

When was Jesus born? Did God leave us clueless to the timing of one of the greatest events in world history—the coming of the Light of the World? Can we determine from the pages of our Bible the season and approximate date that Jesus was born?

The apostle Paul wrote that all scripture is given by God, and that it all has a purpose<sup>1</sup>. God didn't waste words; everything He had written is for our benefit. But some of the things He wants us to see are not clearly spelled out—we have to do some searching, for “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.”<sup>2</sup>

So let's begin our search for the day when Jesus was born . . .

But where do we start? Let's start with something God made very obvious, something we've probably passed over a number of times in our reading of the story of Jesus' birth, the fact that John the Baptist was born six months before Jesus. Luke's narrative (Luke 1) tells us that when the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary about the fact that she was going to be the mother of Israel's Messiah, her cousin Elizabeth was already six months pregnant with her son John<sup>3</sup>. Notice that the angel told Mary that Elizabeth had also conceived, implying that Mary was already with child<sup>4</sup>.

So now, all we have to do is determine when John was born. Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't just come out and tell us when he was born, but with a little searching, we can come up with a good

approximation to when he was conceived, and then, of course, we'll know when he was born.

Let's go back to Luke's narrative. In chapter 1, vs. 5, he introduces Zacharias, John's father. In this and the next few verses, Luke gives us some very important details:

- Zacharias was a priest in the course of Abijah (very important fact) (vs. 5)
- Zacharias was executing his responsibilities as priest according to the order of his course. (vs. 8)
- Zacharias was informed, while performing his duties, that he was going to have a son (vs. 13–22)
- Zacharias remained in Jerusalem until the days of his service were complete, then he went home to his wife (vs. 23)

What does the 'course of Abijah' have to do with John's birth? Let's search and see, but first, let's learn a little bit about the Biblical calendar.

The Biblical calendar begins with the month called Nisan. When David was King of Israel, there were a large number of priests—too many to serve on a daily basis. So David, by God's direction, divided the priests into 24 “courses”, with each course serving for one week at a time and all of them serving during the Biblical festivals. The course of Abijah was the eighth course.<sup>6</sup>

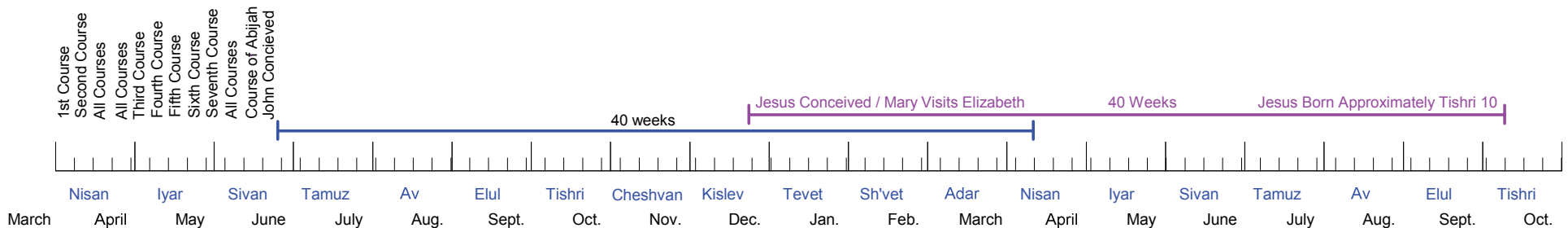
The first course of priests began their service on the first Sabbath day (Saturday) of Nisan.<sup>7</sup> Each course served for one week at a time and all of them served during the Biblical festivals. Going to Leviticus 23 we find that there

are festivals, Passover and the Feast of Weeks, that take place in the first and third month of each year. Therefore, the course of Abijah's time of service was around the middle of the month of Sivan, the first part of June on our Gregorian calendar. Check the timeline provided below which makes this easier to understand.

Zacharias' service ended a week later and he began the two to three day walk home. Assuming he didn't waste any time in trying to bring the angel's prophecy to fruition, John was probably conceived the latter part of Sivan.

A normal pregnancy is about 40 weeks. If you take a Jewish calendar (which closely follows the Biblical calendar) and count 40 weeks, you come to the middle of the second week of the first month (Nisan)<sup>8</sup>. So now we see that John was born very close to the tenth of Nisan (the day the lambs were chosen for Passover).

Now that we have a close date for John's birth, all we have to do to determine when Jesus was born is to go back to our first fact (John is six months older than Jesus) and go on down the calendar six months. Again, take a Jewish calendar and count six months from John's birth and you come to the middle of the second week of the month of Tishri<sup>9</sup>. Comparing this date to our present Gregorian calendar, we find that Jesus was born during the fall, from about the third week of September to the second week of October.



<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16; <sup>2</sup> Proverbs 25:2; <sup>3</sup> Luke 1:36; <sup>4</sup> Most Bible versions translate the Greek word “kai” as “also”, indicating that Mary was pregnant at this time.; <sup>5</sup> The naming of the months began after the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish people. Before that time, the months were simply

numbered. God told Moses what the first month would be in Exodus 12:1–2.; <sup>6</sup> 1 Chronicles 24:10; <sup>7</sup> 2 Chron. 23:8; <sup>8</sup> Coincidentally, the Jewish people expect Elijah the Prophet to come on the first night of Passover. In Matthew 17:11–13, Jesus likens John the Baptist to Elijah.; <sup>9</sup> The first three weeks of Tishri contain four very

important holy days that are very significant in Biblical eschatology. In the second week (the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Tishri) is the Biblical festival of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 23:27). According to Jewish eschatology, the Messiah will step His feet on the Mount of Olives on that day.

## It All Fits Perfectly!

In the Old Testament book of Leviticus, chapter 23, God instructs Israel in regards to His festivals. Contrary to common Christian belief, these festivals are not 'Jewish'<sup>1</sup> but are given by God to all His people for a specific purpose—to teach about His plan of salvation through Jesus our Messiah.

Most of us see the connection between Jesus, the Lamb of God, and the Passover. We also know that the Apostles were gathered in the Temple on the Day of Pentecost<sup>2</sup> when they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, but do most Christians see the significance of the fall festivals—The Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Eighth Day Festival—all of which occur in the month of Tishri—the month in which our Savior was born? Let's look at the connections:

The first day of Tishri is the Feast of Trumpets<sup>3</sup>, or literally, the Day of Shouting<sup>4</sup>. It is customary to announce this day with the blowing of a ram's horn—a Shofar. Paul spoke of this day in regards to the return of The Messiah and the resurrection of the dead<sup>5</sup>. In Jewish understanding, this day is also considered the day when The Bridegroom comes to fetch His bride.

Tishri 10 is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement<sup>6</sup>. The Jubilee year always begins on this day, and according to tradition, The Messiah will return to the earth on Yom Kippur to bind Satan in preparation for the 1000 year Messianic kingdom—a great time of peace on earth.

Then five days later, Tishri 15, begins the Feast of Tabernacles<sup>7</sup>—referred to in many Jewish writings as the "Season of Our Joy". For 1000 years Jesus the Messiah will "tabernacle" with His people, restoring all things back to the way God intended.

As we read the narrative surrounding the birth of Jesus<sup>8</sup>, we see connections to these festival themes. With the mention of peace, joy, and good will, could it be that the angels were showing us that Jesus is the fulfillment of these festivals? If Jesus is the fulfillment of the spring festivals, it would stand to reason that He would also be the fulfillment of the fall festivals as well. It all fits perfectly!

*Ami Yisrael*

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# THE BIRTHDATE OF JESUS IN SCRIPTURE ?



<sup>1</sup> God calls the festivals "feasts of the Lord" (Lev. 23:1); <sup>2</sup> Acts 2:1; <sup>3</sup> Lev. 23:24; <sup>4</sup> the phrase "blowing of trumpets" (NKJ version) comes from the one Hebrew word "teruah" which literally means "a shout"; <sup>5</sup> 1 Thes. 4:16; <sup>6</sup> Lev. 23:27; <sup>7</sup> Lev. 23:34; <sup>8</sup> Luke 2:10-14