



Considering The Birth Of Jesus

A booklet written to consider the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, its timing and significance. In scripture we see that God acts to His perfect plan, both in time and purpose. Is there more to note regarding Jesus coming in time - His nativity?

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Introduction

To suggest that Jesus may have been born at Christmas can draw some strong opinions as the vulgarities of the modern Christmas season and obvious pagan parallels offend the consciences of many. Different opinions are found as regarding exactly when Jesus was born as scripture does not clearly indicate the timing of Jesus birth. The differing opinions are often backed up with good logic and biblical argument.

The nativity story is very much part of scripture and its record contains important truth as to the birth of Jesus to a virgin, whose father was God Himself. This is no fairy story. Like many of the stories we find in the Bible it introduces a spiritual reality beyond the natural world.

Perhaps the answer to the question as to what time of year Jesus was born is not important. Perhaps it is a controversy better avoided but I hope the scriptural information contained in this booklet might give the reader at least a new wonder at the plan of God that is yet to unfold.

Don't Mark One Day Above Another

To many, the pagan aspects of Christmas prevents them from considering that Jesus might have been born in December. To mark one day above another is a matter of choice but are we right to discount the fact that Jesus might have been born at Christmas? Is there a

significance to the time of Jesus' birth that we might not have realised?

Herod's Death

NASA has now made information available of all stellar, solar and lunar movements on any given date in history. By checking the moon phases with the information now available on the internet that are posted by NASA it is possible to date certain historical events that are recorded. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records an eclipse of the moon just before Herod died. The Gospels tell us that Jesus' birth was shortly before Herod the Great died. (cf. Matthew 2:19) So Herod's death can be fixed with certainty. This eclipse of the moon occurred on March 12th or 13th in 4 B.C.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, also tells us that Herod died just before Passover that took place on April 11th in the same year, 4 B.C. From other details supplied by Josephus, Herod the Great's demise therefore occurred between March 29th and April 4th in 4 B.C.

At the time of Jesus' birth Matthew's Gospel tells us that Herod killed Bethlehem's babies who were two years old and under. The earliest Jesus could therefore have been born is 6 B.C. but it is likely, through a variety of other time indicators, that Jesus was born in either late 5 or early 4 B.C.

It might sound strange to suggest that Jesus Christ was born no later than 4 B.C. since B.C. means 'Before Christ' but our modern calendar which splits time between B.C. and A.D. was not invented until A.D. 525.

The 25th December and the 25th Day of Chislev

As we consider the Jewish Calendar and see how this lines up with the Gregorian Calendar that we now use, we can, by checking NASA moon phases on line, see how the 25th of Chislev lines up with the Gregorian calendar. The significance of the 25th day of the Jewish month of Chislev will become apparent as we consider the historic record. It is an extremely rare occurrence to have December 25th and Chislev 25 coincide but in 5 B.C., the year that is likely to be when Jesus was born, Chislev 25 coincides with December 25th!

The Feast of Dedication Instituted

We read in 1 Maccabees, that after Alexander the Great, the Greek Seleucid kings who followed allowed Israel to practice their religion until the Greek-Syrian king, Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.), who was known as "Epiphanes" (God Manifest), entered the temple in 168 B.C. and "took away the golden altar and the candlestick of light" and other temple furnishings, broke them in pieces, and carried them off to his own country. "Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that they should all become one people, and everyone should give up his particular practices. And all the heathen assented ... And many from Israel agreed to his kind of worship and offered sacrifice to idols and broke the sabbath. And the king sent word ... to ... put a stop to whole burnt offerings ... and to break the sabbaths and profane the feasts ... to build ... idol temples and sacrifice hogs and unclean cattle; and to leave their sons uncircumcised and defile themselves with every unclean ... practice, so that they might forget the Law ... and anyone who did not

obey ... should die.... he erected a dreadful desecration upon the altar." (1 Maccabees 1:41-54).

It was then on the 25th of Chislev that "they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on the altar of burnt offering" (1 Maccabees 1:59) - the 25th of Chislev according to the Hebrew calendar.

So it was the Maccabean revolt began after Antiochus demanded that the Jews worship him as a "god." Mattathias, the son of John, the son of Simeon, a priest of the sons of Joarib from Jerusalem, killed a Jew who stepped forward to offer a sacrifice to an idol in Mattathias' place. So it was that he and his five sons then fled to the wilderness of Judea.

After the death of his father, Judas Maccabaeus, known as "the Hammer", led the armies of Israel against the Syrian army obtaining quite miraculous victories against great odds and eventually reoccupied Jerusalem in 165 B.C.

So it was that the Jews reconquered the temple site on the 24th day of the ninth month, exactly three years to the day after the evil king, Antiochus IV, had forced the ending of the daily sacrifice. The next day, "Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month of Chislev ... they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the altar of burnt offering which they had built. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs" (1 Maccabees.4:52-54).

Jewish Talmudic legend says that a one-day supply of the sacred oil was found hidden away in a wall of the Temple

by a priest. When this was brought out to be used to light the lamp, it miraculously lasted for the full eight days of the celebration, until new oil could be made. So it was that the Feast of Dedication, also known as the Feast of Lights, and later, Hanukkah, was instigated.

Judas “chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law who cleansed the sanctuary, and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place. And when, as they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which was profaned they thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it: wherefore they pulled it down and laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them. Then they took whole stones according to the law, and built a new altar according to the former and made up the sanctuary and the things that were within the temple, and hallowed the courts. They also made new holy vessels and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table and upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the temple. Furthermore they set the loaves upon the table, and spread out the veils, and finished all the works which they had begun to make. Now on the fifth and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month of Chislev, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up betimes in the morning and offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made.”

Look At What Time And What Day

The account of the rededication of the temple and in particular the rebuilding and dedication of the altar that replaced the one that had been profaned continues in the first book of Maccabees with the exhortation to consider the timing of this important event: “**Look, at what time and what day the heathen had profaned it**, even in that it was dedicated with songs, and lutes, and harps, and cymbals. Then all the people fell upon their faces, worshipping and praising the God of heaven, who had given them good success. And so they kept the dedication of the altar eight days and offered burnt offerings with gladness, and sacrificed the sacrifice of deliverance and praise. They decked also the forefront of the temple with crowns of gold, and with shields; and the gates and the chambers they renewed, and hung doors upon them. Thus was there very great gladness among the people, because the reproach of the heathen was put away. Moreover Judas and his brethren, with the whole congregation of Israel, ordained that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month of Chislew with mirth and gladness.” (1 Maccabees 4:41-59)

So this is the historical account that is found in the First Book of Maccabees, the story of the desecration of the altar by Antiochus Epiphanes who typified the antichrist, the man of sin, and its subsequent miraculous restoration on the very day it had been defiled. We see Satan’s desire to desecrate the altar where the blood of animals was shed to sanctify and cleanse, signifying the blood of Christ: “The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a

heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (Hebrews 9:13-14)

Jesus At The Feast of Dedication - The Feast of Lights

There is only one reference to the Feast of Dedication in the Bible and this is in the New Testament when Jesus went to Jerusalem at the time of this feast - "At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'" (John 10:22-30)

The Light of the World

So it is we may see that the Feast of Lights points to Jesus, who is the Light of the world. In John's Gospel we read, "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify about the Light so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” (John 1:4-9)

And Jesus said, “I am the Light of the world,” (John 8:12) just as He also said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

The 25th Day of the Month of Chislev

So just as the temple was rededicated on the 25th of Chislev, and the Feast of Lights, now known as Hanukkah, was instituted, we see Jesus may also have been born on this very day. The Light of the World had come.

When Joseph and Mary presented Jesus at the temple on the eighth day, on what would be the eighth day of the Feast of Lights, Simeon, to whom the Holy Spirit had revealed that he would not see death “before he had seen the Lord’s Christ,” (Luke 2:26) took Jesus in his arms and said, “For my eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou has prepared in the presence of the peoples, **a light** of revelation to the nations and the glory of Thy people Israel.” (verse 31-32)

Jesus Is The Temple

And just as God had ordained for the temple that was still standing in Jesus' day to be rededicated on the 25th day of Chislev we see that Jesus, Himself was come, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

We see that at the beginning of His ministry when He cleansed the temple at Passover, Jesus declared, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19) Although this confused the Jews, His disciples were to recall this occasion when He was raised from the dead because "He was speaking of the temple of His body." (John 2:21)

So in Jesus birth we see the commencement of the building of the temple who we, the church, now are, as Paul taught the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit." (1Corinthians 3:16)

The promise to King David was being fulfilled: "The Lord also declares to you that the Lord will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up your seed after you, who will come forth from you and I will establish His Kingdom. He shall build a house for My Name and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever... and your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

This promise was not referring to the temple Solomon would build, that would be destroyed, but to the temple Jesus Christ would build, the temple which is His body, comprised of the true church with Jesus as its head.

The Significance of the Timing Of Jesus Birth

So it is that we can see a significance in the timing of Jesus birth as being at the time of year that has come to be known as 'Christmas'. It is not a day we need to keep but is it a day that has perhaps been kept alive in the remembrance of mankind without them knowing exactly why?

On the 24th of Chislev there have been other significant events in Israel's history like the one when the foundation for the second Temple was laid in 520 B.C. "From the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it.... From this day I will bless you" (Haggai 2:18-19).

It was on the 24th of Chislev that God, having declared that He would shake not only the earth but also the heavens, declared that the "latter glory of the house will be greater than the former.... and that in this place I shall give peace,' *declared* the Lord of hosts."

On this day He said, "Consider from this day forward, from the 24th of the ninth month, from the day when the temple of the Lord was founded, consider," that God told Haggai to declare He was going to "shake the heavens and the earth." (Haggai 2:6-10 & 18-21 and see Hebrews 12:26-29)

Jerusalem was freed from Ottoman rule, which lasted almost 400 years until World War 1, on December 9, 1917, which was the 24th of Chislev. The Turks gave up the city without a shot being fired thinking that "Lord

Allenby" was a fulfilment of a prophecy of a coming "Man of Allah." (Allen = Allah, Beh = man)

The significance of this last event is perhaps going to resonate even more as the Ottoman Empire rises again, bringing forth in due course a future desecration of the holy place. An event of which Jesus said, "Let the reader understand." (cf. Matthew 24:15)

The Abomination Of Desolation

Jesus said, "When you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place... then let those in Judea flee to the mountains... for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall." (cf. Matthew 24:15-21)

Satan is yet to desecrate the holy place again and the man of sin is to be revealed, "the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so he takes his place in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.' (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

Paul is clear, this is the beast - "the lawless one" who "will be revealed, whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8) - "And from His mouth comes a sharp sword... and the beast was seized" and "thrown alive into the lake of fire..." (cf. Revelation 19:15-21)

Satan's plan will be to no avail. The golden altar of incense, behind the veil, in the holy of holies was but a

copy of heaven itself where Jesus appeared in the presence of God having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and He will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin to those who eagerly await His coming. (cf.Hebrews 9)

We see Satan's attempt to spoil the plan of God in Antiochus Epiphanes desecrating the brazen altar and taking the golden altar away from the temple.

Satan's future attempt to prevent the second coming of Jesus will see the church which is His body, lay down their lives in love even unto death at this time of great tribulation, having entered into the fulness and consecration through this altar in heaven, to enter into the reality of the holy of holies and demonstrate and preach the gospel of the Kingdom in the whole world for a witness to all the nations as a witness, and then the end of this age will come. (cf.Matthew 24:14)

The salvation that comes through Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead will yet bring forth the harvest of the end of the age. Jesus second coming for those who have received Him by faith will follow the end-time ministry of the true church.

This reality and understanding, Satan has done his best to malign and confuse, but God's will, plan and purpose will not be stopped. The victory Jesus came to bring, that men might receive His life, will be seen in this time of great tribulation, a tribulation caused by Satan who knows his time is short. (cf.Revelation 12:12)

After this comes the wrath of God, the awesome 'Day of the Lord', before which the Lord comes with His angels to

gather His elect. The dead in Christ will rise first and those who are alive will be caught up to be with them in the air. Nothing will then prevent the coming of Jesus after the time of God's wrath is poured out, coming with His saints - the church - to reign on the earth when His Kingdom will fill the whole earth and Jesus will sit in the Holy Place in Jerusalem as King of the whole earth, that place that has been the focus of Satan's attacks across the centuries, the very place of His dedication as a babe on what was perhaps the eighth day of the Feast of Dedication. (cf. Luke 2:21-39)

We perhaps cannot say that Christ was born at Christmas but hopefully this booklet has shown a significance and timing of past events and given more insight into events yet to come.

We are yet to see the abomination of desolation set up in this holy place, a coming event typified by Antiochus Epiphanes when he desecrated the temple on the 25th of Chislev in 168 B.C. When we see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in the holy place we will once more see Satan trying to defile the holy place from where Jesus will yet reign upon earth?

The battle is yet to continue but let us be assured, the victory belongs to the Lord and it is prophesied, His Kingdom *will* fill the whole earth.

Colin Winfield - 2016

Appendix

The reader might not have come across the historic books of 1 & 2 Maccabees contained in the Apocrypha.

In most bibles there is a 400 year gap in Jewish history between Malachi and Matthew that these historic writings give us insight into.

The Apocrypha itself has been the source of much disagreement, as to whether these books should be part of the bible, but this is the source of Jewish history we should not discount. It is from 1 Maccabees that we find the historic information in this booklet.

According to 1 Maccabees 1:54, the abomination was erected on the altar of burnt offering. “Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah...” (1 Maccabees 1:54) Then on “25th day of the month they offered sacrifices on the altar.” (verse 59)

As regards the Hebrew Calendar the months are based on lunar months, but years are based on solar years. The calendar year features twelve lunar months of twenty-nine or thirty days, with an extra lunar month added periodically to synchronise the twelve lunar cycles with the longer solar year. These extra months are added seven times every nineteen years. This means that the dates of our Gregorian calendar vary from year to year as compared to the Hebrew calendar.

Exodus 12:2 and Deuteronomy 16:1 set the month of Aviv, which is now called Nisan, as "the first of months": “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.”

Nisan 1 is referred to as the ecclesiastical or religious new year and always coincides with March or April of our calendar. So it is the ninth month of Chislew, or Kislev, always coincides with November or December in our calendar.

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