

The *Real* Birthday of Jesus—Pt.2

(12-21-25)

December 25th is only four days away—the *day* we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

But is December 25th *really* the day that Jesus was born?

Last week we launched a 2-part study to answer that very question.

Last time we said that the Bible never tells us directly when Jesus was born—even though the birth of Jesus is the most *talked about, prophesied about, anticipated and important* birth in human history.

As we said last time, the Bible records *that* He was born, *where* He was born, and the time in human history He was born into—but not the *day* He was born.

“Is it important that we know the very day Jesus was born—is it essential for my salvation?”

No, not at all—but if the Holy Spirit didn’t want us to discover the *day* of Jesus’ birth—He wouldn’t have put clues in the NT for us to find that would lead us to the discovery Jesus’ birthday.

Last week we said that even though we don’t know the day Jesus *was* born—we can be fairly certain about the day Jesus *wasn’t* born—and that day is December 25th.

How do we know that?

We know it because in the account of Jesus' birth in Luke's gospel we are told that—on the night Jesus was born, *“shepherds were living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night.”* (Luke 2:8)

Shepherds in Israel never watch over their flocks by night, while living outside in the open fields in the *winter*.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself—*“So, if Jesus wasn’t born on December 25th, then when was He born?”*

Well, we don’t really know for sure but by studying some of the *‘clues’* given to us in the New Testament—we can put forth an educated guess.

The first *clue* has to do with John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Christ.

John also had a miraculous birth—not as miraculous as Jesus’ birth of course (John wasn’t virgin born)—but incredible none the less.

John’s dad, Zacharias, was a priest who (along with his wife Elizabeth) was well advanced in years (they were probably in their 80’s).

One day Zacharias was in the Temple offering incense to God when an angel of the LORD appeared to him and said—

“Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.” (Luke 1:13)

But a few verses before that, in Luke 1:5, the Holy Spirit seems to give us another clue as to the date Jesus was born when He tells us that Zacharias was of the *division of Abijah*.

In those days the priests were divided up into divisions or groups.

You see there were too many priests for all of them to serve at the same time, so they were divided into 24 divisions—and each division served in the Temple for two consecutive weeks each year.

The Abijah division was the division that Zacharias belonged to.

Scholars who have studied this tell us that this particular division served from *June 30th* through *July 13th* each year.

That means it was sometime between June 30th and July 13th when Zacharias was serving in the Temple that the angel came and announced that Elizabeth was going to become pregnant and would have a son whom they were to name *John*.

I believe that as soon as Zacharias finished his service in the Temple he returned home, told Elizabeth the incredible news, had relations with her—and she got pregnant immediately!

That means that John would have been born 9 months later which would put his birth sometime in April.

The Feast of the Passover often takes place in the month of April.

As we pointed out last week, during the Passover meal every orthodox Jewish family keeps an empty seat at the table for the prophet Elijah—why?

Because of the prophecy given thru the prophet Malachi in Malachi 4:5-6—(Comment).

At one point during the meal the youngest child would run to the front door and fling it open hoping to see Elijah standing there—why? Because if Elijah is standing there, it would indicate that Messiah was not far behind!

Notice what the angel said to Zacharias about the child that would soon be born to him and Elizabeth—

Luke 1:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, *'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,'* and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

John the Baptist symbolically represented Elijah—listen to what Jesus said about John:

Matthew 11:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive *it*, he [John the Baptist] is Elijah who is to come. [Comment]

It could very well be that John (being born in April) was born on the Feast of Passover when people were talking about Elijah, were looking for Elijah—and even had a place at the table reserved for Elijah!

Now if John was born on the Passover (it would be just like the Lord to do something like that) then that would give us a *big* clue as to when Jesus was born—you say, “*How so!?*”

In Luke chapter 1 the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she was going to conceive without having physical relations with a man (she was a virgin), and that the child she would give birth to was going to be the Son of God.

But then Gabriel went on to give her a further piece of information that Mary didn’t need to know, something that really had nothing to do with her—but something that becomes another clue to help us solve our quest to discover the day Jesus was born—

Luke 1:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

This means that John would have been born—6 months before Jesus.

If John was born sometime in April, possibly on the Feast of Passover, and Jesus was born 6 months later—it would put the birth of Jesus sometime in the month of September (the Jewish month of Tishrei).

Okay, but are there any more clues that can help us pinpoint the actual day in September when Jesus was born?

Here I believe that we are given another clue to help us solve this mystery—this time it is given to us by John the apostle—

John 1:1-3, 14 (NKJV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made...¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Greek word for ‘dwelt’ in v.14 literally means ‘tabernacled’—“**And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us ...**” (speaking of Jesus’ incarnation or birth).

In September there are 3 feasts that the Jews celebrate—Trumpets, Yom Kippur and Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) occurs on the 15th day of the seventh month (the month of Tishrei on the Jewish calendar) and continues for seven consecutive days (Leviticus 23:33-43).

The Feast of Tabernacles was and still is today, both an agricultural and a memorial feast.

It's an agricultural holiday because it takes place at the time of the great fall harvest when God had blessed His people with an abundance of crops (which is why it's also called the *Feast of Ingathering*), a harvest festival and time of thanksgiving for all that God had provided.

Even to this day the Feast of Tabernacles is the most joyous of all the Jewish holidays.

So, the Feast of Tabernacles was an *agricultural* feast—but it was also a historical feast.

You see it commemorated Israel's forty-year wilderness wandering where they lived in tents (temporary housing) and how God sustained them all those years providing bread from heaven and water from the rock.

God wanted them to remember the hardship their ancestors had endured during their forty years in the wilderness so that they (current descendants) could enjoy the blessings of the Land of Promise with all of its abundance.

And so, God commanded His people (Lev. 23:42-43) to make these “*booths*” or tabernacles out of palm branches (or with the branches of some other leafy trees) and for seven days they were to move out of the comfort of their homes into these makeshift huts.

God said that they were to leave enough space in between the branches of the roof so they could see the stars at night and in the walls so that the breeze could pass through—as a way of remembering what their ancestors endured for forty years during their wilderness wanderings.

But also, as a way of remembering what God had just provided in the way of a great harvest—the Jewish people would take some of the newly harvested crops that God had provided: the grapes, the barley, the wheat, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates—and bring them into this temporary dwelling place (tabernacle) and hang them all around to remind them to be thankful to God for being so good to them!

So, this feast was kind of like our Memorial Day and Thanksgiving Day all rolled up into one great feast!

During this time, they would sit around the campfire each night, reminiscing how that 1500 years earlier, “*God was with us in the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night all those years our ancestors were in the wilderness.*” And, how “*He fed us with bread from heaven (manna) and gave us water from the rock to drink.*”

And so, I believe that when John told us that Jesus ‘*tabernacled*’ among us (John 1:14), he was telling us that Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles.

“*But how did John know that’s when Jesus was born—who told him that?*”

Remember that as Jesus hung on the cross, He wanted to make sure His mother Mary would be taken care of—we read:

John 19:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*.

From that day on Mary moved in with John who took care of her for the rest of her life.

Mary was a typical Jewish mother who loved to talk about her children (especially her sons)—and I think she shared with John all sorts of stories about Jesus growing up and probably the story of His birth including what day He was born on.

Think of the significance of Jesus being born during the Feast of Tabernacles—the time each year when the Jewish people were remembering, how that 1500 years earlier, God had been with them (remember that Jesus is called “*Immanuel*” in Matthew 1:22-23—“*God with us*”).

It was a time when the Jewish people were remembering how God fed them with bread from heaven in the wilderness—Jesus called Himself the ‘*Bread of Life*’ (John 6); and water from the rock—Jesus also called Himself ‘*Living Water*’ (John 4)

During the Feast of Tabernacles 4 huge menorahs were placed in the courtyard of the Temple—each being several stories high.

Everyday a young priest would climb a ladder and pour buckets of olive oil into the large basin or bowl at the top of each menorah branch—seven in all.

Each basin contained a giant wick made from garments that the priests had worn—but which had worn out during their course of service for the Lord.

The light from these menorahs burned so brightly that Josephus, the Jewish historian, records for us that the light could be seen from a hundred miles away!

How significant that during the Feast of Tabernacles when each night the darkness was pierced with the incredible light from these giant menorahs (the menorah spoke of Jesus) that Jesus, the Light of the world, would have been born—the One Who said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

John the apostle in speaking of the birth of Christ calls Jesus the “True Light” who, coming into the world, gives light to every person—

John 1:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (“could not extinguish it”)

The darkness in our culture has tried for years to extinguish the light of Christ—but they never have nor ever will!

Let me bring our quest to find the mystery day of Jesus’ birth to a conclusion.

As I said, the Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three major Jewish feasts of the year—the others being Passover and Pentecost.

These three major feasts attracted Jews from all over the known world to Jerusalem—causing the city to swell to between 2 and 3 million people.

Jerusalem couldn't accommodate all of these pilgrims, so many would stay in the surrounding towns and villages—until every available room in house and inn was filled to capacity.

Now look, I know it was the decree of Caesar Augustus that forced Joseph (and Mary) to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem late in her pregnancy (Luke 2:1-4).

But Bethlehem wasn't a big town that so many came there to be registered so that there was no room for them anywhere in town—something else was going on.

I believe that it was also the Feast of Tabernacles that was going on as well as the census which together brought all these people (pilgrims) into Jerusalem and its surrounding towns and villages.

Could this be the reason why when Joseph and Mary finally arrived in Bethlehem (a suburb of Jerusalem)—there was no room for them in the inn, and she had to give birth to the Son of God in the stable out back?

Again, when John the apostle said that “*the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us*”—I believe he was revealing to us that Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles.

You say, “*Yes, but that was a week-long feast—can we know the day during that week that Jesus was actually born on?*”

Well, it's true, as we have already said, the Feast of Tabernacles was a 7-day feast—a feast that climaxes on the seventh day, the last day, also known as the ‘great day’ of the feast:

John 7:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ On the last day, that great *day of the feast*, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink...

As we said, the Feast of Tabernacles was first of all an agricultural feast that celebrated the great fall harvest when God had blessed His people with an abundance of crops.

But it was also an historical feast commemorating Israel’s forty-year wilderness wandering where they lived in tents (temporary housing) and how God sustained them all those years providing *bread* from heaven and *water* from the rock—especially water.

And I say that because a few centuries before the time of Christ, a ceremony was added each day to the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles called—the Water-Liberation Ceremony.

During Jesus’ lifetime, the feast started each morning at the time of the morning sacrifice where the High Priest took a golden pitcher and led a procession of priests down to the Pool of Siloam.

The pitcher was then filled with water and was carried in procession back to the temple mount.

As the procession came to the Watergate, three trumpet blasts were made to mark the joy of the occasion and the people recited Isaiah 12:3, *“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”*

At the temple, while onlookers watched, the priests would march once around the altar of sacrifice with the water pitcher while the temple choir sang the Hallel Psalms (113–118) at which time the water was then poured out on the altar as an offering (a water-liberation) to God.

This was done each day for the first six days of the feast reminding the people how God had provided water in the wilderness to satisfy their ancestor’s thirst.

This seventh day was known as “*The Great Hosanna*” and climaxed the feast.

The previous *six* days the High Priest had marched around the altar once each day before pouring upon it the water from the Pool of Siloam—but on the seventh day, the *great day* of the feast, he marched around the altar *seven* times before pouring out the water on the altar.

I believe at the very moment that the High Priest was pouring the water on the altar, at the very moment the feast reached its climax, Jesus stood on a rock or table and cried out saying, “**If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink...**” (v.37)

In John 4, Jesus likened Himself to ‘*living water*’—or in other words, by “*drinking Him*” (believing in Him) a person would experience a new birth—that moment would become their spiritual birthday!

And so, I believe that was the day that Jesus was born on the earth—on the last day, the great Hosanna Day of the Feast of Tabernacles

“Yes, pastor, but what about this whole December 25th thing? You’ve gotten me depressed since I celebrate the birthday of Jesus on December 25th and you’ve removed from it any and all meaning! I mean if it’s not the day that Jesus was really born, and it actually has pagan roots—why bother with it?”

Well, let me show you one more thing about this.

If Jesus was actually born in late September during the Feast of Tabernacles, if you go back 280 days (the gestation period of a fetus from conception to birth)—it would mean that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary on or close to December 25th!

So, all of a sudden Christmas day, which we celebrate on December 25th—has a whole new, richer, deeper and fuller meaning to us!!

Because during the time of year when it is darkest, coldest, and everything is dead—that was the time when God said, “*I’m going to move, I’m going to act, I’m going to bring hope and light to a*

world trapped in hopelessness, darkness and despair. In that day I will conceive My Son in the womb of the virgin Mary—and He will be the Light and Hope of the world!"

And although the Light in Mary's womb wouldn't be born for another 9 months, and no one could see any evidence that the Savior had come to earth—God was at work!

And the same is true in your life this morning.

When things look their blackest and darkest; when your life seems cold and dead and hopeless—remember Christmas.

Remember how God was at work during mankind's darkest hour and the Light, the answer to all of man's problems, had been conceived and was about to be revealed—and the same could very well be true for your life.

God hears your prayers, He knows what you're going thru and has promised never to turn a deaf ear to the cries of those who *know* Him, *love* Him and are *desperate* before Him.

But it all begins by receiving the Light of the world, Jesus Christ into your heart!

Merry Christmas!