

BIBLICAL CHRISTMAS (BIRTH) DATING OF JESUS CHRIST

Request: “Could you explain what year Dec.25 became associated with the birth of Jesus Christ?”

For the past two weeks we have been studying the dating of Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ.

- Dec.16 We’ve studied the “Cultural Christmas Dating” of the birth of Jesus Christ
- **Dec.23** Today we’ll study the historical “Biblical Christmas Dating” of the birth of Jesus Christ

You may hear ministers say that there are no adequate biblical clues for the dating of the birth of Jesus Christ. We learned last week that Jesus wasn’t born on Dec.25; it was a cultural date and not a biblical date.

**This lesson will study nine biblical clues to the date of the birth of Jesus Christ.
We will explain why we believe that Jesus Christ was born in April of 5BC.**

There are at least nine Biblical clues to the actual date of the birth of Jesus Christ:

- 1. Herod the Great reigned from 37BC to 4BC.**
 - He was reigning when the Magi visited (Matt.2:1-3; Luke 1:5).
 - Josephus says that he died before the Passover of 4BC at the age of 70.
 - Therefore Jesus had to be born before 4BC.
- 2. After interrogating the Magi, Herod murdered all the male children 2 years and under within the Bethlehem vicinity (Matt.2:7-8, 16-18; Jer.31:15).**
 - Herod died shortly after this event in 4BC.
 - This caused Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt (Matt.2:13-15; Hosea 11:1).
 - If we add one year to 4BC to determine the birth of Jesus, we get 5BC.
- 3. When Archelus succeeded his father Herod as king, Jesus returned from Egypt (Matt.2:19-20).**
 - However Jesus didn’t return to Jerusalem or Judea until after the death of Archelus (Matt.2:21-23).
 - Archelus reigned from 4BC to 6AD.
 - Jesus attended the next Passover after the death of Archelus (7AD).
 - Luke records that Jesus was 12 years old (Luke 2:41-50).
 - If we add 7AD to 5 BC, we get 12 years.
- 4. The Roman Census decreed by Caesar Augustus (reign / 31BC to 14AD, NIV) (Luke 2:1-7).**
 - Egyptian records show that a census was taken about every 14 years.
 - Acts 5:37 records another Roman census about 6AD.
 - This means that the first census would have been around 8BC.
 - We know that the health of Herod the Great was terrible during this time.
 - We also know that they didn’t require the census in the season of difficult travel.
 - Many believe the delay could have been easily explained by these two factors.

[The next point will help us.]

5. Quirinius was a Roman governor of Syria which Israel was part of in the Roman Empire.

- History tells us that he was governor twice (6-4BC) and (6-9AD) (Luke 2:2).
- He was used by Rome in the two censuses recorded in the Bible (Luke 2:2; Acts 5:37, NIV).
- Women age 12 and men age 14 and older, were required to register.
- Joseph would have registered in both of them, but Jesus in neither of them (5BC and 6AD).

6. Bethlehem shepherds were watching their flock in the field by night at the time of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:8-20).

- Plummer explains that they were temple shepherds watching the sacrificial sheep.
- He explains that they were penned from Nov. to March.
- I believe that Jesus was probably born in April of 5BC.

7. Zachariah was priest of the order of Abijah (Luke 1:5, 8-10, 23-26).

- David divided the priesthood into 24 orders (1 Chron.24:1-19; 2 Chron.8:14; Neh.12:24).
- Abijah was the 8th of 24 orders.
- The conception of John the Baptist occurred in connection with it (Luke 1:5, 23-26).
- John was conceived 6 months before Jesus (Luke 1:26, 34-38).
- John was probably born in Oct.6BC and Jesus April 5BC (born 6 months later).

8. Jesus was baptized by John to begin His ministry in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius (14AD to 37AD).

- He was the successor to Caesar Augustus (Luke 3:1-3, 21-23).
- History says that he was the adopted son and co-regent of Augustus during 11-12AD.
- Luke 3:23 says that Jesus was about (hosei) 30 (30-31) years of age at His baptism.
- If you add 11AD and 15th year, it equals 26AD for the baptism of Jesus.
- This makes Jesus 31 years at His baptism (26AD + 5BC = 31 years).
- You'll remember that the date of His age of 12 was 7AD and His baptism at 31 years.
- Therefore 19 years have passed (7AD + 19 years = 26AD).
- His public ministry lasted through four Passovers (26AD to 30AD).
- He died at the age of 35 years in April (Passover) of 30AD.

9. The final dating clue for the birth of Jesus Christ is the reconstruction of Herod's temple in Jerusalem (John 2:18-22).

- John 2:18-22 occurred during the first year of Jesus' ministry (26AD).
- It was said that Herod's temple had been under construction for 46 years (John 2:20, NIV).
- History tells us that the temple was started between 19-20BC [26AD + 20BC = 46 years].

Therefore, based upon the biblical evidence stated above, the actual dating of the birth of Jesus Christ was sometime during the month of April, 5BC.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM DSBC
"In the year of our Lord, 2009."**

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