

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES PART 2

When Was Jesus Born?

First of all, why is this even an important question? Well, how well would it go for you to celebrate your spouse's birthday, or one of your kids' birthdays, on a wrong day? Worse yet, what if you chose to celebrate your wife's birthday on the same day as one of your old girlfriend's birthdays? How well would that go over? This question is relevant because the scriptures command us to follow the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, so help us God. We would call it disrespectful to change your wife's birthday to a different day. Yet when it comes to the Son of God, we have taken the position that it doesn't matter. I am of the position that most of us would teach our children that even the smallest lie is not acceptable. So, in order for us to discover when Yeshua was actually born, I think it's important to know when He was not born.



It's no secret that December 25th, Christmas, is the time that almost all Christians celebrate the birth of Christ. But few actually know why they celebrate it on that day or where the celebration originally came from. The origins of this holiday are so rooted in paganism, hedonism, and sexual immorality that it was actually outlawed in the United States all the way up until the late 1800s. The short version is that it originates with the very *Baal* of the bible.

Baal was Noah's great grandson and built the cities of Nineveh and Babel. When he died, he was deified and became the infamous sun god of virtually every culture around the world. He was known by different names in different cultures, but his original identity remained the same. He was the head god of the underworld.

Ancient Roman culture had a twelve-day feast called the *Feast of Saturnalia* during the winter solstice at the end of December. This is where we get the twelve days of Christmas. It was a drunken feast filled with debauchery and sexual immorality as they believed that the mistletoe and evergreen trees were symbols of fertility and new growth. The evergreen tree was a phallic symbol of the sun god, and the people would decorate it with twelve candles and gold and silver balls in symbolism of all that is unholy. Originally, an eight-pointed star was placed on the top of the evergreen tree as it was the symbol of the Roman sun god.

Although he was called by many names in different cultures around the world, his attributes are strikingly similar. Our modern day “**sun god**” comes cloaked in red and white and bears gifts for children. He originated from the Scandinavian culture where he was called Odin. Odin had a long white beard, carried a crosier stick, was all-knowing, all-powerful, and traveled around the world at night once a year. His eight-legged horse and two blackjacks would eventually be transformed into eight reindeer and elves. He would give gifts to children if they had been good that year and his blackjacks would beat the children if they had been bad. Over time, his name became Sinterclaus in Europe and, of course, the infamous Santa Claus here in the States.

Odin's origins are of old and are directly connected to Lucifer himself, that imposter of Christ that pretends to be all-knowing has snow white hair and a white beard, is omnipresent, keeps a book of works, and cares for children. In the Shakespearean era, when publicly-performed plays were popular, demonic characters would announce their entrances with a, “Ho, Ho, Ho.” And yes, that is exactly where Santa's version of it comes from. The difference between the true Giver of heavenly gifts and this imposter is that this modern-day sun god travels and operates in the dark, comes down chimneys through the fire, and has no agenda of leading our children to the truth, but rather of increasing the lust of the flesh and the material garnishments of this life that lead to making life all about the self. No wonder it was illegal to celebrate Christmas here in the United States when it was still the thirteen British colonies. They knew its sinister history. And these are just a few details of the origins of the holiday. For a full historical analysis of both Christmas and Easter, I encourage you to watch my full-length documentary on the subject called *Truth or Tradition*. It's available online.

So now that we know when the Messiah was **NOT** born, we can finally answer the question of when he **was** by looking into the scriptures and putting together the pieces of the mystery. Our journey starts with Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

Luke 1:5 There was in the day of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

The “division of Abijah” will be very important in just a moment. For now, let's find out when the angel appeared to him.

Luke 1: 11 *Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.*

This tells us that Zacharias was in the Temple, which means that the time period during which he was visited was while performing his priestly duties. Gabriel tells him that his wife Elizabeth will conceive and bear a son in her old age and that they are to name him John.

Luke 1: 23-25 *So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. ²⁴ Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived and she hid herself for five months, saying, ²⁵ ‘Thus the Lord has dealt with me, to take away my reproach among people.’*

So right “**after those days**” of his temple service, he went home and Elizabeth became pregnant and hid for five months. Now we need to tie this to the date that Mary gets pregnant with the Savior. The scriptures give us that timeline in the exact same chapter:

Luke 1:26-27, 31 *Now in the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth. ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary...³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son of the Highest and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.*

So let’s put together what we have so far. Elizabeth gets pregnant right when her husband comes back home after serving in the Temple. Six months later, Mary gets pregnant with Yeshua. This means that Mary will give birth six months after John the Baptist is born. So all we have to do now is find out when Zacharias came back from his service in the Temple and we’ll know exactly when Yeshua was born. To do this, we need to go back and find out when the “division of Abijah” served in the Temple. We can find the descriptions of the divisions in 1 Chronicles chapter 24.

1 Chronicles 24:10 *the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,*

In the priestly system, the Levitical priests each took “shifts” serving in the Temple throughout the year. There was a schedule of service that consisted of twenty-four divisions, each of which served one week at a time, twice a year. There are two calendars that are represented in the bible. There’s the civil calendar, which was the official calendar of the kings, childbirth, and for contracts. This calendar began with Tishrei 1, which is called Rosh Hashanah today. It falls in our September/October. The other calendar is the religious calendar, which dealt with the things having to do with the priests and the Feast Days were calculated. This calendar starts on the Hebrew month of Nisan 1, our March/April. And it is from this calendar that the priestly divisions started.

Now that we know the week of the first division, we can count forward eight weeks to arrive at the beginning of Zacharias’ first week of service in the Temple: near the last week of the month of Iyar. There is no way to know the exact day on which Elizabeth gets pregnant once he’s back home, but it’s safe to believe that it happened sometime during the month of Iyar. The

gestational period for a child in the womb is forty weeks. This puts the birth of John right during the Feast of Passover the next spring! And this is no surprise as the scriptures say in Luke that he is to come in the spirit of Elijah and will be the forerunner to the Messiah. It has always been understood in Judaism that Elijah will come during Passover. To this day, every practicing Jew will leave an empty chair at the Passover table for him and will even, at one point in the Seder, get up and go open the front door, symbolically inviting him in. For John to be born during Passover is no surprise at all.

So now that we *know* when John was born, calculating the birth of Jesus/Yeshua involves plain math. Because we know from Luke's narrative that Mary was three months pregnant when John was born, we simply count forward another six months to find out exactly when she gave birth to our Savior. And again, not surprisingly, Yeshua's birth lands right at the beginning of the *Feast of Tabernacles*, where He **tabernacled** among men. John was born during the first Feast Day and Yeshua was born during the last one, called simply "**The Great Feast**," that massive end-of-the-year celebration where all of Israel was traveling to Jerusalem to celebrate the Harvest Festival. Little did they know how great a celebration it really was that year!

Further evidence of His being born during the Feast of Sukkot (our September/October) is the fact that the narrative says in Luke 2:8 that the *shepherds were still out in the fields tending their flocks*. If He'd been born at the end of December, the shepherds wouldn't have been spread so far out in the fields; they would have been tending their flocks closer to shelter during those much colder winter evenings. Secondly, Caesar Augustus of Rome called a census that year and would never have done so during the winter months when travel was difficult, and the weather was not optimal. Logic says that the best time to do a census would be when the people were already traveling to Jerusalem...which was during the Feast of Sukkot!

Another important point: Yeshua was not born in just any little town. Few people know that Bethlehem's very name is made up of two Hebrew words: *beit*, which means "house," and *lechem*, meaning "bread." Bethlehem literally means "House of Bread." This was **THE** Levitical village where the holy bread for the priests working in the Temple as well as the olive oil for the menorah that lit it was made. Furthermore, this is where the Yom Kippur goats and the Passover lamb, the most important animals in all of Israel, were raised. This was the birthplace of King David, the burial place of Rachel, the threshing floor of Ruth and Boaz, and was also a military outpost. The prophetic history in this little place could not be thicker.

Think about this for just a moment... Mary, nine months pregnant, was rejected because "there was no room in the Inn?" I don't think so. It would have been anathema for their family and friends to not make room for them with her being with a child. The more likely truth is that she was shunned because everyone knew that she was pregnant out of wedlock, and no one would have believed a crazy story of her having conceived by the Holy Spirit. So she and Joseph were sent over to a barn in which she could give birth. Since God is a God of perfect prophecy and extreme prophetic detail, could it be that the Lamb of God was actually born in **THE** Levitical barn in which the Passover Lamb and Yom Kippur goats were raised? Could He have been placed in **THE** manger (feeding trough) from which the Passover Lamb fed? There's no doubt in my mind that that's what happened. Their rejection led to a prophetic promotion. Don't ever forget that formula. Rejection by men always leads to promotion with the God of Israel.

And if all that wasn't enough, because we know the time of His birth, we can backdate it to the time of the miraculous conception. And that just so happens to be at the end of Chislev, our December, during the Feast of Dedication, better known as Hanukkah. This feast is called The Festival of Lights and Yeshua is called the Light of the world! It's a memorial feast to remember when the Jews won back the temple from the Greeks who had desecrated it almost two hundred years earlier. The menorah of the temple became the central symbol of this holiday, and the menorah always represented the Word of God. We, believers, know exactly who that Word of God actually is. Yeshua was conceived prophetically during this eight-day festival as a representation of the real Light of the world that would come and liberate the temples of men, setting them free from the real enemy who originally desecrated it. Every Jew and Messianic Christian in the world puts out a candlestick, called a Hanukkia, during the Festival of Lights to remember that historical day. Today, that same Light is to be displayed in our lives for all to see!

As you can see, understanding the biblical calendar is critical to understanding, not just the birthday of our Messiah, but understanding almost every other subject in the bible. The Feast of Sukkot is no different. It's the most exciting festival of the year. And now you can understand a little more of the reasons why. Our Savior was conceived during the Festival of Dedication as the Light of the world and was born during the Feast of Tabernacles where He sprang forth to tabernacle among men. May each of us carry His Light deep inside our temporary dwelling places (sukkahs) and let it shine brightly for the whole world to see!

Shalom,
Jim Staley