

## The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 5

### 4 BC

In this lesson I will diverge from the verse-by-verse study of the scripture to establish the correct chronology of the beginning of the Life of Christ. I have heard it said by some Christian theologians that one cannot reconcile the events of history with the events recorded in the Gospels. They are wrong!! Over fifty years ago when I was a young believer I recognized that the chronologies presented by various commentaries, books, and theologians varied considerably as to the historical dates of Christ's birth and death. I was a little dismayed by this widespread confusion. However, even as a young Christian, I was wise enough to understand that there were more important things in Scripture for me to understand if I was to live an effective and vital Christian life. I just put the issue of the Chronology of Christ in the back of my mind. However, about twenty years ago, I chanced to stumble onto a personal understanding of some of the things that many of the "experts" didn't seem to grasp. A clear outline of the accurate chronology of Christ's life began to take shape. I discussed some of those things in our first lesson in this series. One of the main elements of that understanding was the history and operation of the Jewish Calendar. Also included was a comprehension of the rich detail about the times of Christ provided to us by the record of the ancient Jewish historian Josephus. I have written a long paper on this subject that encompasses the chronology of whole life of Christ. However, in this lesson, I will focus only on the dates concerning the first months of Jesus' life. The first date was the date of His birth.

### *Birthday of Jesus Christ – Gregorian Calendar - 29 January, Jewish Calendar - 3 Adar*

### *Birth Year of Jesus Christ – 4 BC*

There is a simple method of calculating the year of the birth of Christ. It uses five pieces of information.

1. Jesus was born before Herod the Great died. This is according to **Matthew 2:1** "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem."
2. There is no doubt from ancient records that Herod the Great died in 4 BC. Josephus records a lunar eclipse that occurred shortly before Herod's death that astronomers tell us occurred on the early morning of March 13<sup>th</sup>, 4 BC.
3. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist during the governorship of Pontius Pilate. Luke 3:1-2 "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar --when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod (*Antipas*) tetrarch of Galilee, ---- the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert." Subsequent to that passage is the description of Jesus' baptism.
4. We know from history that Tiberius was co-regent with his stepfather Augustus for two years and then became sole ruler in 14 AD. That made the fourteenth anniversary of his reign fall in 26 AD. The 365 days immediately following was the fifteenth year of his reign, and at least the first part of it fell in 26 AD. We also know from Josephus that Pontius Pilate succeeded his predecessor Gratus, who served for 11 years after Tiberius



2. If Christ was born two years before the death of Herod that would mean that “the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar--when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea,” which is ascertainable from history as being no earlier than 26 AD.<sup>2</sup> A birth of Christ in 6 BC would have put the time when “the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert” (Luke 3:1) 32 years after the birth of Christ (26+6), yet we know that Christ was not more than 30 years old at that time because Luke 3:23 tells us that Jesus was “about thirty years” old at that time.

Therefore, it is historically impossible for the word of God to be accurate and have Christ born in 6 BC, two years before the death of Herod the Great. Furthermore based on the date of the “Word of God” coming to John the Baptist and the age of Christ, the date is firmly established between late 5 BC and early 4 BC.

### *The Day of Jesus’ Birth*

The critical point that led to my conclusions as to the **exact day** of Christ’s birth came a number of years ago when I was reading Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews.<sup>3</sup> By that point I had recognized that the Jewish Josephus had accepted that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. It was after he had become a Christian that he wrote Antiquities of the Jews (although he was not a Christian when he wrote his earlier work, Wars of the Jews).<sup>4</sup> I read the following passage in Josephus which described the time just before Herod’s death in 4 BC. (The most important passages I have copied in bold print.)

**Antiquities of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, Book 17, Chapter 6, Paragraph 2-4.** “There was one Judas, the son of Saripheus, and Matthias, the son of Margalothus, two of the most eloquent men among the Jews, and the most celebrated interpreters of the Jewish laws, and men well beloved by the people, because of their education of their youth; for all those that were studious of virtue frequented their lectures every day. **These men, when they found that the king’s distemper was incurable, excited the young men that they would pull down all those works which the king had erected contrary to the law of their fathers,** and thereby obtain the rewards which the law will confer on them for such actions of piety; for that it was truly on account of Herod’s rashness in making such things as the law had forbidden, that his other misfortunes, and this distemper also, which was so unusual among mankind, and with which he was now afflicted, came upon him; for Herod had caused such things to be made which were contrary to the law, of which he was accused by Judas and Matthias; **for the king had erected**

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<sup>2</sup> Depending on whether you take the reign of Tiberius as starting from the death of Augustus, or the date of Tiberius’ co-regency it could be argued as 26 or 28 AD. However, the usual practice of the time was to date from the year of co-regency.

<sup>3</sup> I strongly recommend reading Josephus’ Antiquities. However, there are translations around of an incomplete manuscript, which I believe is fraudulent, which leave out large important sections of the book. I strongly recommend the translation given by William Whiston (1667 – 1752).

<sup>4</sup> See Lesson 1 of this series.

over the great gate of the temple a large golden eagle, of great value, and had dedicated it to the temple. Now the law forbids those that propose to live according to it, to erect images or representations of any living creature. So these wise men persuaded [their scholars] to pull down the golden eagle; alleging, that although they should incur any danger, which might bring them to their deaths, the virtue of the action now proposed to them would appear much more advantageous to them than the pleasures of life; since they would die for the preservation and observation of the law of their fathers; since they would also acquire an everlasting fame and commendation; since they would be both commended by the present generation, and leave an example of life that would never be forgotten to posterity; since that common calamity of dying cannot be avoided by our living so as to escape any such dangers; that therefore it is a right thing for those who are in love with a virtuous conduct, to wait for that fatal hour by such behavior as may carry them out of the world with praise and honor; and that this will alleviate death to a great degree, thus to come at it by the performance of brave actions, which bring us into danger of it; and at the same time to leave that reputation behind them to their children, and to all their relations, whether they be men or women, which will be of great advantage to them afterward.”

“And with such discourses as this did these men excite the young men to this action; and a report being come to them that the king was dead, this was an addition to the wise men's persuasions; so, **in the very middle of the day, they got upon the place, they pulled down the eagle, and cut it into pieces with axes, while a great number of the people were in the temple.** And now the king's captain, upon hearing what the undertaking was, and supposing it was a thing of a higher nature than it proved to be, came up thither, having a great band of soldiers with him, such as was sufficient to put a stop to the multitude of those who pulled down what was dedicated to God; so he fell upon them unexpectedly, and as they were upon this bold attempt, in a foolish presumption rather than a cautious circumspection, as is usual with the multitude, and while they were in disorder, and incautious of what was for their advantage; so he caught no fewer than forty of the young men, who had the courage to stay behind when the rest ran away, together with the authors of this bold attempt, Judas and Matthias, who thought it an ignominious thing to retire upon his approach, and led them to the king. And when they were come to the king, and he asked them if they had been so bold as to pull down what he had dedicated to God, “Yes, (said they,) what was contrived we contrived, and what hath been performed we performed it, and that with such a virtuous courage as becomes men; for we have given our assistance to those things which were dedicated to the majesty of God, and we have provided for what we have learned by hearing the law; and it ought not to be wondered at, if we esteem those laws which Moses had suggested to him, and were taught him by God, and which he wrote and left behind him, more worthy of observation than thy commands. Accordingly we will undergo death, and all sorts of punishments which thou canst inflict upon us, with pleasure, since we are conscious to ourselves that we shall die, not for any unrighteous actions, but for our love to religion.” And thus they all said, and their courage was still equal to their profession, and equal to that with which they readily set about this undertaking. And when the king had ordered them to be bound, he sent them to Jericho, and called together the principal men among the Jews; and when they were come, he made them assemble in the theater, and because he could not himself stand, he lay upon a couch, and enumerated the many labors that he had long endured on their account, and his building of the

temple, and what a vast charge that was to him; while the Hasmonaeans, during the hundred and twenty-five years of their government, had not been able to perform any so great a work for the honor of God as that was; that he had also adorned it with very valuable donations, on which account he hoped that he had left himself a memorial, and procured himself a reputation after his death. He then cried out, that these men had not abstained from affronting him, even in his lifetime, but that in the very day time, and in the sight of the multitude, they had abused him to that degree, as to fall upon what he had dedicated, and in that way of abuse had pulled it down to the ground. They pretended, indeed, that they did it to affront him; but if any one consider the thing truly, they will find that they were guilty of sacrilege against God therein.”

“But the people, on account of Herod's barbarous temper, and for fear he should be so cruel and to inflict punishment on them, said what was done was done without their approbation, and that it seemed to them that the actors might well be punished for what they had done. But as for Herod, he dealt more mildly with others [of the assembly] but he deprived Matthias of the high priesthood, as in part an occasion of this action, and made Joazar, who was Matthias's wife's brother, high priest in his stead. **Now it happened, that during the time of the high priesthood of this Matthias, there was another person made high priest for a single day, that very day which the Jews observed as a fast. The occasion was this: This Matthias the high priest, on the night before that day when the fast was to be celebrated, seemed, in a dream, to have conversation with his wife; and because he could not officiate himself on that account,<sup>5</sup> Joseph, the son of Ellemus, his kinsman, assisted him in that sacred office.** But Herod deprived this Matthias of the high priesthood, and **burnt the other Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon.**”<sup>6</sup>

Let me summarize for you the important events described here: Some years before, Herod had put a golden eagle over the gateway of the Temple in contravention to the Law of Moses. He had done that as a tribute to his patrons, the Romans, since the eagle was the symbol of the Roman god, Jupiter Capitolinus, the patron god of Rome. Seeing that Herod was near to death, a band of young Jewish men determined to tear it down. At a time when the Temple was crowded with people they did just that. About the same time a High Priest was appointed for one day, during a fast. Within a day or two, the all the young men who had been captured were burned alive, and the same night there was a full eclipse of the moon.

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<sup>5</sup> See Leviticus 22:4b “He (a priest) will also be unclean if he -- has an emission of semen.”

<sup>6</sup> Footnote of William Whiston's translation of 1737 “This eclipse of the moon (which is the only eclipse of either of the luminaries mentioned by our Josephus in any of his writings) is of the greatest consequence for the determination of the time for the death of Herod and Antipater, and for the birth and entire chronology of Jesus Christ. It happened March 13th, in the year of the Julian period 4710, and the 4th year before the Christian era. See its calculation by the rules of astronomy, at the end of the *Astronomical Lectures*, edit. Lat. p. 451, 452.”

*My comment - the date of this eclipse is also confirmed by modern calculations.*

These events occurred within the six months during which Jesus must have been born according to my previous calculation of the year of His birth. When I first realized this I couldn't help but ask myself the following questions:

Were **these extraordinary events** in Jerusalem related to the other **Great Event** which was to take place in nearby Bethlehem?

Was the substitution, for one day, of a faithful and righteous High Priest who was not one of Herod's political creatures, arranged by God for some purpose related to Jesus' birth?

Was the tearing down of the Golden Eagle over the Temple similarly related?

Would the Father have allowed his Son to be dedicated in a Temple presided over by an unbeliever?

Would the Father have allowed His Son to be dedicated in a Temple which was decorated with the image of the patron god of the Romans?

These were provocative questions that deserved an attempt at an answer.

Sometime later, I was reading something that remarked that most of the main Jewish feasts were on the full moon, and I remembered that all eclipses of the moon also only occurred on a full moon. Then I remembered the eclipse in the Josephus passage we just read. Over a course of about six months stumbling about, I found that modern astronomical charts and the Jewish calendar confirmed that the date of the eclipse of the moon was on the night after the Feast of Esther (Purim). By reading the Josephus' text, I could infer that the date the eagle was torn down was two days before the eclipse. I could infer this because it seems to have taken about two days to round up the culprits, take them to Jericho (to which Herod had retired for the winter), interrogate them, try them, and execute them. That meant that the tearing down of the golden eagle thus would have occurred during **the Fast** of Esther which preceded the two-day Feast of Purim by one day. We can infer why the conspirators might have chosen that day to tear the eagle down. The Fast and the Feast of Esther memorialized the ancient day (recorded in the Book of Esther) when Mordecai and Esther delivered the Jews from their enemies. What better day for them to celebrate the soon expected deliverance from Herod and the hated influence of Rome by tearing down the Eagle.

It then occurred to me that the fast Josephus referred to in the account of the replacement High Priest must also have been the Fast of Esther. The only other formal Jewish fast during the High Priesthood of Matthias was at the very beginning of Mattheas' High Priesthood. If it had occurred during that early time Josephus probably would have mentioned it in Chapter 4 when Matthias was appointed instead of waiting till Chapter 6 when he described the end of Matthias' High Priesthood. My estimate for the length of the priesthood of Matthias is based on the following facts. According to Josephus' account it appears that Matthias was appointed High Priest no more than a month before Herod's son Antipater got back from Rome. Antipater was tried immediately and sentenced to die. At that time Herod sent messengers to Augustus, the Emperor in Rome, to get permission to carry out this sentence. These messengers would have had no other duty than to get to Rome and back as soon as possible. They returned at least a week after Purim (the Feast of Esther) in 4 BC, but no later than 14 days before Passover in 4

BC. According to Gibbon, you could sail from east from Rome to Alexandria in favorable winds in nine to ten days.<sup>7</sup> The winds generally were favorable in one direction depending on the time of the year. However, Gibbon records that if one went by Roman road on Imperial business you could make 100 miles a day easily.<sup>8</sup> If the messengers went by land except for crossing the straights at the mouth of the Adriatic, the distance could not have been more than 3000 miles. Thus both legs could have been done in 30 days. If we allow 20 extra days for contingencies the messengers could have left as late as 43 days before Purim. Matthias was probably appointed High Priest not later than a month before the date of their departure, and maybe as much as two months before that then. The messengers arrived no more than four weeks before Passover that year and no less than two, since we know that there was at least one day from their arrival to the death of Antipater and at least five days after that to the death of Herod.<sup>9</sup> After that there was at least seven days of mourning from the death of Herod to Passover.<sup>10</sup> We thus can conclude that the High Priesthood of Matthias covered no more than two of the established Fasts of the Jews, the Fast of Esther and the Fast of 10<sup>th</sup> Tevet about two months before. It seems most likely, given the context, that the Fast of Esther was the Fast when there was the appointment of the substitute High Priest for one day.

So, we can we accept that the date of the substitute High Priest was the Fast of Esther, and the date of the Golden eagle being torn down was the same day. What does that tell us? **Nothing.** That is, **unless we make an assumption that the events were related to the advent of Jesus Christ.** On what day would those events have been the most significant? It is clear to me that

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<sup>7</sup> *History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, by Edward Gibbon, Esq. Vol. 1 “From this port (Ostia), which was only sixteen miles from the capital, a favorable breeze frequently carried vessels in seven days to the columns of Hercules (Strait of Gibraltar), and in nine or ten, to Alexandria in Egypt.”

<sup>8</sup> *History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, by Edward Gibbon, Esq. Vol. 1 “Such was the solid construction of the Roman highways, whose firmness has not entirely yielded to the effort of fifteen centuries. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse; out their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions; nor was any country considered as completely subdued, till it had been rendered, in all its parts, pervious to the arms and authority of the conqueror. The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence, and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the emperors to establish, throughout their extensive dominions, the regular institution of posts. Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays, it was easy to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads.

<sup>9</sup> ***Wars of the Jews*, by Flavius Josephus, Book 1, Chapter 33, Verse 8.** “So Herod, having survived the slaughter of his son five days, died,

<sup>10</sup> ***Wars of the Jews*, by Flavius Josephus, Book 2, Chapter 1, Verse 2** “Now the necessity which Archelaus (Herod’s successor) was under of taking a journey to Rome was the occasion of new disturbances; for when he had mourned for his father seven days, ---”

***Wars of the Jews*, by Flavius Josephus, Book 2, Chapter 1, Verse 2.** “--- And indeed, at the feast of unleavened bread, which was now at hand, and is by the Jews called the Passover,”

day would have been the day the infant Jesus Christ Himself would have come through the gate which **had only that morning had still been decorated** with the now destroyed golden eagle. He came in to be dedicated under the auspices of a High Priest chosen by God. If we know that day we not only know the day of his dedication, but also the day of his birth. So what difference does that make? If the days are not significant it adds nothing to the story of the birth of Christ. The wonderful thing is that the dates are very significant. I didn't manipulate the facts to make the dates come out on significant days, and yet they did. That is a major reason why I am sure the dates are right.

The actual day of the birth of Jesus Christ is a subject of much speculation. In ancient times (about the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD) the Western Church picked December 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>11</sup> There is no record of whether the date was picked out of oral tradition, or religious expediency. I believe, they were accurate in that they said it happened in the winter. Years ago I was erroneously taught that the shepherds would not have been in the hills of Judea in the dead of winter (Luke 2:8). However, I have learned that was an error. It reveals an ignorance of agricultural and weather conditions in Judea. In Judea it only rains in the winter and very early spring. The winter rains create winter grass in the hills of Judea. The soil is so porous that, immediately after the rainy season stops, the grass dies. Because of this, flocks are moved into the hills in the winter to use the limited time they can graze there. Winters are relatively mild in Judea and I have since personally witnessed flocks grazing in the hills of Judea in the dead of winter. Besides that, as we saw in the last lesson, the herds kept outside of Bethlehem for the offerings had to have been so numerous that they would have had to be fed out of mangers scattered throughout the fields whatever the time of year. In other words, the amount of natural forage isn't relevant to the argument of when the shepherds were in the fields.

I believe the birth of Jesus occurred during the night of January 29, 4 BC (Gregorian Calendar). **In the Jewish Calendar that would have been 3 Adar.** Why is that the date? Because it would have put Joseph, Mary and Jesus in Jerusalem, at the Temple for Mary's purification and Jesus' dedication at the Fast of Esther, just one day before the Feast of Purim, which is based on the Josephus speculation about the Golden Eagle and one-day High Priest explained in the previous pages of this lesson. The Feast of Esther (Purim) as a date supports a pattern of Feast Days being prophetic of actual events. I arrived at that date using informed speculation, but when I counted back the days to discover the day of His birth, I was convinced that this was something more than just speculation. Why? That is because the date I was led to was also the date on which Zerubbabel and Joshua, at God's command completed the Second Temple, the third day of the month Adar.

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<sup>11</sup> *The Orthodox Church currently celebrates January 6<sup>th</sup> as Christmas. They used to celebrate December 25<sup>th</sup>, but when the Catholic Pope Gregory instituted the new, more accurate Gregorian Calendar for the old Julian Calendar it involved a shift of twelve days. When they finally accepted the logic of the improvement, they couldn't bear to shift Christmas so they left it where it had been the previous year, which by the new calendar was January 6<sup>th</sup>.*

Ezra 6:14-15 “So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. The temple was completed on the **third day of the month Adar**, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.”

This was an occasion very evocative of the birth of Jesus! For several decades, the Lord had made me very aware that one of the central messages of Scripture is that the Temple that God promised David would be built by his descendant was in fact to be the mission of the incarnated Jesus Christ. It included His righteous life, His atoning death, and His resurrection. This was confirmed by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John:

John 2:19-22 “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”

Another thing the LORD had made me aware of was the dual lineage of Jesus Christ through his human parent, Mary. The dual lineage was both from the line of the King (David), through Mary’s father, and from the line of the High Priest (Aaron) through Mary’s mother. The two men, Zerubbabel and Joshua, who built the temple dedicated on the third day of Adar were both ancestors of Jesus Christ as prophesied below:

Haggai 2:21-23 “Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. “‘On that day,’ declares the LORD Almighty, ‘**I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,**’ declares the LORD, ‘**and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,**’ declares the LORD Almighty.”

Zechariah 6:11-13 “Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of **the high priest, Joshua** son of Jehozadak. Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘**Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.**”

The third day of Adar, when the Temple of Zerubbabel and Joshua was completed in about 517 BC, thus perfectly foreshadowed the day that the true Temple, prophesied to be built by the son of David, was completed.<sup>12</sup> On that day Christ began his work as the true High Priest and King

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<sup>12</sup> 2 Samuel 7:12-13 “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your seed to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.

making the true and efficacious offerings to God the Father in God's true Temple. It took Him 33 years to fulfill the offerings of His righteous life, thoughts and acts and the offering of His innocent blood at His death.

It is interesting to remember that some have speculated that in about the fifth Century AD, some in the ancient Church adopted December 25<sup>th</sup> as the birthdate of our Lord because it corresponded with the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev on the Jewish calendar which was the date of the rededication of the Temple in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC.<sup>13</sup> Could this be because there was a lingering (but incomplete) tradition that the birth of our Lord took place on the day the Temple was dedicated? It seems that they just chose the wrong dedication of the Temple. They should have chosen the one recorded in Ezra 6:15.

On the next page I have attached a table showing how 3 Adar was 41 days before the purification of Mary at the Temple in Jerusalem.

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*He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."*

<sup>13</sup> *Alfred Edersheim, 1874, The Temple, its Ministry and Services, The Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, "the date of the Feast of the Dedication--the 25th of Chislev--seems to have been adopted by the ancient Church as that of the birth of our blessed Lord--Christmas--the Dedication of the true Temple, which was the body of Jesus."*

**Calculation of Birth of Christ Counting back from Fast of Esther**

Based on the following calendar conversion website at <http://genealogy.org/~scottlee/calconvert.cgi>. (no longer available)

A Jewish Calendar is currently available at <http://www.uwm.edu/~corre/calendar.html>

Other valuable information about the Jewish Calendar is also available at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/1584/index.html>

Julian Date	Modern Civil (Gregorian) Calendar	Jewish Calendar	Day of Christ's Life	Events
1719993	6:00 PM January 28, 4 BC to 6:00 PM January 29, 4 BC	3 Adar I 3757	1st Day	Birth – Anniversary of the completion of Zerubbabel's Temple
1719994	6:00 PM January 29, 4 BC to 6:00 PM January 30, 4 BC	4 Adar I 3757	2nd Day	
1719995	6:00 PM January 30, 4 BC to 6:00 PM January 31, 4 BC	5 Adar I 3757	3rd Day	
1719996	6:00 PM January 31, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 1, 4 BC	6 Adar I 3757	4th Day	
1719997	6:00 PM February 1, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 2, 4 BC	7 Adar I 3757	5th Day	
1719998	6:00 PM February 2, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 3, 4 BC	8 Adar I 3757	6th Day	
1719999	6:00 PM February 3, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 4, 4 BC	9 Adar I 3757	7th Day	
1720000	6:00 PM February 4, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 5, 4 BC	10 Adar I 3757	8th Day	Circumcision on the eighth day
1720001	6:00 PM February 5, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 6, 4 BC	11 Adar I 3757	9th Day	
1720002	6:00 PM February 6, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 7, 4 BC	12 Adar I 3757	10th Day	
1720003	6:00 PM February 7, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 8, 4 BC	13 Adar I 3757	11th Day	
1720004	6:00 PM February 8, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 9, 4 BC	14 Adar I 3757	12th Day	
1720005	6:00 PM February 9, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 10, 4 BC	15 Adar I 3757	13th Day	
1720006	6:00 PM February 10, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 11, 4 BC	16 Adar I 3757	14th Day	
1720007	6:00 PM February 11, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 12, 4 BC	17 Adar I 3757	15th Day	
1720008	6:00 PM February 12, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 13, 4 BC	18 Adar I 3757	16th Day	
1720009	6:00 PM February 13, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 14, 4 BC	19 Adar I 3757	17th Day	
1720010	6:00 PM February 14, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 15, 4 BC	20 Adar I 3757	18th Day	
1720011	6:00 PM February 15, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 16, 4 BC	21 Adar I 3757	19th Day	
1720012	6:00 PM February 16, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 17, 4 BC	22 Adar I 3757	20th Day	
1720013	6:00 PM February 17, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 18, 4 BC	23 Adar I 3757	21st Day	
1720014	6:00 PM February 18, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 19, 4 BC	24 Adar I 3757	22nd Day	
1720015	6:00 PM February 19, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 20, 4 BC	25 Adar I 3757	23rd Day	
1720016	6:00 PM February 20, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 21, 4 BC	26 Adar I 3757	24th Day	
1720017	6:00 PM February 21, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 22, 4 BC	27 Adar I 3757	25th Day	
1720018	6:00 PM February 22, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 23, 4 BC	28 Adar I 3757	26th Day	
1720019	6:00 PM February 23, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 24, 4 BC	29 Adar I 3757	27th Day	
1720020	6:00 PM February 24, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 25, 4 BC	30 Adar I 3757	28th Day	
1720021	6:00 PM February 25, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 26, 4 BC	1 Adar II 3757	29th Day	
1720022	6:00 PM February 26, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 27, 4 BC	2 Adar II 3757	30th Day	
1720023	6:00 PM February 27, 4 BC to 6:00 PM February 28, 4 BC	3 Adar II 3757	31st Day	
1720024	6:00 PM February 28, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 1, 4 BC	4 Adar II 3757	32nd Day	
1720025	6:00 PM March 1, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 2, 4 BC	5 Adar II 3757	33rd Day	
1720026	6:00 PM March 2, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 3, 4 BC	6 Adar II 3757	34th Day	
1720027	6:00 PM March 3, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 4, 4 BC	7 Adar II 3757	35th Day	
1720028	6:00 PM March 4, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 5, 4 BC	8 Adar II 3757	36th Day	
1720029	6:00 PM March 5, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 6, 4 BC	9 Adar II 3757	37th Day	
1720030	6:00 PM March 6, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 7, 4 BC	10 Adar II 3757	38th Day	
1720031	6:00 PM March 7, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 8, 4 BC	11 Adar II 3757	39th Day	
1720032	6:00 PM March 8, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 9, 4 BC	12 Adar II 3757	40th Day	
1720033	6:00 PM March 9, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 10, 4 BC	13 Adar II 3757	41st Day	Dedication in the Temple & Purification of Mary – Fast of Esther
1720034	6:00 PM March 10, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 11, 4 BC	14 Adar II 3757	42nd Day	First Day of Feast of Purim
1720035	6:00 PM March 11, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 12, 4 BC	15 Adar II 3757	43rd Day	Second Day of Feast of Purim
1720036	6:00 PM March 12, 4 BC to 6:00 PM March 13, 4 BC	16 Adar II 3757	43rd Day	Eclipse of the Moon from 1:42 to 4:02 AM

## *Dedication of Jesus, Purification of His Mother – Fast of Esther 4 BC – 41 Days Later*

Julian day number: 1720033, Day of week: Monday, Gregorian calendar: 10 March 4 BC (modern civil calendar), Julian calendar: 12 March 4 BC (old civil calendar), Jewish calendar: 13 Adar II 3757<sup>14</sup> (3757/7/13)

This date is the benchmark from which, the previous date, the date of Jesus' birth is measured.

The dedication of the first-born son was to occur when he was one month old, which in Jesus' case would have been any time during the one-month period between 4 Adar II<sup>15</sup> and 3 Nisan. This was dictated by the Mosaic Law:

Numbers 18:15-16 “The first offspring of every womb, both man and animal, that is offered to the LORD is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. When they are **a month old**, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs.”

Joseph took him to be dedicated on the same day which Mary was required to be purified which was on the 41st day of His life. On the eighth day He was circumcised, then on the thirty-third day after that Mary was purified. The day of Christ's birth is counted as the first day. This also was dictated by the Mosaic Law.

Leviticus 12:1-4,6,8 “The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. **On the eighth day** the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait **thirty-three days** to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. -----“When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (*for Mary in 4 BC, the Temple in Jerusalem*) a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering.----- If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering.”

If my assumption based on Josephus' history of the events in the Temple at that time is correct, this purification would have been on the Fast of Esther. The Fast of Esther was significant in that was the day on which Israel's destiny was cast in the time of Mordecai and Esther. It was also the day before the Feast of Purim (also called the Feast of Esther). Significantly, Esther means “Star” Or “Morning Star” in the Persian language.

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<sup>14</sup> *The number 3757 represented what the scribes had decided was the number of years since the creation of Adam. It is not a Biblically reliable number.*

<sup>15</sup> *The year Jesus was born was one of those years when an extra or intercalary month was added. The extra month was called Adar II.*

Luke recounted the appearance of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem for this purification of Mary and the dedication of Jesus 33 days after the circumcision of Jesus:

Luke 2:21-39 “On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed,<sup>16</sup> Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”<sup>17</sup>), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”<sup>18</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

The Book of Esther shows the origin of the date of the Fast of Esther.

Esther 3:13 “Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews--young and old, women and little children--on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.”

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<sup>16</sup> See previous quotation of *Leviticus 12:1-4,6,8*

<sup>17</sup> *Exodus 13:1-2* “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal.’”

<sup>18</sup> Note that we can know by the offering made for purification, that Mary and Joseph were poor. This also tells us that the purification occurred before the Magi had made their gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh

According to The Feasts of the Lord, Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, p. 185 “Sometime after the institution of Purim (*Circa 474 BC*), Adar 13 became connected to the holiday and was celebrated as the “**Fast of Esther**.”

It is true that the Fast of Esther fell into complete disuse in later times, probably because during the time of the Maccabees the Jews had a great victory over the Syrian Nicanor on Adar 13 and fasting was later forbidden (at least by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD) on that date in honor of the victory. Thus, if this ban was in effect in 4 BC,<sup>19</sup> the Fast of Esther could only be celebrated on years in which there were 13 months and there was a month called Adar II. On that year the fast could be celebrated without violating the prohibition against fasting on Adar 13. The year Christ was born was such a year.

These passages also show the origin of the date of the Feast of Purim. You will note that the date I have indicated at the beginning of the section is 13<sup>th</sup> Adar II (also called Adar Shenei) not Adar I. In all Jewish leap years Purim was always celebrated on the leap month (Adar II) so that it would always be celebrated one month before Passover.<sup>20</sup>

Esther 9:17-21 “This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. That is why rural Jews--those living in villages--observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other. Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, to have them celebrate annually the **fourteenth and fifteenth days** of the month of Adar.”

Esther 9:24-26 “For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the **pur** (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. But when the plot came to the king’s attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. (Therefore these days were called **Purim**, from the word pur.)”

Esther 9:30-31 “And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Xerxes--words of goodwill and assurance-- to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they

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<sup>19</sup> *According to Edersheim, the religious leaders did not have much respect for the Maccabees during the time of their reign, as the successors of Judas tended to be autocratic and brutal. This makes it possible that this prohibition was not even in place at the time of Christ.*

<sup>20</sup> *The Feasts of the Lord*, Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, p. 178 “Purim is a late winter feast (late February or March), the last feast of the biblical year. It occurs on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Adar, the twelfth Hebrew month (or in a leap year, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Adar Shenei, the thirteenth month), exactly one month before Passover.”

had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation.”

I have established the year of Jesus’ birth as 4 B.C. I have also established that the fast described in Josephus was the Fast of Esther. We therefore know from a comparison of the Jewish Calendar with the known date of the eclipse that the eclipse succeeded the Fast of Esther by three days and the Feast of Esther/Purim by half a day. If you accept my belief that this was the day that Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated as the only begotten son of His Father, then we can see how the fast and feast harmonized perfectly with actual events of that day in 4 B.C. which were described by Josephus.

1. The Feast of Purim is literally the feast of lots. The lot of the Jews, not to mention the entire world, was cast in the Child that was dedicated to the Lord that day.
2. The Feast of Purim is also known as the Feast of Esther. Esther means “star” in the ancient Persian language. I believe this was meant to foreshadow the star that would become visible over Bethlehem the night of the eclipse.
3. On the same morning Jesus was to be brought into the Temple a graven image of an Eagle decorated the gate of the Temple. It had been put there by Herod years before. However, before Jesus was brought into the Temple the golden was torn down.<sup>21</sup> The rite of dedication had been instituted in Moses’ day and involved holding up the child toward the Eastern gate. The rite had been instituted as a testimony that one day the Messiah would come through one such child.
4. The day of that Fast of Esther was the only time in the 109-year history of the corrupt Herodian High Priests, that the High Priest disqualified himself and had someone else <sup>22</sup> officiate for one day. Thus, Jesus was dedicated by a faithful High Priest.

***The Arrival of the Magi – at the time of the Lunar eclipse in Jerusalem on the night of the 12th of March, the Feast of Purim (Esther).***

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<sup>21</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, Book 17, Chapter 6, Verse 3. ----- and a report being come to them that the king was dead, ----, in the very middle of the day, they got upon the place, they pulled down the eagle, and cut it into pieces with axes, while a great number of the people were in the temple.*

<sup>22</sup> *There is no doubt that Matthias, the officiating High Priest at the Temple, was in a difficult position. He must have known that a conspiracy was afoot to tear down the Eagle. He also knew that Herod would not survive long. If he thwarted the conspiracy, he would be hated by the people and when Herod died, he would have no one to protect him. If he ignored the conspiracy and let the image of the gold eagle be destroyed, the vengeful Herod might have him executed immediately. What was His solution? He got someone else to officiate for that day. That way he could plead that he since he wasn’t there, he couldn’t be held accountable. Who would he to get to be the scapegoat High Priest? Undoubtedly, he got someone who he wouldn’t mind seeing killed by Herod! He would get one of those “fanatics.” He would get one of those true believers in the merciful God!*

Julian day number: 1720035, Day of week: Wednesday, Gregorian calendar: 12 March 0004 BC (modern civil calendar), Julian calendar: 14 March 0004 BC (old civil calendar), Jewish calendar: 15 Adar II 3757 (3757/7/15)

The next event in the life of Christ was the arrival of the Magi from the east. One of the traditional views which has always really irritated me was the conception that the star of Bethlehem was a star in the sense of our modern astronomical understanding. A “star” in that day was understood to be any bright light in the heavens. The Star of Bethlehem was certainly not a star in the sense of it being a distant sun or galaxy. Nor was it a star in the sense of being one of the bright planets like Jupiter and Neptune. This was a “star” which rose out of Judea and could be followed toward Bethlehem from the East (Babylon). Try to follow any star except the North Star and you will find yourself going east half the time and west half the time as it traverses across the sky like the sun or moon. The Star of Bethlehem was obviously a unique event. It was a bright light stationary in the heavens over Israel. Maybe, as I believe, it was the host of Angels which was sent to witness and stand guard over the baby Jesus. Whatever it was, to the Magi, whose profession included scanning the night sky and looking at the “stars,” it was what they would have called a “star.”

This raises the question, Why did the Magi in Babylon see it and yet it seemed to have gone mainly unnoticed in Judea? The answer is that in Babylon there were no clouds at that season, and a “star” high enough in the sky could have been seen from the regions of the Tigris and Euphrates. In Judea, it was the heart of rainy season. There would have been very few nights with a cloudless sky.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the Jews didn’t have a body of men who studied the stars for a living as did many of the Magi of Babylon.

I can imagine the experience of the Magi in Babylon the night the “star” appeared. First, a few of them might have noticed the star on the western horizon and wondered that it hadn’t been visible before. Perhaps, later that evening they noticed with amazement that the same star was still in the same place while the rest of the heavens had rotated above them. That observation would have caused great excitement. Word would have spread quickly among all the Magi and they would have anxiously waited for the next nightfall. After all, one of the main responsibilities of their profession was reading the stars to foretell the future. When the next nightfall came, they looked and the star was still there, directly to their west. It was a star unlike any other they had ever seen. It had taken its position over Israel (also called “Jacob”) and had

<sup>23</sup> **Monthly Rainfall for Jerusalem 1952-1967**

	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Year</i>
<i>Inches</i>	5.5	4.4	4.6	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	2.7	5.1	24.3

**Monthly Rainfall for Baghdad 1988 - 1990**

	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Year</i>
<i>Inches</i>	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.8	1.0	6.1

not moved! It must have caused a sensation among the Magi in the east. It would have stayed there night after night, becoming visible at nightfall and disappearing with the morning light. They must have desperately wondered what the star was supposed to signify. There must have been some among them who were familiar with the Hebrew Bible. After all, both Daniel and his three friends had been Magi. There were hundreds of thousands of Jews who still lived in the east as part of the great Jewish diaspora which began with the Babylonian Exile. Finally, someone among them must have come upon the meaning of the Star. It was part of a prophecy that had been uttered under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the time of Moses and Joshua. The prophecy was made by one of earliest of the Magi from the east, a Gentile named Balaam. It was he who uttered the original prophecy that foretold both the coming and the meaning of the “star.” That prophecy was recorded in Numbers:

Numbers 24:17 “I see him (*the Messiah*), but not now; I behold him, but not near. A **star** will **come out of Jacob**; a **scepter** will **rise out of Israel**.”

The Magi would have seen that this star had risen out of the western horizon that was directly above Israel. After it had risen, it had not moved. The prophecy of Balaam exactly described the star they were seeing. They understood from the prophecy that this star would herald the rise of a King (the word “scepter” defines a king).

So how many days would have passed before the Magi from Babylon could have arrived in Jerusalem? Between the birth, which coincided with the first rising of the star, and the arrival of the Magi from the East could have been no shorter than eight days. That was the shortest length of time that one could travel from Babylon to Jerusalem in those days. According to ancient authorities a rider on a fast camel could cover the distance from Babylon to Jerusalem in that time.<sup>24</sup>

We have already studied how Jesus was taken to the Temple to be dedicated forty days after he was born. During all those forty days the star would have remained stationary in the sky as a beacon to the Magi who were in the east. Is it reasonable to assume that it took forty days for the Magi to arrive?

I believe that having noticed the star, it probably took about thirty days before the Magi left to follow the star. First they had to discover the prophecy and decide what the star meant. Then they had to organize an expedition by deciding who would go and what to take with them. After they set out, all they knew for sure was that they had to keep diminishing the distance between them and the Star. First, they would have followed the only road west across the Syrian Desert that led to Palmyra and then to Damascus. As they neared Damascus, the Star would have come to be to their southwest. As they got into the highlands of Israel heading south toward the royal court of Israel in Jerusalem they would have encountered the rainy and cloudy winter weather in

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<sup>24</sup> Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book I, Chapter 1. “Only eight days’ journey, though, according to Philo’s western ideas of it, by a difficult road, separated them (Babylon) from Palestine”

the highlands of Samaria. It must have been about that time that they lost sight of the Star. According to that scenario, it would have allowed them to arrive in Jerusalem at about the time of the second day of the Feast of Purim two days after Jesus had been dedicated, close to the end of the rainy season. We know that Josephus recorded that everyone in Jerusalem saw the eclipse of the moon that night, the same night that Herod burned alive the young men who had torn down the Roman eagle over the Temple gate. Therefore we know there was an open sky that night. I believe that the Magi had arrived to see Herod during the daylight hours before the eclipse. The Magi would have come out of their interview with Herod and seen the star for the first time since they had gotten into the highlands of Samaria and Judea. Besides that, they would have just learned from Herod that Bethlehem was the prophesied birthplace of the promised King. They were also able to follow the star to Bethlehem. The Gospel of Matthew has the account:

Matthew 2:1-9 “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east <sup>25</sup> and have come to worship him.’ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ‘In Bethlehem in Judea,’ they replied, ‘for this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’” Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.’ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead <sup>26</sup> of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.”

We will study this passage in more detail in the next lesson.

At that time Herod was in an orgy of bloodletting. As we have already seen, according to Josephus on that date he burnt alive forty young men who had torn down the image of the Roman eagle on the gate of the Temple (Antiquities of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, Book 17, Chapter 6). About a week later Herod had his son Antipater, who had been his heir until that time, put to death. Also, he had all the principal men of the Jewish nation shut up in the Hippodrome with orders that upon his impending death they should all be slaughtered. It is little wonder that the slaughter of no more than ten to twenty infants in Bethlehem, was overlooked by the historical records upon which Josephus must have relied as he wrote of the events surrounding that date when he wrote his history almost ninety years later. I believe that the

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<sup>25</sup> They were in the east (Babylon) when they saw the star. They did not see the star to (in the direction of) the east.

<sup>26</sup> The Greek word here is προάγω {pro-ä'-gō}. It should be understood as saying that the star was there before them, not leading them. Since Bethlehem was only six miles from Jerusalem, they would have seen the stationary “star” and followed it until they were directly under it.

night that Herod's soldiers slew the infants and Jesus and his parents escaped to Egypt was the night after the moon was eclipsed.

The occurrence of the eclipse at this time provokes a suggestion that the eclipse was foretold in Scripture. The first is in Isaiah:

Isaiah 24:23: "The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously."

The first time the Lord appeared in Jerusalem as a baby was marked by a total lunar eclipse, the last time he appeared publicly was marked by a total blacking out of the sun during His crucifixion! The second passage that seems to foretell this event is in Joel:

Joel 2:31-32 "The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls."

It says the moon will be "turned to blood." It is a well-known astronomical phenomenon that during a total eclipse of the moon, the moon turns red.

***When was the Historical Death of Herod?  
Answer: before Passover, but after the lunar eclipse in Jerusalem  
Between the 12th of March and the 1st of April 4 BC***

The first piece of evidence is recorded in the writings of Alfred Edersheim:

The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, by Alfred Edersheim APPENDIX VII - The first and most certain date is that of the death of Herod the Great. Our Lord was born before the death of Herod, and, as we judge from the Gospel-history, very shortly before that event. Now the year of Herod's death has been ascertained with, we may say, absolute certainty, as shortly before the Passover of the year 750 A.U.C., which corresponds to about the 12th of April of the year 4 before Christ (*Julian Calendar*), according to our common reckoning. More particularly, shortly before the death of Herod there was a lunar eclipse (Josephus' Antiquities xvii. 6. 4), which, it is astronomically ascertained, occurred on the night from the 12th to the 13th of March of the year 4 before Christ. Thus the death of Herod must have taken place between the 12th of March and the 12th of April, or, say, about the end of March (comp. Ant. xvii. 8. 1).

Herod, having executed his son Antipater after the eclipse, must have died in the period which fell between five days after the eclipse and at least seven days prior to the succeeding Passover. That is indicated by the following passages from Josephus:

**Wars of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, Book 1, Chapter 33, Verse 8.** “So Herod, having survived the slaughter of his son **five days**, died,

**Wars of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, Book 2, Chapter 1, Verse 2** “Now the necessity which Archelaus was under of taking a journey to Rome was the occasion of new disturbances; for when he had mourned for his father **seven days**, ---”

**Wars of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus, Book 2, Chapter 1, Verse 2.** “--- And indeed, at the feast of unleavened bread, which was **now at hand**, and is by the Jews called **the Passover**,”

### *Two other interesting connections of Christ's life and ministry with the 1st and 2nd Temples*

It is worth noting that if you compare 1 Kings 6:1, 1 Kings 6:37-38, 1 Kings 11:42-43, and 1 Kings 14:25-26 you will find that the glory of Solomon's Temple was destroyed in its 34<sup>th</sup> year never to be regained. This is documented by the following Scripture:

1 Kings 6:1 “In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD.”

1 Kings 6:37-38 “The foundation of the temple of the LORD was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv. In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.”

1 Kings 11:42-43 “Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king.”

1 Kings 14:25-26 “In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made.”

Solomon reigned forty years, the Temple was completed after eleven years, so the Temple stood complete during Solomon's reign for 29 years. It only survived until the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign. Twenty-nine plus five is 34.

The Temple of Jesus Christ's body was also destroyed in its 34<sup>th</sup> year, but it was raised in greater glory in three days.

Our earlier study indicated that Jesus Christ was born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the month of Adar in 4 BC. He was the true temple. This was the same month and day as the dedication of Zerubbabel's temple. Zerubbabel's temple was constructed in three years, six months and 7 days (by the Jewish Calendar) as recorded in Haggai and Ezra:

Haggai 1:14-15 “So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius.”

Ezra 6:15 “The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.”

Coincidentally this was the exact length of time of Jesus’ public ministry which began with His baptism on the Day of Atonement in 26 AD<sup>27</sup> to His resurrection on the Feast of the First fruits in 30 AD.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *I will establish this date in a later lesson on the Baptism of Jesus by John.*

<sup>28</sup> *I will also establish this date in a later lesson on the Crucifixion of Jesus.*