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## **WHEN WAS JESUS BORN?**

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In this eJournal I will discuss the biblical facts for the birth date of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The bible tells us with accuracy what month and what biblical feast His *birth* and *return* fulfill. The biblical narrative conclusively reveals that the birth of the Messiah is not December 25<sup>th</sup>, nor is it even in the month of December. What we learn by understanding what the bible reveals is, that His birth occurs at the Fall Feast of Sukkot (God dwells / Tabernacles with Mankind). You can find out detailed information about His birth and Sukkot at [www.rhm-net.org](http://www.rhm-net.org), and then select Teaching Resources, Hebraic Teachings article #15.

### **MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

I believed for more than twenty years that December 25<sup>th</sup> was the birth date of Jesus Christ. I assumed that what we were doing each year was biblical and Christian, even though I was distressed about materialism, Santa Claus and the scarcity of Jesus in the holiday. But, I did what I had learned from my family, culture and witnessed in the church celebrations. As an Assemblies of God Pastor it never occurred to me to question where these traditions came from and if they were biblical or not. Scores of times over the years I was asked to read the narrative that accompanied our church choir's Christmas musicals and I did so joyfully, not realizing I was narrating a fable instead of the real facts about the Messiah's birth.

It wasn't until late 1997 that I attended a lecture about, "When Was Jesus born." The speaker reviewed the actual biblical narrative of Christ's birth and the origins of the symbols and traditions used in Christmas celebrations. I was in shock..., it was like he was exposing or destroying an untouchable "sacred cow!" There was immediately a level of emotion in the conference room. Some heard the truth... and others said during break and on the ride home things like heretic, legalist, cultist, kill joy and Grinch.

I understand that to challenge these "traditions" is to accept the risk of making you the reader upset. But truth sets you free, and the bible is the authority that governs the actions of mankind not our emotional attachments to the traditions of this world.

### **HISTORICAL FACTS**

The Western Church, since the fourth century C.E., has adopted December 25 as the official day to acknowledge the incarnation of the Messiah. However, most historians

admit that this was more in concession to pagan practices than to the Holy Scriptures. The Roman Church "Christianized" many existing pagan days and festivals and co-opted them into the church in order to accommodate converts who continued doing their ancient rituals. December 25 is a classic case in point. This day happened to be an ancient pagan feast to celebrate the return of the sun after the winter solstice. It had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus, but was adopted nonetheless.

### THE BIBLICAL CALCULATIONS OF THE MESSIAH'S BIRTH

1. Elizabeth (John's mother) was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36). We can determine the approximate time of year Jesus was born if we know when John was born.
2. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). Historic calculations indicate Zacharias service corresponded to June 13-19 in that year.
3. It was during this time of temple service that Zacharias learned that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a child (Luke 1:8-13).
4. After he completed his service and traveled home, Elizabeth conceived (verses 23-24).
5. This means Elizabeth's conception of John took place near the end of June, adding nine months brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for John's birth.
6. By using simple addition we add another six months, the difference in ages between John and Jesus, this brings us to the end of September or Mid October as the likely time of Jesus' birth (The Month of Tishrei / Feast of Sukkot / Tabernacles). *The Companion Bible, 1974, Appendix 179, p. 200.*
7. Others have pointed out the inconsistency of shepherds watching the flocks in the fields during the dead of winter. The Mishna (*rabbinic commentary*) states that, because of winter weather, the flocks around Bethlehem were normally brought into a protective corral called a "sheepfold" from November through February. Hence the December date seems unlikely. "*Luke,*" *Adam Clark's Commentary, Vol. 5, p. 370.*
8. A final clue surrounding the details of the Messiah's birth has to do with the exceptional crowds seeking housing with the result that there was "no room in the inn" (Luke 2:7). While it is true that much of this congestion would have been related to the census taken by the Romans at that time, there seems to be more to it.
9. The Romans were known to take their censuses according to the prevailing customs of the occupied territories. Hence, in the case of Israel, they would opt to have people report to their home provinces at a time that would be convenient for them. There is no apparent logic to calling the census in the middle of winter. The more logical time of taxation would be after the harvest in the fall and this also coincided with one of the major Biblical Feasts known as Sukkot (Tabernacles). Because of this we would expect the entire area of Jerusalem and Bethlehem to be overrun with pilgrims the same as it is every year during Tabernacles.
10. The nativity accounts in the Gospel took place during one of the major Biblical Holy Days and not during December. The only major holy day that takes place in the fall

is Sukkot (Tabernacles). It seems that there is indeed a holy Feast pointing to the birth of the Messiah. The Messiah came to “dwell” in the midst of His people as perfectly typified in the Feast of Tabernacles.

11. So, God in the flesh (Jesus) would have come to Tabernacle (Sukkot) with mankind on the first day of Tabernacles.
12. On the eighth day of Tabernacles God commanded that a special day called, the Eighth Day of Assembly was to be set apart as a holy assembly. “For seven days you are to bring an offering made by fire to Adonai; on the eighth day you are to have a holy convocation and bring an offering made by fire to Adonai ; it is a day of public assembly; do not do any kind of ordinary work.” Lev 23:36 CJB
13. Why would God command a special memorial on the eighth day of Sukkot? Not only is this the closing day of the feast of Sukkot, but this day may contain another connection to the birth of Jesus Christ. “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” Rom 15:8 KJV
14. Jesus’ birth took place on the first day of Sukkot. If this is true what would take place on the eighth day after a Jewish boy is born? Any good Jewish parent could tell you. On the eighth day a Jewish baby boys takes the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant through circumcision (Gen 17). Jesus was presented on the eighth day after His birth (incarnation). “When the time came for their purification according to the Torah of Moshe, they took him up to Yerushalayim to present him to Adonai it is written in the Torah of Adonai, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to Adonai.” Luke 2:22-23 CJB
15. So what is being implied? It is this; Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of Passover and Pentecost fulfilling both feasts with 100% accuracy, why would the Lord not come and dwell (Sukkot / Tabernacle) with His people at the precise time that the Fall Feasts indicate?
16. The Fall Feasts give us the bibles narrative of the Messiah dwelling with mankind at His birth (as the Lamb of God) and also at His future return (as the King of Kings), and it all happens in the month of Tishrei (Sept. / Oct.) not December.
  - a. Tishrei 1 is Rosh Hashanah (Last Trump, Jesus comes first and second time).
  - b. Tishrei 10 is Yom Kippur (Atonement, Judgment Seat of Christ).
  - c. Tishrei 15-22 is Tabernacles (Dwelling with Him forever).

#### **A PERSONAL EXHORTATION FROM THE AUTHOR**

Hanukkah is not an alternative to the winter solstice celebration of Christmas. The Feast of Dedication (Jn.10) is the story of a people who said enough, removed man’s pagan and religious traditions from the house of God, re-dedicated it and then separated themselves from the vain religious practices they represented. His birth scripturally came during the Fall Feast of Tabernacles not at the Winter Solstice. Because worshipping the Father in Spirit and Truth are foundational to the Christian way of life, I want to encourage you to research and find out for yourself where the Yule Tide, Winter Solstice and Christmas celebrations originated from.

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim 2:15 KJV*

### **LET ME SUGGEST SOME RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- ♣ Why are Christmas traditions not in the bible or found in ancient or current Hebrew history?
- ♣ Why Do We Decorate a Tree during Christmas and where did it originate from?
- ♣ What does Jeremiah 10:1-4 say about this ancient and modern practice?
- ♣ Why is mistletoe hung in doorways?
- ♣ A circle wreath is it a Christian or a pagan symbol?
- ♣ Why do we call Christmas the Yule Tide season and what is Yule?
- ♣ Why is a Yule Log burned during the Winter Solstice?
- ♣ Where did the 12 days of Christmas originate from?
- ♣ Was Christmas outlawed in England?
- ♣ Did the Puritans outlaw Christmas in the New World and fine people 5 schillings for celebrating it?
- ♣ Protestant Churches in the New World did not celebrate Christmas for over 200 years, is this true?
- ♣ Is it true that the US Congress starting from December 25, 1789 and for 76 years thereafter did not break or recognize Christmas?
- ♣ When did the Wise Men arrive to give Jesus their gifts?
- ♣ Were there three Wise Men at the manger?
- ♣ Was Jesus an infant or a toddler when the wise men arrived with their gifts?
- ♣ Herod killed all the children 2 years and under why?
- ♣ If they only gave gifts to Jesus why do we give gifts to ourselves?
- ♣ Where did personal gift giving during the Winter solstice come from?
- ♣ Where did Santa, elves and reindeer come from?
- ♣ Since the Messiah was not born in December, how did all this get started?

The biblical "Feasts of The Lord" and other Hebrew celebrations mentioned in the bible have nothing in common with the winter (Christmas) and spring (Easter) solstice celebrations. The biblical celebrations are recorded in Leviticus 23 and are also validated by Jesus' presence at them and by what He taught during them (for feast details go to [www.rhm-net.org](http://www.rhm-net.org) /teaching resources). God told Moses they are; *"a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you,"* (Ex. 31:12-13). Zechariah tells us they will be celebrated during the thousand year millennial reign of Jesus Christ (Zec. 14:15-16). Isaiah tells us that they continue on in eternity after the new heaven and earth is completed (Isa. 66:22-23). If they are celebrated by Jesus and continue during the millennium and in eternity wouldn't our faith be better served by understanding and practicing them *"on earth as it is in Heaven?"*

*Blessings Pastor Bob Hill*

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