. I propose one other place where trumpets resounded on Yom Teruah as Immanuel ["God with us"] was born. The heavenly host [a review is coming up in Chapter Ten] most likely brought their own praise and celebration to the unsuspecting sheep-herders relaxing with their flocks in the fields around Bethlehem.

New Year's Day [Rosh Ha'Shana] is celebrated worldwide by those in Judaism. It begins Israel's new year on the civil calendar [remember the religious calendar starts with Nisan]. In 500 BC, the Jewish rabbis added a second day to Yom Teruah. The seven days that follow are referred to as "Yomim Noraim" [seven days of affliction] and these lead right up to the sixth feast that begins on the tenth of Tishri, Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement. It is exciting to consider Messiah announced by shofars blown all across Israel at the start of the brand new year.

Various websites for the Hebrew calendar show when Yom Teruah takes place this Fall of 2020. FedWeb.org shows *Rosh Ha'Shana* on Friday September 18<sup>th</sup> for two days until Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup>. Chabad.org says it starts Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> at sunset and ends after nightfall on Tishri 2 so that Friday eve to Saturday eve is Tishri 1, and Saturday to Sunday is Tishri 2. WeAreIsrael.org says the sighting of the **7<sup>th</sup> month** new moon in Israel is expected on Friday the 18<sup>th</sup>, so Yom Teruah is from then until nightfall on Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup>. It has been my tradition to schedule my one-hour teaching on this topic each year in the evening at the start of Tishri 1. More recently I have added a soundtrack of the shofar trumpet for everyone to hear and reflect on as we consider that first Christmas evening.

#### **FEAST-6 DAY OF ATONEMENT**

The second Fall feast is on Tishri 10, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This is recorded in Leviticus 6:1-19, 23:26-32, and Hebrews 9:1-16. It is the *only* day in the entire year when the

high priest enters the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood from a bull and a goat on the Mercy Seat [the top of the Ark of the Covenant] to make atonement for the nation's sins. Paul comments that God dwelt figuratively between the wings of the cherubim, with the Law on stone tablets below Him in the Ark. The sprinkled blood is symbolic propitiation [restitution] for sin that has been exposed by the Law. The word propitiation in the Greek is *Hilasterion*. This is used in 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:2, 4:10 and Romans 3:25 in the Septuagint [LXX] Bible translation for the lid [*kapporet*] of the Ark.

The Hebrew word Kippur means "to atone by offering a substitute". Leviticus 16:20-34 describes the red heifer [bull] along with one of two goats as being the blood offering on the Mercy Seat. The second "scapegoat" would symbolically have the sins of the nation put on it and then it would wander off into the desert as Yahweh removed the nation's sin to an "uninhabited land". Jesus also had all the sins of the world placed on Him by the Father [2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21] as He who knew no sin was made sin our behalf. Isaiah 53:6 concurs that each of us like sheep have gone astray, turning to our own way, but the Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

This feast foreshadows Jesus removing the barrier from between sinful man and our righteous God. The thick veil over the entrance to the Holy of Holies was torn in two as Messiah finished His atonement on the cross for the sins of the world [Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45]. It also points directly to Biblical eschatology. The Lord will one-day restore His faithful remnant of

believers in the nation of Israel who come through His judgment of Earth [Revelation chapters 6-18]. That occurs after the Church has been caught up [raptured] to join Jesus for the marriage supper. As Jesus returns to earth at His Second Coming He will place His foot on the Mount of Olives [Zechariah 14:4] and establish His reign on David's throne in Jerusalem [Luke 1:32-33]. That kingdom will have no end.

#### **FEAST-7 SUKKOT**

The final feast is Sukkot ["booths"] and happens five days after Yom Kippur on Tishri 15. Also called the Feast of Tabernacles, Leviticus 23:33-34 instructs Israel to remember wandering in the wilderness by building temporary structures symbolic of not yet being permanently in the land. These booths have intentional openings in the roof so stars are seen in the night sky to remind them of their temporary earthly dwelling. It also points to remind of the Millennial kingdom of Jesus on earth, when He will permanently rule and reign on David's throne in Jerusalem at His Second Coming.

John writes [1:14] that *"The Word became flesh and did tabernacle among us"*. In John 7:2-6 at the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus said it was not yet His time to be revealed as Mashiach. Paul wrote [2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:16] God will make His dwelling among men, quoting Exodus 29:45. Jesus will permanently "tabernacle" among us in Revelation 21:3-5 just as Isaiah 9:7 said: *"There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne and over His kingdom, to establish it and*

*uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore".* Ezekiel 37:27 says God's dwelling place will be with us. He will be our God among us, and we shall be His people. The Lord Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His kingdom will have no end [Luke 1:33]. How exciting!

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Israel's feasts provide yet another layer of perspective and insight about God's timing and positioning of Christmas. His continuously unfolding plan for bringing Messiah into the world "in the fullness of time" includes regularly reminding His people Israel of His care and provision through the centuries. The Springtime feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost speak to the finished work of Jesus in His first coming. The Fall feasts potentially align to still-future events for Jesus. Yom Teruah begins with blowing trumpets at sunset and may have been ordained by God to announce Messiah's birth with Israel's celebration of the new year. It is fascinating that the blowing of the shofar may well have heralded the birth of Jesus and it will also declare Him when He comes to snatch His church [His bride] from the world at the "last trumpet" [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:52]. These seven key feasts of Israel demonstrate a strong alignment with previously fulfilled prophecies about Messiah as well as some insightful potential for thinking of the still unfulfilled prophecies concerning Jesus. The next chapter provides a detailed overview of the Magi from the East and their unique part in the original Biblical story of Christmas.

# CHAPTER 9

## *The Magi Coronators*

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem,  
Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem saying,  
‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?’ “

**Matthew 2:1-2**

What Christmas story could not include the “three wise men” described by Matthew? Yet Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth does not mention the visit of the Magi. Some call this a contradiction, but this actually provides a confirmation that the Magi were not present on the day of His birth as Luke only mentions local shepherds in the Bethlehem area alerted by an angel-messenger to go into the village and see Jesus lying in a manger after His birth [Luke 2:10-12]. This record presented by Luke is focused on the time leading up to and after the actual

## *The Magi*

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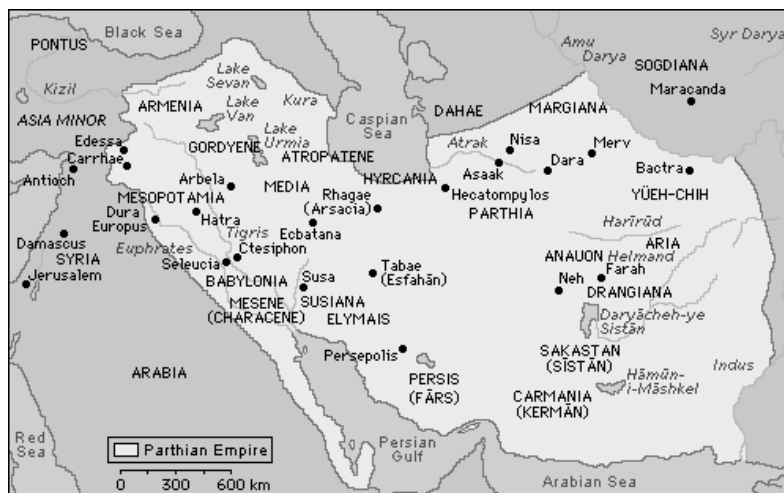
birth of Jesus. The account in Matthew simply states that Jesus was born to a virgin and does not cover the same details prior to and at the birth. Instead Matthew moves right to [chapter 2, verse 1] “**After** Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of king Herod, Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem”. Before reading any further in Matthew 2, it is important to take a few moments to clearly identify who the Magi were and provide some background on why they came all the way from Persia-Parthia to Jerusalem to worship Jesus.

### **BACKGROUND**

The term Magi is the plural of the Greek word *magoi* [also *magos* or *magus*] used by Chaldean, Babylonian, and Medo-Persian royalty for the trusted priests, astrologers, seers, augers, and soothsayers. Our English word “magician” is from this root word *Magi*. Herodotus said [I.107 and 120, VII. 19] they were skilled in *oneiromancy* – the ability to interpret dreams that predict the future. When the famous Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Judah in 597 BC and then destroyed Jerusalem, Daniel was carried off as a teenager into captivity. This siege happened when Jehoikim was king. He died and his heir Jeconiah was deported to Babylon. Daniel was a young teenager and wrote, “*I Daniel, observed in the books the number of years revealed as the Word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely 70 years*” [Daniel 9:2]. Cyrus declared in his **first year** reigning in Persia, God commanded him “build God a house in

Jerusalem" [Ezra 1:13]. Daniel was still alive in Persia **three years later** [Daniel 10:1]. He had lived through 73 years since being deported by Nebuchadnezzar. So if he was 13 years old as he was captured and sent to Babylon he would have lived into his mid-to-late 80s or even older.

Darius-the-Great [550-486 BC] was the King of Medo-Persia for 36 years [522 to 486 BC] during the Achaemenid Dynasty. The Bible mentions both "Darius the Mede" [Daniel 6:1] as well as "the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian" [Daniel 6:28]. Ezra 4:5 mentions "*All the days of Cyrus King of Persia, even until the reign of Darius King of Persia*". This then became the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC Persian-Parthian Empire after the death of Alexander the Great [see the map below].



Magi priests were put in place by royal decree over all the state religious activities in Persia. They continued to be the

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counselors for the kings of the subsequent Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian realms. Nebuchadnezzar said [Daniel 4:4-9] he called in his Magi – the conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners, to interpret his dream and Daniel, whom the king had renamed Belteshazzar, was given the title ‘Rab Mag’ [chief of the Magi]. This is confirmed in Daniel 5:11, “*Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel Rab Mag, master of the Magi, astrologers, soothsayers, and Chaldeans*”. Daniel lived well into his 80s [maybe longer] and was no doubt well-known for both his ability to interpret dreams and his prophetic writings about “Mashiach Nagid”. His prophecies were in the catalogued archives of these Medo-Persian Parthian Magi, who eventually ascended to ruling the “Council of Megistanes” [the root of the English word “magistrates”]. Their primary duty was to choose the king for the realms in the Parthian Empire. The Magi were “future-seeing king-coronators” who no doubt had interest in the timing of Rab Mag Daniel’s writings about an “anointed king” and how this related to their astronomical observances concerning “him who is born King of the Jews”.

#### **1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY MAGI**

In 63 BC, Pompey the Roman conquered Armenia in Parthia. Eight years later in 55 BC, the Roman general Carssus conquered Jerusalem and large areas of Parthia. Rome was later repelled at the battle of Carrhae and the Parthians invaded Syria, Armenia, and Judea. Antipater [Herod’s father] had token rule for a few years until the Parthians came back in 40 BC. Marc Antony reinstated Roman rule in 37 BC. He moved into Parthian territory

but was driven out of Judea as Herod fled to Alexandria, Egypt then to Rome. The Parthians allowed Jewish rule in Jerusalem. In 38 BC Herod had the Roman Senate grant him the title “King of the Jews” and three years later in 35 BC he entered Jerusalem to get that throne. Herod was nothing more than a Roman puppet in a demilitarized zone between the Roman Empire to the west and Parthians to the east. He was ailing as Parthia’s ruler Phraates IV was also quite old and facing imminent death.

#### **MAGI IN JERUSALEM**

When the Magi entered Jerusalem [Matthew 2:1-12] around four-to-seven months after Jesus’ birth and inquired, “*Where is He who has been BORN King of the Jews?*” it is then easy to understand why Matthew wrote in verse 3: “*When Herod the king heard this he was troubled and all of Jerusalem with him*”. Herod was not born king of the Jews. He was from Edom [and called an Idumaeen]. His “King” title came from political manipulation and bribery in Rome. Given the recent military history of the Roman-Parthian conflicts with Jerusalem right in the middle of both empires, the entire city had every reason to be concerned and even worried.

These Persian-Parthian “king-coronators” were not just three guys on camels representing Asia, Europe, and Africa. Their journey from either Susa or Ctesiphon, the capital cities of Parthia located on the Tigris River [30 miles south of Baghdad] would cover some 1,100 km over harsh deserts and mountains. The trip was probably initiated when the Magi first noticed the

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astronomical signal [Matthew 2:2] as they stated, “We saw *His star in the East*”. The Magi were already east of Jerusalem so their statement is better stated: “We *in the East* saw *His star*”. This could have been at the time Gabriel visited Mary, then add nine months until the birth. Perhaps the Magi had several ‘Councils of the Megistanes’ to deliberate the meaning of a king being born during the Roman-Judean-Parthian tensions. Add in the time to plan and organize this significant west-bound excursion [food, water, animals, tents] plus two or three months on the road, and the Magi probably arrived four-to-seven months after Jesus’ birth.

The number of Magi [plural] was probably a dozen or more priests with a support entourage of perhaps 25-to-50 servants and a Parthian military escort of 100 or more cavalry. This would have been a large and quite majestic caravan that rode into the city. Picture helmets and turbans, dozens of flags flying on tall lances and spears, gleaming swords and shields with horses, camels, and donkeys in a regimented line perhaps the length of a football field, riding in formation into Jerusalem’s gate. This would have created tremendous buzz about *why* they had come. Herod would have had to formally welcome them and was no doubt “*Very troubled, and all Jerusalem with him*” [Matthew 2:3]. Consider both the political and potential military implications of Persian-Parthian cavalry entering the DMZ between two mighty empires.

The meeting of Herod and the Megistane Council must have been intense with the Sanhedrin serving as Herod’s advisors.

Matthew 2:4-6 explains the Jewish scribes and priests told Herod the prophet Micah [5:2] said Messiah will be born in Bethlehem [just 10km south]. From Matthew 2:7 *"Herod determined from the Magi the exact time the star appeared"* so all were doing calculations to try and figure out the age of this recently born King of the Jews. Herod sent the Magi to Bethlehem Ephratah to find the child [Matthew 2:8], with instructions to bring back word so he could worship Him. But Herod had no interest or intention as he was only concerned about his own political survival.

Two key terms differentiate Luke's account of Jesus birth from Matthew's account of Magi arriving in Bethlehem months after the birth. First, the Magi enter a house [Matthew 2:11], whereas Luke 2:16 says shepherds find Jesus lying in the straw of a manger. Second, the Magi see a pre-toddler [*paidion* in the Greek] because Jesus is between four and seven months old, while the shepherds saw the newborn infant [*brephos* in Greek].

Joseph and Mary stayed in Bethlehem until Jesus was old enough to safely make the rugged trip north back to Galilee. The Magi worship Jesus and give Him gold [prophetic symbol of a king], frankincense [used in the Temple for the altar of incense – symbolic of Jesus being a great High Priest], and myrrh [foreshadows the embalming spices used as Jesus would one day be laid in the tomb after being crucified]. It is interesting to note that at the Second Coming of Jesus, He brings gold and frankincense [Isaiah 60:6] but no myrrh as He comes as both King and Priest [Psalm 135:14, Psalm 110:4, and Hebrews 17:7],

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whereas His sacrificial death was “once for all” [Hebrews 7:27, 9:12, 10: 10, Romans 6:10, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:18]. The gold also provided the family with financial resources for what was to come. Once these ‘king-coronators’ finished their visit they were set to return and report to Herod. But God speaks to them in a dream [Matthew 2:12] to not return to Herod, so they headed east and returned directly to the Persian-Parthian Empire in Mesopotamia.

### **FOLKLORE**

The contemporary Christmas lore has also extended to all kinds of tall tales and misconceptions about the infamous ‘three wise men’ who according to the classic carol were *kings from the Orient who brought gifts and traveled afar, over field and fountain moor and mountain following yonder star*. In the western church traditions that go back to the Middle Ages, the kings were named Gaspar [from India], Balthasar [from Arabia or Ethiopia], and Melchior [from Persia]. Over time they were ascribed as representing the three primary continents of what was considered the known world: Asia, Africa, and Europe. In other man-made traditions, these three are from Noah’s three sons: Shem [Shemites or Semites settled in Asia], Ham [his descendants had darker skin and inhabited Africa], and then Japheth [whose family lineage populated Europe].

The 8<sup>th</sup> Century church writer Venerable Bede [died in 735 AD] described Melchior as an old man with white hair and long white beard [very similar to modern Santa] who brought gold to Jesus. The wood-etching on the next page is from 1480 by the

French artist Georges Trubert Breviary, showing the bearded Balthasar facing Jesus while kneeling in front of the dark-skinned Gaspar and the lighter-skinned Persian, Melchior.



The Feast of the Epiphany [the root word in the Greek means *manifestation* or *appearance*] was established to bring homage to the 'three wise men'. It happens 12 days after Christmas on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Some Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas on January 7<sup>th</sup> and the Epiphany 12 days later on the 19<sup>th</sup>. It is also a time to celebrate the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan River. The basic reasoning for 'three' wise

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men is based on the three gifts given to Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh [one gift per each wise man]. Like so many other traditions of men, this folklore of the kings from the East has morphed into its own tales, conceptions, images, and ideas that have no credible basis in true history or the Biblical account.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

It is fascinating that the birth of Messiah in September of 2 BC has a direct connection to Daniel and the Magi. Over 500 years earlier, the very same angel-messenger Gabriel who spoke to Mary about giving birth to Jesus explained to Daniel there will be 7 sevens and 62 sevens for God's people Israel [Daniel 9]. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Sunday April 6, 32 AD hailed with the Messianic Psalm 118. Thirty-two years earlier, 1<sup>st</sup> Century alumni of Daniel's Magi observed an astronomical sign in the heavens and decided to travel to Jerusalem, arriving in the first few months of 1 BC to inquire of Herod *"Where is He who has been born 'King of the Jews'?"*

The prophet Daniel had interpreted dreams, most notably for Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar [Daniel 2]. One of those dreams had provocative connections regarding the world history to follow that realm culminating in verses 44-45 with God's eternal kingdom that has no end. The dream included the "stone not cut by human hands" who crushes the final earthly empire. God gave Daniel the interpretation that laid the basis for elevating Daniel to 'Rab Mag', Chief over all the Magi of Babylon

[and later, Persia-Parthia]. This is the most likely source of the term for *three wise men* of Christmas lore.

Daniel wrote of 'Mashiach Nagid' [Messiah the King] who would be revealed at a very specific time. The Magi no doubt had access to Daniel's written records among the reference library archives and may have connected the celestial sign they observed with the birth of that very same "King" [Nagid] that Daniel had written about five centuries prior. It remains a truly amazing component of the Christmas story that a remnant of Daniel's priestly sect from the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC is present more than 500 years later to formally coronate Jesus as "King of the Jews".

This provides further outside confirmation about both the royalty *and* priestly role of Jesus – impacting both the spiritual life of the nation Israel as well as the entire world. Messiah will give His life for the sins of the world, and at a still-future date He will rule and reign over planet earth seated on David's throne in Jerusalem. The last chapter coming up summarizes everything from this book into an updated and expanded account of the first Christmas. My prayer is that this will provide a compelling narrative of great imagery to capture and confirm sound Biblical truth about what happened when God the Logos became flesh as the only begotten of the Father [John 1:14].

# CHAPTER 10

## *The First Christmas*

“And Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and she wrapped Him in cloths and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the guest quarters.”

**Luke 2:7**

The conclusion of this book is that the birth of Jesus took place in the city of Bethlehem in Judea, the city of David, on a balmy Fall evening of September 29<sup>th</sup> in the year 2 BC. It was just after sunset as the first of Tishri began *Yom Teruah*, the Feast of Trumpets. How appropriate that this date is the head of the year [“Rosh Ha’Shanah”] on the Jewish civil calendar, for it was truly a new beginning. All across the land of Israel the priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes at the Temple, as well as Jewish families and individuals in every city, town, or small village – everyone was celebrating New Year’s Day by blowing trumpets at sunset as the last day of the prior month Elul ended. This new year would have been 3,760 on the current Jewish calendar [5,780 here in 2020].

Consider the iconic images of tens of thousands crowded into Times Square in New York City or along the harbor near the Sydney Opera House for an exciting celebration shouting out “Happy New Year” to everyone. Perhaps many thought this would be the year Mashiach finally came to oust the Romans and set up His eternal kingdom on David’s throne. This backdrop of festivities and prophetic reverence has the Feast of Trumpets bring hope for the fulfillment of God’s Promised Messiah [as covered in Chapter One]. The narrative to follow tells the story of the first Christmas from the Bible with all the enhancements presented in the previous nine chapters of this book.

#### **THE CHRISTMAS STORY**

This is not about Ralphie and his pump-action BB-gun. This *Christmas Story* draws from the previous chapters being aligned with the Biblical accounts from Matthew’s and Luke’s gospels. It will definitely not match up with how the Dickens holiday describes holly wreaths and sleigh rides in the new-fallen snow. There will be no eggnog, candy canes, or figgy pudding. There will be some carolers, but not like anything anyone had ever heard or seen before. My intent is to capture your mind’s picture, and not pertaining to fanciful myths, longstanding traditions, or quaint folklore, but to have you see clearly the picture of what it was probably like when Jesus was born in Bethlehem just over twenty centuries ago. This will trace the Biblical Christmas narrative with color commentary about the people, places, and events that specifically aligned with God’s

foreshadowed plan – an amazing and landmark evening in the history life of mankind on planet Earth.

#### **ACCOUNCEMENT TO MARY**

The story starts in late December of 3 BC when the angel-messenger Gabriel is dispatched from the throne of Elohiym with news for a young teenager living in Nazareth. Mary will give birth to Jesus nine months later in September of 2 BC. She is not from a wealthy or prominent family that is well-known among Jewish high society in Jerusalem. Instead, she resides up in the northern Galilee region with her father Eli and at least one sister [John 19:25]. She is betrothed to a young man named Joseph who is probably 16 or 17 years old and she remains a virgin. Joseph's family tree is directly "*of the descendants of David*" [Luke 1:27].

Located 145 km north of Jerusalem, Nazareth is a tiny and rather insignificant village with a population of only 400, surviving on subsistence farming and fishing in the nearby Sea of Galilee [Lake Tiberius]. It was said of her hometown village by Nathaniel [John 1:46] "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" There is also quite the subtle skepticism inferred [Matthew 21:11] from the crowds when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday and they openly comment, "Isn't this the carpenter from *Nazareth*?"

Gabriel was not like the typical artist's rendering of angels in gleaming white robes with large feathered-wings spreading above the shoulders. The many Biblical accounts of angels sent as "messengers" from God describe them as "a man" or "men".

Consider Genesis 18 and the “three men” who meet Abraham at the Mamre Oaks, or the “two men” the women saw at the empty tomb. The many Biblical accounts of angel-messengers state they “stand” or “the angel stood” so they must have legs and appear like humans. Hebrews 13:2 says we should show hospitality to strangers for in doing so many of us have entertained angels without knowing it. In Luke 1:28-29, Mary is not in awe regarding the angel’s appearance, but is more perplexed by the message delivered to her: *“Greetings favored one, the Lord is with you”*.

When it is explained that she will *“conceive in her womb”* with no mention of a man getting her pregnant, Mary asks how this can happen for *“I am still a virgin”* [Luke 1:34]. The angel tells her that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her, so that her child will be called *“the Son of God”* [Luke 1:35]. Mary says she is the bondservant of the Lord *“So let this be done as the angel has said”*, and the messenger departs [Luke 1:38].

This first scene in the Christmas story demonstrates the heart of God to choose a very average young woman – from modest means in a small village – through whom He will show His might and power. This is not about Mary being sinless or her superior spirituality, social standing, or individual power. This is all about what GOD WILL DO, just as He wills so that all will know His glory through His Son.

## **MAGI OBSERVE A STAR**

The second scene opens up some 1,200 miles to the east in the Persian-Parthian Empire, as the ancient priestly sect of Magi [see Chapter Nine] are reviewing historical archives of prophecies, recent astronomical signs in the heavens, and various regal coronations dating back to the time of Daniel in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC [remember, he held the title “*Rab Mag*”, Chief Magi]. It is provocative how the Lord decides to make known the birth of Mashiach to these diviner-soothsayers. Some form of astronomical alignment of planets, perhaps a comet, maybe a supernova, or other celestial anomaly caught their attention in the night sky of northern Mesopotamia. This was deciphered as being a very clear signal of a significant event occurring to their west: the birth of a new king.

There were perhaps dozens, maybe hundreds, of these Magi who probably then spent weeks or months engaged in discussions and debates about this unique sign in the heavens. Picture them consulting racks of scrolls and codices from their ancient library holdings. The timing of that “King” [Nagid] written of by Daniel could very well have been part of their deliberations. They clearly knew He had been born King of the Jews [Matthew 2:2] so perhaps they link him to the writings of Daniel’s prophetic writings almost six centuries ago. It is then settled. A contingent of the Magi will travel west toward the Mediterranean Sea into the Roman province Syria [included Judea] to locate, worship, and coronate this newborn King.

## THE BIRTH OF JOHN

In scene three we see Mary's cousin Elizabeth and her husband Zacharias. He is from the priestly tribe of Levi and has been assigned to the course of Abijah, one of 24 groups of priests who rotate once every 24 months to do the formal service in the Jerusalem Temple [this was covered in Chapter Six]. After Mary hears from Gabriel, she visits her cousin and finds Elizabeth six months along in her pregnancy. While she tells her cousin what the angel said, John does a few kicks of his legs within the womb as a signal of the spiritual connection that will be between him and his second cousin *Jeho-shua*.

Fast forward three months to April of 2 BC, perhaps even right on the day of Passover, and Elizabeth gives birth to her son. Her husband Zacharias had been mute the last nine months due to his unbelief in God's promise about having this baby. On the eighth day after the birth, as they prepare to circumcise John according to the Law of Moses, the rabbis and other family members are set to name him Zacharias after his father. Elizabeth said his name shall be John but they say, "No one in the family has that name". They gave Zacharias a tablet and he writes "His name is John", and just then he was able to speak again. None are aware at the time that John will be that very specific voice of one crying in the wilderness [John 1:23] "*Prepare the way of the Lord*", the person who literally fulfills that preview Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 40:3.

## THE DECREE FROM AUGUSTUS

Scene four opens on Gaius Octavius who was crowned the first Emperor of Rome with the title *Divi Felius Augustus* ["Divine Son of August"]. Historians estimate he was ruling 15 percent of the world's 300 million population. His Roman subjects totaled 45 million people, with six million as slaves. When his decree went out the Empire stretched west from the Iberian peninsula, east to Syria and Asia Minor, north across what is today France, Belgium, and Germany, with a southern border covering north Africa Egypt and the Sinai to Mauritania. Everyone had to travel to their ancestral homes, so Joseph and Mary journey 156 km from Nazareth south to Bethlehem.

Luke uses the present tense language for the census decree as he says in Luke 2:2 it was the '*first-time census*' for the Empire to be tabulated and taxed. This then became a regular periodic census as Luke mentions it again in Acts 5:37. Historian Jack Finegan, author of *Light From The Ancient Past* [Princeton University Press] notes papyri found in Egypt speak of the Romans doing a census of the population in northern Africa. While that may not be the exact same census written about by Luke, it does provide a confirming context that Rome did continue to periodically survey its population. People throughout Judea were traveling to get to their own cities for the census. God knew Joseph's ancestral links to Bethlehem Ephratah through his forefathers to Boaz, who married Ruth and redeemed that land for Naomi, was to be the birthplace for the promised Messiah.

## **NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM**

It is now scene five. The Bible does not say how far along Mary was in her pregnancy when they departed but they probably waited until April or May 2 BC after the colder winter months, but before the hotter summer days of June, July, or August leading up to her giving birth the last week of September. Joseph loaded several months' provisions of food, water, and clothing onto horses, camels, or donkeys for the 12-to-15 day journey to Bethlehem [average six or eight miles per day over rough terrain]. They needed supplies until Jesus was born and then to remain in Bethlehem for five-to-seven months through April or May 1 BC until Mary and Jesus were physically able to do the return trip to Nazareth. They would probably stay in Bethlehem through the Fall when Jesus was an infant and also the winter months of early 1 BC when the weather was colder and not conducive to overland travel. It is very likely they came to Bethlehem as part of a larger caravan with other families heading south to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, or nearby cities [Luke 2:44 notes that Mary, Joseph, Jesus and all of Jesus' siblings traveled in a similar caravan manner as they would journey each Spring from Nazareth to Jerusalem for their family's annual trip for the Feast of Passover].

## **THE INN AND MANGER**

In scene six, imagine perhaps a few hundred people also returning to the town of Bethlehem for the census along with Joseph and Mary. Many people had a similar ancestry of the tribe of Judah and traced their family roots back to the city of David.

## *The First Christmas*

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This would perhaps double the population and make it difficult to secure long-term housing arrangements that would cover the last three or four months of Mary's pregnancy plus another five-to-seven months after Jesus was born so it would be a much easier trip north back to Nazareth.

When the couple arrives in Bethlehem we tend to see them as many artists have depicted Mary with a large belly just days or even hours from giving birth. She sits on a donkey and Joseph is on foot with a walking stick leading the way. He has a small satchel over his shoulder that is not enough to cover their two-week trip. But instead picture them arriving with three or four of their own animals as part of a caravan of several families. Joseph rode one, Mary rode one, and the others are loaded with provisions. They most likely arrive with a few months still to come before Mary will give birth.

Coming in for the census, housing arrangements were probably shared, as rooms were at a premium. Luke 2:7 simply states that when she does give birth Jesus is laid in a manger because there was no room at the inn [*katalyma* in the Greek is "guest quarters"]. This is the basis for most people believing Joseph and Mary settled into an outdoor stable or cave with animals. The manger is thought to be a Western-style feeding trough. A closer look at Biblical archaeology and 1<sup>st</sup> Century Middle Eastern history shows that typical homes in Judea were 2-story mudbrick, wood, and stone with living and sleeping areas upstairs to feel the breezes, and animals kept downstairs on the

first floor underneath. Ken Bailey writes a 2008 article in *Associates for Biblical Research* [BiblicalArchaeology.org] that a manger is actually an indentation in the ground-floor section of a house where straw was stored for the animals. With no room in the lodging area on the second floor, it looks like Mary and Joseph stayed on that first-floor section near the manger. After she swaddled Jesus in strips of cloths [very Middle Eastern form] she laid him on soft hay in the manger. It was a balmy evening, September 29<sup>th</sup>, the first day of Tishri, the Jewish new year. At sunset a great celebration would begin to unfold in and around the village of Bethlehem.

#### **THE SOUNDS OF YOM TERUAH**

As the final stages of the birth process occur in scene seven, it is just after sunset at the start of the first day in Tishri and Yom Teruah, the feast of blowing trumpets. All across the Bethlehem region, family and friends are blowing the ram's horn *shofar* trumpet as prescribed in Leviticus 23:23-25, "*In Tishri on the first of the month you shall have a rest reminder by blowing trumpets as a holy convocation*". Hundreds of trumpets would be blown within and around Jerusalem, while Bethlehem had perhaps a dozen people out on their rooftops blowing the shofar. The shepherds in the fields perhaps blew a shofar also at their evening campfire. When I do this teaching at churches or conferences, I play a 3-minute podcast of a real shofar being blown outdoors in Israel at the start of Yom Teruah and let the sound slowly resonate across the room. Then I add a second and

third shofar layered over the first to provide an experience of hearing several trumpets. It would have been such a beautiful sound reverberating over the valley and meadows that had been redeemed by Boaz for Naomi.

#### **SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELDS**

In scene eight, the grazing areas around Bethlehem have many cohorts of shepherds watching over their flocks of cows, sheep, camels, cattle, and goats. They are well aware of the Feast of Trumpets beginning at sunset as they settle into their camps. They have a fire and some food to usher in the new year. And while Jehovah could certainly have made the announcement of Messiah's birth right in downtown Jerusalem at the Temple to tens of thousands of Jews, He chose to send *"good tidings of great joy"* [Luke 2:10-11] to an average lot of working class laborers outside Bethlehem. *"In the same region were shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night"* [Luke 2:8]. These men had little, if any, worldly status or social standing among the Jews, but God announces the birth of the 'Good Shepherd' [John 10:11] to shepherds.

#### **THE HEAVENLY HOST**

Mary is giving birth to Jesus on the first floor of their lodging. In scene nine, the sky is filled with shofar trumpet-sounds. Luke says [2:9] a messenger from the Lord suddenly **stood** before these shepherds, probably seen as a man in the same manner that angel-messengers visited Abraham. But then the glory of the Lord shone brightly around them and the sheep

herders were terribly frightened. Different from Gabriel with Mary this messenger from God shows up and 'bright light' is all around them. The Greek word used is *doxa* for majesty, brilliant light, moonlight, starlight, magnificence. Perhaps it was similar to the glory [same *doxa*] that Luke used to describe when Jesus was transfigured [9:28-36] on the mountain.

This angel-messenger tells the shepherds not to be afraid [Luke 2:10-12], "I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be for all people". *"Today in the city of David a Savior is born for you and He is Mashiach the Lord"* [in the Greek *christos kyrios*]. *"The sign for you to find Him is He will be wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a first-floor manger."* Suddenly [Luke 2:13-14] there appears the *Plethos Ouranios Stratia*, literally: 1] *multitude* [root of *plethora*], 2] *from heaven*, 3] *an army/band of soldiers*. It must have been so incredibly magnificent and overwhelming. Perhaps several dozen, or even hundreds of these angel-messengers [Luke 2:15] dispatched from God's realm outside time-space stepped into the world Jesus created, with praises: *"Glory to God [doxa Theos in the Greek] in the highest"* [literally meaning in 'heaven where God dwells'] and *"here on earth among men with whom He is well pleased"*.

It was quite logical that the birth of the long-awaited Messiah promised by Yahweh some 4,000 years earlier would be heralded to men in the temporal dimension of earth by a celebratory display of beings coming from the extra-temporal

realm of God's heavenly domain. And all this was happening while shofar-trumpets were being blown all across Judea.

#### **SHEPHERDS SEE JESUS**

In the tenth scene, the angels depart, the brilliance of the glory of the Lord subsides, and the night sky is once again black with stars overhead. This awesome display is finished and the sheep herders say to one another [Luke 2:15] *"Let us go to Bethlehem now and see what the Lord has announced"*. The village was not large and Luke 2:16-20 notes they hurried and found Mary and Joseph with Jesus lying in a manger, as had been told them. It is inferred there are several others now gathered in that downstairs room standing near the manger straw on which the newborn is laid, because the shepherds recount what they had just seen and heard out in the fields as [verse-18] ***"All who heard it marveled, wondered, admired the things told them by the shepherds"***. Mary simply pondered and treasured these things in her heart as they were incredible confirmations of all Gabriel had explained to her nine months earlier. After maybe an hour or so, the shepherds returned to their flocks in the fields praising God for all they just heard and saw. Joseph and Mary will then use Bethlehem as their home base for the next several months as Jesus grows.

Notice there is no mention of Magi at this time of the birth when Jesus is a newborn infant [*brephos* in the Greek]. Coming up in this Christmas story, the Magi will see Jesus in

about five-to-seven months when they arrive in Bethlehem to see a pre-toddler [*paidion* in the Greek].

#### **THE 7<sup>th</sup> AND 8<sup>th</sup> DAY**

The eleventh scene opens as Luke 2:21-22 notes that *after Jesus was born* and Mary completed her seven days of purification [see Leviticus 12:1-2], Jesus was then circumcised on the eighth day as prescribed in Genesis 17:10-12. This most likely was done by Joseph in the same first-floor lodging place where Jesus had been born. Mary would have to complete an additional 33 days of ritual purification. She had no doubt lost a lot of blood during the birthing-delivery. Leviticus 17:11 states “*The life of the flesh is in the blood*” and this is the basis for the Law of Moses requiring very specific ceremonial washings to purify a person after blood contact. This was especially true for women after childbirth and in their regular monthly cycles. Remember the woman from Luke 8 who had for 12 years a blood flow hemorrhage that rendered her always ‘unclean’.

On Mary’s 40<sup>th</sup> day the family travels six miles from Bethlehem up to Jerusalem to dedicate Jesus in the Temple as Exodus 13:2 says, “Consecrate every firstborn male to Me, He belongs to Me” [another foreshadow in God’s Law pointing to Messiah]. Joseph purchases either two pigeons or turtledoves for this sacrifice [Luke 2:24]. Thirty-two days after Jesus is circumcised Mary can touch “*consecrated things and enter the sanctuary*” [Leviticus 12:4]. It is interesting to see that Leviticus 12:5 says a Jewish woman who gives birth to a *daughter* is unclean for two

weeks, unlike the seven days with a son, and she remains in her blood purification for 66 days total.

#### PROPHETIC WORDS

In scene twelve, the new family heads to the Temple and probably passes through the Fountain Gate and the Pool of Siloam. Jesus is now 40 days old [almost seven weeks]. It is November 9<sup>th</sup> in 2 BC. They walk across the Gentiles' Court heading in the direction of the East Gate and then two people approach them and speak very interesting prophetic words over Joseph and Mary's infant son Jesus.

The first is a man named Simeon [Luke 2:25-35] who had been told by the Lord he will not die until he sees Mashiach. As he takes the 7-week old Jeho-shua into his arms, Simeon states, *"Now Lord you are releasing your bond-servant to depart in peace according to your Word for my eyes have seen your **salvation**, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel"*. These are clearly prophetic of Jesus. He is the One who brings **salvation** to the world. He will bring the light of His love into the darkness of the Gentiles [see John 8:12 as fulfillment of Isaiah 49:6, 52:10, and 60:3]. Jesus is truly that "glory of Israel" as the promised Messiah.

Mary and Joseph are very much astonished by what is being said about their son [verse 33]. Simeon blesses mom and dad, then speaks a specific prophetic word over Mary: *"Behold your child is appointed for both the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed, such that a sword will pierce even*

*your own soul, to the end that thoughts from many may be revealed".* This clearly points to the future day of Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup> in the year 32 AD [Nisan 14, Passover] as Mary will stand on Golgotha with her sister, another Mary [the wife of Clopas], Mary Magdalene, and John bar-Zebedee. They are at the foot of the cross where she will witness her son undergoing the brutal suffering of Roman crucifixion. It is assumed Simeon is old because he says the Lord can release him to depart [die] in peace for God's promise is now fulfilled.

After Simeon comes a woman prophetess named Anna [Luke 2:36], the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe Asher. She was 84 years old, and had been married seven years when her husband died, then she lived as a widow ever since. If she was married at 15, then her husband died when she was 22, so it was over 60 years she had been a widow. She never leaving the Temple as she fasts and prays day and night. She comes to the family and gives thanks to God for their Son, continuing her witness [verse 38] to many who came to the Temple that the redemption of Jerusalem had finally come.

#### **RESTING IN BETHLEHEM**

In the next scene, the family leaves Jerusalem to return to Bethlehem so Mary can continue her rest and fully recover from giving birth and Jesus can grow for a few more months before they make the journey back to Nazareth. It is now mid-November of 2 BC. If Herod the Great dies sometime after the eclipse in mid-January of 1 BC [coming up in two months] but prior to

Passover [coming up in April, 1 BC] Joseph and Mary will then stay in Bethlehem for between four and seven months after Jesus' birth. Most of the those who came to Bethlehem for the census had probably departed. It is during this time that interesting visitors arrive, and as a result the young family will have to quickly leave for safety down in Egypt.

#### **MAGI ENTER JERUSALEM**

Scene-14 is right out of Ridley Scott period films such as *Gladiator* or *Kingdom of Heaven* as scouts bring word to Jerusalem that a massive caravan from the East is just a few miles out, heading toward Jerusalem. The buzz around the city is everywhere that Persian-Parthian Magi, accompanied by their military escort of cavalry in full regalia with turbans, riding majestic stallions and carrying tall lances donned with flags, will soon ride through the city gate. [Chapter Nine covered this in detail]. They gain an audience with Herod, who asks his advisors where Messiah will be born. Bethlehem is named [Micah 5:2], so the Magi entourage heads south to find this "King of the Jews". The entire company went to Bethlehem because they do not return to Jerusalem, but leave directly for northern Mesopotamia as God directs them through a dream.

#### **MAGI AT THE HOUSE**

Scene-15 has the massive and ornate caravan riding into Bethlehem. It stops at the long-term lodging place where Jesus has been living with His parents the last few months. Luke writes that when they enter the house they see a pre-toddler [*paidion* in

Greek]. This is unique from shepherds who four-to-seven months earlier saw Jesus the newborn infant [*brephos*]. If Jesus was born on September 29, 2 BC and Herod dies sometime after the mid-January eclipse of 1 BC, but prior to Passover in April in 1 BC, the Magi would be in Bethlehem between mid-January and mid-April of 1 BC. They gave prophetic gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh as they worshipped Jesus [Chapter Nine explains the gifts].

#### **HEROD'S DECREE**

When the Magi are warned in a dream to not return to Herod in Jerusalem, they go East back to the Persian-Parthian Empire capital cities of Susa and Ctesiphon. In scene 15, word gets to Herod they are not coming back with news of where the new King is located in Bethlehem, so Herod gathers his advisors of scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and other rabbis to ascertain *when* this "King of the Jews" had probably been born. He does not have an exact date from the astronomical rendering of the Magi's timing. He knew they were in the East and saw "His star" and sometime after that made the journey west to Judea. Herod needs to be sure his death squads kill this exact child, who could be less than a year old all the way to close to two years of age, depending on when the Magi first became aware. It could have been as the child was conceived, perhaps sometime during the pregnancy, or at the time of the birth. Because of his uncertainty Herod orders to kill *all* male children in the Bethlehem region who are **two years old and under** so he can be absolutely sure the child does not live to grow up and become "King of the Jews".

### **RESPIRE IN EGYPT**

In scene 16, Matthew 2:13 explains how the Lord told Joseph in a dream that Herod is going to seek to kill Jesus, and instructs him to go to Egypt and wait there until the Lord tells him it is safe to return. Joseph literally took his new family in the middle of the night [Matthew 2:14] and probably headed directly west to the Mediterranean Sea where they could sail from Ascalon to Pelusium, or other Egyptian settlements just east of the Nile River delta. It is always interesting to me that virtually all Bible commentaries presume that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus traveled around 400 miles overland to Egypt. Such a harsh desert journey would take two-to-three months. But they could easily sail about 330 nautical miles in ten days]. Over the last 30 years I have included in my slide presentations a photo of an Egyptian Airlines 747 jet airliner along with the heading used in most Bible commentaries: "The Flight to Egypt". However, it seems most reasonable that they sailed to Egypt and back.

### **DEATH OF HEROD**

In scene 17, Herod finally dies sometime after the mid-January eclipse of 1 BC, but prior to Passover in April. Joseph was instructed in a dream from the Lord to go to Egypt and [Matthew 2:13] *"Remain there until I tell you"*. Once Herod is dead, the Lord told Joseph it was safe to sail back up the coast to Ascalon, maybe further north to Joppa or Caesarea which is almost due west from Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee. The family had been gifted valuable gold and frankincense from the Magi, so God

provided materially for their journey to Egypt and return to Nazareth. This trip fulfills yet another Old Testament prophecy about Mashiach [Hosea 11:1] “*And out of Egypt I called my Son*”. Certainly, to be born in Bethlehem and yet be called from Egypt is not merely a coincidence. Matthew 2:14-15 explains that the family remained in Egypt until after the death of Herod. Luke’s gospel does not cover the death order of Herod but does pick up [Luke 2:39-40] with the family heading north back to Nazareth.

#### **JESUS GROWS IN STATURE**

The family settles into the wedding home Joseph had prepared for his betrothed at his father Jacob’s house. Over the next nearly 29 years Jesus resides in Nazareth of Galilee and is a carpenter’s apprentice to Joseph who is *presumed to be His father* [Luke 3:23]. Mark records [6:3] that the local people of Nazareth refer to Jesus as “Is not this ***the carpenter*** the son of Mary?” This shows two things. First, that Jesus is a woodworker prior to His public ministry and second, it seems when Jesus is an adult, Joseph has already died because Jesus is referred to as “the son of Mary” with no mention of her husband Joseph.

Joseph and Mary had a large family with at least 6 children born after Jesus. His brothers are James, Joses, Simon, Jude, and at least two sisters [see John 7:3, Mark 6:3, Matthew 13:55, and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:5]. This clearly removes man’s tradition that Mary remained a virgin her entire life.

There is no daily log of Jesus’ life prior to age 30 while He lived a very human life within the family structure of Mary, Joseph, and at least 6 siblings. But Luke [2:41-52] tells when Jesus was

age twelve, His family went to Jerusalem for their annual family trip to the Feast of Passover. This particular year in Spring of 11 AD Jesus lingered at the Temple to converse with the religious leaders. Mary and Joseph were quite worried about finding Him [Luke 2:48]. But Jesus explained [verse 49] *"Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?"* Luke provides the insight [verse 50] that Jesus returned to Nazareth continuing **to be subject to them as parents** as Mary treasured in her heart all that Gabriel had announced to her, as well as what Simeon had prophesied over Jesus.

#### **A GREAT CHRISTMAS STORY**

It is truly a wonderful story to tell again and again each year. God sent His angel-messenger to Mary and her cousin was already pregnant with John the Baptist. Augustus requires Joseph to take Mary to Bethlehem for the birth. Ordinary sheep herders are told glad tidings of good news by an army of angel-messengers accompanied by a display of glorious light, even as Yom Teruah begins blowing trumpets at sunset. The new year is ringing in with the sounds of shofar ram horns in overlapping cadences in Bethlehem and throughout Judea.

On the eighth day, Jesus is circumcised according to the Law. On the 40<sup>th</sup>, day He is prophesied over by Simeon and Anna tells the great news to many in Jerusalem. From the East and the Persian-Parthian capital cities of Ctesiphon and Susa, Magi "King-coronators" arrived at Herod's palace inquiring about the newborn King of the Jews. They are directed to Bethlehem and

worship the pre-toddler Jesus who is between four and seven months old, and present Him with their gifts. They are warned to not return to Herod which enrages him. He orders all young males in the Bethlehem area to be killed. Jehovah warns Joseph to take his family to Egypt, then calls His Son out of Egypt after Herod's death. The family settles in Nazareth where Jesus grows for 30 years as a carpenter, abiding by Mary and Joseph as His parents in a family with His four brothers and at least two sisters.

The late September early Fall first day of Tishri has no snow, snowmen, sleigh-bells, holly, ivy, red berries and bows, hot apple cider, or eggnog. The stockings were not hung by the chimney with care and there was no decorated evergreen tree. There were shepherds and others crowded around the newborn lying on straw in a manger cut into the floor. And the host of heaven, literally "army of angels", were the first Christmas carolers declaring "*Glory to God in the highest*".

#### **LINK TO HANUKKAH**

The true Christmas story is absolutely mind-boggling in its dozens of details that match a cosmic precision established before the foundation of this physical world. The celebration here on Earth will no doubt continue to be marked every year on December 25<sup>th</sup> with the long established traditions of men [and retail merchandising].

Over the last several decades there have been comments that Christmas celebrations during December may overshadow the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. Many have dropped "Merry

## *The First Christmas*

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Christmas"[the Brits say "Happy Christmas"] and replaced it with "Happy Holidays" or "Seasons Greetings". This is more likely ascribed to political correctness that seeks to remove the thoroughly "Christian" theme from the Christmas Season", but does not have much at all to do with celebrating Christ's birth. However, this holiday is by its very definition based *entirely* on the Christ [Mashiach, Anointed One]. The word Christ defines the word "Christmas" so I respectfully hold onto these adages, "Keep Christ in Christmas" or "You can't have Christmas without Christ". But I am also very much drawn to the wonderful connection that Jesus the Christ has with the thoroughly Jewish festivals, remembrances, and holidays that so many of our dear Jewish friends and family celebrate each December.

First, the birth of Jesus is clearly a Jewish event. His Hebrew name Jeho-shua means "Jehovah is salvation". He is also Immanuel, "God with us". His mother is from a Jewish family line going back to Nathan the son of King David. His legal-adopted father's ancestry traces back to King Solomon. Jesus was born into a family from the tribe of Judah who was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, and whose name became Israel. This birth is foretold dozens of times all throughout the Torah, Psalms, and writings of the prophets, taking place in the well-recognized historical-ancestral Bethlehem Ephratah, the city of David. These geographic roots date back to Ruth and Boaz, who was the Hebrew *Goel* who redeemed and returned Naomi to her land. Jesus was also circumcised on the eighth day and went every

Spring down from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover with Mary, Joseph, and his siblings.

There is also one additional and very intriguing facet that John records in his Gospel [chapter 10:22-23] that can be easily overlooked in a casual reading. It tells of an additional Jewish celebration Jesus went to in Jerusalem. John writes specifically about the annual celebration to commemorate the re-dedication of the second Temple in Jerusalem. After describing Jesus being the Good Shepherd [John 10:1-21] he notes in verse 22: "*At that time, the Feast of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, **it was in winter** and Jesus was walking in the Temple at the portico of Solomon*". This festival is [and continues to be] in the month of Kislev [December], and looks back to 167-160 BC when after Judas Maccabee led a revolt against the Seleucid Empire, the Temple was cleansed of the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes, who in 167 put a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the Holy of Holies. Upon the victory of the Maccabees over the Hellenist armies, the Temple's re-dedication was an annual celebration of God's faithfulness. It first occurred on the third anniversary of that abomination of Antiochus IV, Kislev 25 in 164 BC and most notably *in winter*.

John said *it was in winter* so he was not referring to the dedication of the original anniversary of the first Temple built by Solomon that was dedicated to the Lord in Tishri, which typically occurs in September. And John is not speaking of the dedication for the second Temple which was rebuilt after the Babylonian

captivity and dedicated in the month Adar during the Spring. John writing that this 'Feast of Dedication' **was in winter** is pointing directly to it being that re-dedication in the month of Kislev [December], which means Jesus celebrated the event that would become the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY

The details of the first Christmas were an extraordinary fulfillment of a plan laid out in God's Word across four previous millennia leading up to a His birthday on Yom Teruah, Tishri 1, also September 29, 2 BC. It is truly a beautiful story of blessing poured out upon a young maiden during a major census that would bring her to Bethlehem. Jesus was born as shofar trumpets blew all throughout Judea. Magi coronators from Persia-Parthia with direct links to Israel's prophet Daniel in Babylon, announced to Herod and all Jerusalem that the "King of the Jews" was born. Christmas gifts included costly foreshadows that Messiah is royalty as well as a priest, but He will also be "cut off" and not for Himself. Blessings are spoken over the newborn King while He is presented at the Temple, followed by time in Bethlehem and then Egypt before His earthly family settles in Nazareth. Perhaps we can be better prepared to read the full Biblical account of the first Christmas, even as the world's many traditions have all but removed "Christ" from this annual celebration. This more complete Biblical Christmas story should be given its due among all the other festivities and traditions of men that have sadly now come to define Christmas Day on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

# EPILOGUE

“Now those more noble-minded in Berea received the word with great eagerness and searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were true.”

**Acts 17:11**

The above passage was written by Luke describing the Christians from Berea. He was commending their reputation as not only being eager to receive what had been taught them, but also their initiative to diligently search God’s Word to see whether all the topics were in fact true. My intent is not to imply that all the positions presented in this book are the absolute truth and only correct interpretation of Jesus’ birth. There are obviously multiple competing positions in theology books, podcasts, as well as Bible commentaries on the shelves of serious scholars [see the Resources page that concludes this book]. Some put the birth of Jesus happening as early as 6 BC or 4 BC, based solely on the

## *Epilogue*

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supposed death of Herod near an earlier eclipse with the caveat, “nobody really knows when Jesus was born”. The online Wiki regarding the birth of Jesus merges the dozens of public contributors into this caveat, “Most theologians assume a year between 6 BC and 4 BC”. The website of the well-renowned *Biblical Archaeology Society* states, “While this is sometimes debated, the majority of New testament scholars place Jesus’ birth in 4 BC, or earlier.” I always have to laugh when the definitive majority statement from a respected resource includes the open-ended caveat “or earlier”. LiveScience.com also uses the 6 BC to 4 BC window “based partly on the Biblical story of Herod the Great who **supposedly** ordered the death of all male infants under the age of two”. But this is then quickly dismissed with the various other caveats and disclaimers that include: “no one is sure when Herod died”, or because Bible scholar Reza Aslan’s book has definitively concluded that “the mass infanticide [of Herod] is legend, not fact”.

Now that you have read this book, you will no doubt understand why my preference for Tishri 1 in the Fall of 2 BC [September 29<sup>th</sup> that year] fits several intertwining components related to the birth of Jesus. Most notably it gets the birth of John the Baptist to match up with Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth so that John is 6 months older than Jesus and they begin their own ministries 6 months apart – John turns 30 in April of 29 AD and Jesus turns 30 in September of that year.

The September 29<sup>th</sup> date in 2 BC also provides a very good match with Jesus riding into Jerusalem April 6<sup>th</sup>, 32 AD as per Sir Robert Anderson's detailed calculation. Daniel's prophecy of Mashiach Nagid being revealed exactly 173,880 days [7 sevens and 62 sevens] fits the March 445 BC decree to "restore and rebuild Jerusalem" found in Nehemiah 2. This perfect fit has Jesus turn 30 in the Fall of 29 AD, then minister for those oft-quoted "three years" [29 to 30, 30 to 31, and 31 to 32], and these line up with the Gospels recording Jesus at three Passovers [the first in Spring of 30 AD, the second in 31, and the final one when He was crucified on Passover in 32 AD].

The position of this book regarding the Magi is more closely aligned with the majority of positions that recognize these "priests from the East" were not present on that birth evening [nativity] with the sheep-herders. And yet it is so interesting that the "three wise men" remain a classical fixture within table-top, front-lawn, and "live" nativity scenes. Over the last 30 years, I have had many individuals who heard my teaching and presentation on this topic come and find me at a later date to hand off the "3 wise men" figurines from their own Christmas nativity sets, explaining that they wanted to be more in line with the true Biblical narrative. It has also become quite the phenomenon over the years to keep updating and adding to the traditional nativity scene. People have taken the liberty to include Santa, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, and the little drummer boy, sometimes alongside Dickens'

## *Epilogue*

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London street carolers. There are even now 'themed' nativity sets that celebrate and pay homage to action-figures and related trademarked images of Star Wars, Peanuts [with Snoopy asleep on the stable roof], Masters of the Universe, Legos, yellow rubber duckies, Paddington-like bears, Russian nesting dolls, edible gingerbread figures with candy-frosted stable, the Veggie-Tales ensemble, and even the fully camouflaged cast of Duck Dynasty.

Decades of Christmas television specials have included Perry Como, Andy Williams, Dean Martin, and who can forget the much beloved December 1977 *Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas* featuring the 74 year-old legendary crooner singing a duet with then 30 year-old David Bowie [at the peak of his Ziggy Stardust fame] as they overlapped "Peace On Earth" with "Little Drummer Boy". And so, Christmas on television, in movies, and online media often has very little Biblical *inclusion* but a good deal of secular *exclusion* of Jesus' birth.

A careful review of the case presented in this book will connect *all* the major points from the Biblical records aligned with the timing and geo-political setting from the extra-Biblical sources. My prayer is this will draw you even deeper into reading God's Word, seeing again how precise its message is among the various writers in the Old and New Testaments. May God richly bless you in celebrating the birth of Jesus – a time that still defines calendars for 2020, and years to come.

# WHY IT MATTERS

“The Lord’s testimony is sure,  
making wise the simple.”

**Psalm 19:7**

The testimony of the Lord as shown through His Word is sure. It is true and reliable. We can depend on it. The Bible makes even our simple and limited minds wise. Each account of men, women, cities, nations, kingdoms, oceans, seas, rivers, as well as mountains, valleys, and plains is real. The languages and places are historically accurate. Archaeology has time and again confirmed God’s narrative. And where it may appear to be silent on a certain ruler or location, it simply means that has not yet been discovered, because the overwhelming evidence supports

the Middle eastern context of the Biblical timeline. It is always amazing to see God's Word ultimately confirmed.

Consider that a Greek physician and a Jewish former tax collector penned separate accounts of Jesus' birth. They included Augustus Caesar, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, Pontius Pilate, Tiberius Caesar, Herod the Great, Zacharias and Abijah alongside Judea, Jerusalem, Bethlehem Ephratah, Nazareth, Persia-Parthia, and Egypt. Each fits the integrated context of one very particular window of time during the height of the Roman Empire. It actually makes more sense that if the time and place of Jesus' birth was simply made up, the writers would construct a narrative that is deliberately general and noncommittal, with ambiguity and vagueness that intentionally lacks details that could be reviewed and cross-checked against parallel historical events recorded in other sources. Instead, the preponderance of details turns out to be deliberately *specific* and *unambiguous*, chronicling dozens of names and places within a very narrow timeframe of human history. This only makes sense if the accounts really happened.

With great attention given to historical apologetics of Christianity, it should come as no surprise that applying similar research diligence to the Biblical account of the Christmas story should yield another well-coordinated flow of verifiable facts that fit together, showing once again that the Biblical accounts are reliable and trustworthy. This topic does in fact matter, because the Word of the Lord is upright and all His works are, and will remain, entirely trustworthy [Psalm 33:4].

## REVISIONIST HISTORY

Examining the birth of Jesus on Yom Teruah also really matters because today's post-modern, post-Christian cultures have all but removed everything pertaining to Jesus from the celebration of the holiday that bears the name of Christ. It is disconcerting that the connotations and images many think of when hearing "Christmas" have nothing to do with the literal birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. And yet the Bible has this incredible narrative, both *prophetic* in the Old Testament and *descriptive* in the New Testament, conveying so many specific details of God fulfilling His promise to bring Messiah into the world, in the flesh, to provide salvation to mankind.

A recent article in the local weekly newspaper for our little surf town did a look back at the start in 1948 of Santa Claus, California on a strip of beach-road a few miles south of Santa Barbara. This new "Christmas" village would boast all kinds of "holiday" shops, along with an 18-foot tall, 2.5 ton statue of St. Nick peering out on visitors strolling along and cars driving by. His lofty position was halfway down a giant red-brick chimney atop gift shops, an ice cream parlor, and juice bar. The writer states very clearly that the attraction was designed to focus on *the most important images of Christmas*. So in addition to the massive Santa statue, there were reindeer on another roof, a 20-foot Frosty the Snowman on another, plus a winter wonderland choo-choo train for the kiddies – the *Santa Claus Unlimited*, that

carried passengers on a loop of tracks covering the front and back of the dozen shops.

By 1955, the road was officially renamed Santa Claus Lane, and a U.S. Post Office was added with the main focus on kids mailing their wish-lists direct to the North Pole. Eventually a petting zoo was tried with real reindeer, while employees wore elf costumes to serve as “ambassadors of Christmas cheer” to visitors who came from all over to stop in and “enjoy the magic of Christmas anytime of the year”.

The same can be said of most “Christmas” parades in large cities and small towns all across the country. Floats and giant balloons include lighted trees, shiny wrapped presents with bows, Frosty, Rudolph, elves, reindeer, the little drummer boy, Snoopy, wreaths, Victorian lampposts and carolers, and of course the most important person associated with Christmas – Santa. But not Jesus. While the world gradually dismantles the Biblical Christmas and the complete removal of the birth of Jesus from having any part in the annual December festivities, be assured and stand firm on the truth from God’s Word that a LOT was recorded of this landmark event in world history. *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* [John 1:14] is why it matters. The Biblical account is accurate, detailed, and confirmed on multiple levels of people, places, and dates. I pray that this book’s proposal will strongly encourage you that the truth about Christmas absolutely matters.

## OTHER VIEWS

While there remain disagreements within the Christian community about the timing and events associated with the birth of Jesus, the broader academic and pop-culture world also presents many positions for this event that is celebrated by some 3 billion people worldwide every December 25<sup>th</sup>. The late Reformed theologian R.C. Sproul put forth some of the biggest concerns facing the church about the birth of Jesus in an article for the December 2018 issue of *Table Talk* magazine titled “The Controversial Birth Of Jesus”. He writes:

*Though the New Testament is replete with miracles surrounding the person of Jesus, none seems more offensive to modern man than the virgin birth. If any law of science is established as immutable and unbreakable, it is that human reproduction is not possible without the conjoining of the male seed and the female egg. We may have developed sophisticated methods of artificial insemination and “test-tube” intrauterine implantations, but in some manner the reproduction process requires the contribution of both genders of the race to succeed.*

*Thus, the birth of Jesus violates the inviolable; it mutates the immutable; it breaks the unbreakable. It is alleged to be an act that is pure and simple 'contra naturam'. The story sounds too much like magic, too much like myth and legend that grows up around the portraits of famous people. The arguments against the virgin birth are many. From borrowing mythical baggage of the Greek-speaking world, with parallels evident in pagan mythology, to the scientific disclaimer that the virgin birth represents an empirically unverifiable unique event that denies all probability quotients. Some have offered a desperate exegetical argument trying to show that the New Testament doesn't teach the virgin birth.*



*Former CNN talk-show host Larry King was once asked whom he would most want to interview if he could choose anyone from all of history. He said, "Jesus Christ." The questioner said, "And what would you ask Him?" King replied, "I would like to ask Him if He was indeed virgin-born - the answer to that question would define history for me".*

*Just Thinking, RZIM, Winter 1998*



*Patrick Campbell wrote "The Mythical Jesus" suggesting that the virgin birth account is a clearly recognized mythological element in our faith tradition whose purpose was not to describe a literal event, but to capture the transcendent dimensions of God in the earthbound words and concepts of first-century human beings.*

Moving through my ten chapters about Jesus being born on Yom Teruah in 2 BC may seem to hit a credibility roadblock when Chapter Five is devoted to the virgin birth. Critics say it is deemed illogical for me to present my proposed cogent narrative about the birth of Jesus if I have already disqualified my *logical side* by including the virgin birth within this book.

The world looks at the “overt miraculous” in the story of Christmas [an angel visits Mary, the virgin birth, heavenly hosts in the fields with shepherds], compared to the “logical-historical” [the decree of Augustus, a baby boy born in Bethlehem, Magi from Persia-Parthia arrive in Jerusalem and speak with Herod] as if the account has both unbelievable and some believable parts. However, the *entirety* of the events of the first Christmas are *all* miraculous. By its underlying definition, Jehovah God is providing His Promised Messiah in the fullness of Earth time. It has become popular among so-called “top Bible scholars” to either seriously question the veracity of the “overt” or simply reject outright the account as not having any proof within the “logical-historical”.

*Back in December of 2004, Newsweek and Time magazines each featured the birth of Jesus. Both articles had similar topics, and each made the case that, although Christmas and its traditions are loved among Christians, most of the story of the birth of Jesus was simply the invention of early Christian church writers, and was not an account of what really happened when Jesus was born.*

Consider the case of Spencer Mizen, writing for BBC's *History Revealed* where he endeavors to separate fact from fable:

*Christmas has become such a heavyweight in the global calendar it's now celebrated by more people than any other religious event on the planet. But what about the 2,000-year old tale that lies at the heart of these celebrations? Is it cold-hard historical fact, a theological flight of fancy, or something in between? Virtually everyone knows the nativity story – Joseph and Mary's search for room in the inn, the shepherds tending their flocks, the three wise men arriving in the stable bearing gifts. But **these episodes were recorded by shadowy scribes, with little corroborating evidence.** The story of Jesus's birth may be among the most celebrated in all of literature, but is it possible to root it in history? This is a question that scholars have pondered for centuries. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John may be the authors on whose writings much of our knowledge of Jesus's life and teaching are based, but for historians investigating the nativity story, the gospels throw up two significant problems. The first is two of the books – Mark and John – fail to mention Jesus's birth at all; the second is that the two that do – Matthew and Luke – **disagree on many of the details.***



Dr. Kasper Bro Larsen wrote in the December 20, 2018 "AU-Omnibus" [he is noted as a Biblical scholar teaching at Aarhus University, Denmark] that Jesus was not born in Bethlehem and this was actually a made up 'rags-to-riches' story:

*Anyone who's ever dozed through a midnight Christmas service as a child can probably hear the pastor's voice recounting the Christmas story in their inner ear. The Christmas story is probably best understood as a Christian fiction invented by Jesus' fans about 80 years after his birth. It was not exactly convenient for the first Christians that their savior came from Nazareth, theologically speaking, that was nowhere. Because it had been written in the Old Testament that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. So the evangelists presumably embroidered the truth a little. They recorded that he was Jesus of Nazareth— but added that he had been born in Bethlehem. It's a story about how God does not reveal himself as a king in a palace, but in a small child in a manger. In the beginning, everything in the story highlights Jesus as this big loser, but then he turns out to be God's son. It's pure rags to riches."*



Marilyn Mellowes writing for Frontline at PBS.org said that:

*Whoever wrote Luke wrote more than a gospel, in fact, many scholars insist Luke's gospel is the first half of a two-part story that begins with Jesus in Nazareth and ends with Paul in Rome. And that story has decisively shaped how Christians have viewed the origins of their church, and also deeply influenced how the later church came to imagine the birth of Jesus. For it is Luke who presents the familiar tale of his birth: "And in those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus*

*that all the world should be taxed." Luke describes how Joseph and Mary journeyed from Nazareth, in the region of Galilee into Judea, to Bethlehem. Scholars speculate he is placing the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem because Bethlehem is the city of King David; Luke is drawing a direct parallel between the first king of Israel and the new King, Jesus. According to some interpreters, Luke's Jesus is not only a king, **he also resembles a Greek philosopher**. Others suggest that **Luke's Jesus more closely resembles a semi-divine hero, such as those portrayed in popular stories and celebrated in Greek song.***



Mike Paulkovich published his 2014 article "The Fable of The Christ" for *Free Inquiry* at [SecularHumanism.org](http://SecularHumanism.org) saying:

*When I consider those 126 writers, all of whom should have heard of Jesus but did not—and Paul and Marcion and Athenagoras and Matthew with a tetralogy of opposing Christs, the silence from Qumran and Nazareth and Bethlehem, conflicting Bible stories, and so many other mysteries and omissions—I must conclude that Christ is a mythical character. **Jesus of Nazareth was nothing more than an urban (or desert) legend, likely an agglomeration of several evangelic and deluded rabbis. The Jesus saga is further deflated by Nazareth, a town without piety and having no settlement until after the war of 70 CE, suspiciously, around the time the Gospels were concocted.***



American Bible scholar Joseph Atwill wrote the book "Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy To Invent Jesus" [2005] and was featured at the 2013 'Covert Messiah' annual conference, presenting his unique position that:

*Christianity did not begin as a religion, but was actually a sophisticated government propaganda exercise used to pacify the subjects of the Roman Empire. The New Testament was written by first-century Roman aristocrats and they entirely fabricated the story of Jesus Christ, who may be the only fictional character in literature whose entire life story can be traced to other sources. Once those sources are all laid bare, there's simply nothing left.*



Bill Broadway's December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2001 Washington Post article, "Scholars Question Biblical Details Of Jesus' Birth" noted:

*At the risk of being called the Grinch Who Stole Bethlehem, Paula Fredriksen states: Jesus was born in Nazareth, not the "little town" of the Christmas carol. "I can't think of any New Testament scholar who takes (the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth) to be historically reliable," said Fredriksen, a Boston University professor who specializes in early Christianity. "Most believe he was born in Nazareth." Early biographers of Jesus created the story of the Virgin Birth to counter the same claim by followers of Augustus Caesar. Such conclusions are reached by scholars who have more extensive knowledge of*

## Other Views

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*ancient Hebrew and Greek than ever, use computers for comparative textual analyses, and benefit from more than 100 years of archaeological discoveries that clarify the religious, sociological, and political contexts of the Bible's authors.*



There you have it. B.U.'s Paula Fredriksen who graduated from Wellesley and Oxford with a Princeton PhD has settled it. She can't think of any Bible scholars taking the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' birth as reliable. This immediately brings to mind when Paul writes in Romans chapter 1: "*Professing themselves to be wise, they became as fools*". Also in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:25, Paul says that by comparison, what is considered the foolishness of God is actually wiser than what men come up with. And later in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:19, Paul states, "*For the wisdom of this world is but foolishness before God, because God is the One who catches the supposed wise in their craftiness*". And so Dr. Marvin Meyer, endowed chair at Chapman University, agrees:

*"The Gospels are interpretive reflections. They are really more like sermons than historical accounts. In the case of the birth of Jesus, they were less concerned with historical facts of the birth and **much more concerned about the meaning of Jesus.**"*



Brent Landau, a religious studies scholar from the University of Texas at Austin shares the exact same sentiment:

*My overall take on this, which would be the opinion of most other biblical scholars as well, is that there is very little in the Christmas story of the Gospels that is historically reliable.*



Raphael Lataster who lectures in religious studies for the University of Sydney wrote “There Was no Jesus, There Is No God” [2013] and provides this summary commentary:

*Given the poor state of the existing sources, and the atrocious methods used by mainstream Biblical historians, the matter will likely never be resolved. In sum, there are clearly good reasons to doubt Jesus’ historical existence – if not to think it outright improbable.*



The blog-site BadNewsAboutChristianity.com features one section called “Christian Deceptions” which includes a Case Story on the Nativity, with the following summary comments:

*According to an ancient tradition (confirmed in the Jerusalem Bible), the original version of Matthew’s gospel was written in the Hebrew tongue, likely the one used by the Ebionites, and it was shorter than the Greek version. The reason being the opening verses about Jesus’ miraculous birth were absent. So if this Ebionite Hebrew version is the original Matthew, then the nativity must be a later Greek addition, and we know that early copies of Luke’s gospel also lack this story.*

*Even the most conservative Christian scholars now regard the story of Jesus' miraculous birth as historically unreliable.*



This provides my readers with some general context on the contemporary state of “higher criticism” from supposedly wise and well-educated Biblical scholars. It can feel troubling to read such preponderance of doubt. But there are equally well-researched facts. The gospels and Old Testament present a sequence of events to fit the historical time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Connecting all these sources results in a cohesive narrative that is logical and makes sense, even being about 2,000 years removed from the event. My prayer is that you will be greatly encouraged that there is a sound view to counter all those who would seek to undermine and dismiss the birth of Jesus.

# RESOURCES

There are various different proposals, models, and positions devoted to this topic in theology books, Bible commentaries, magazines, online lectures, podcasts, seminary courses, conferences, seminars, and websites. Following is a sample:

TruthBook.com

LiveScience.com

The Jesus Film Project [JesusFilm.org]

Chuck Missler and Koinonia House [KHouse.org]

Christianity.com

The History Channel [History.com]

BiblicalArchaeology.org

Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon [TheBereanCall.org]

BibleStudyTools.com

The Astronomy Behind The Star Of Bethlehem [Forbes.com]

Was The Christmas Star Real? [EarthSky.org]

The Astronomy Of The Birth Of Jesus [YouTube.com]



This *Resources* list could go on for dozens of pages. It is interesting to see and hear the other theories about dating the birth of Jesus. The key is to find a position that fits exactly on multiple events involved in the life of Jesus. It is my conclusion that the material presented in this book does that quite well.