

When was Messiah Born?

While much of the world celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ on 25 December, can the actual day of Jesus' birth be determined from scripture? This question will be explored in some detail, and scripture will be our guide.

The first passage we will consider begins with the father of John the Baptist, Zacharias:

Luke 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. Luke 1:8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

Luke 1:23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministrations were accomplished, he departed to his own house. Luke 1:24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived..

The clue given to us here is that Zacharias **was of the "course" of Abia.**

Abia or Abijah tells us the exact week of the year he was in the temple.

King David on God's instructions (1 Chr 28:11-13) had divided the sons of Aaron into 24 groups (1 Chr 24:1-4), to setup a schedule by which the Temple of the Lord could be staffed with priests all year round in an orderly manner. After the 24 groups of priests were established, lots were drawn to determine the sequence in which each group would serve in the Temple. (1 Chr 24: 7-19). That sequence is as follows:

The 24 Courses of the Temple Priesthood.

1 Chr 24:7	1. Jehoiarib	2. Jedaiah
1 Chr 24:8	3. Harim	4. Seorim
1 Chr 24:9	5. Malchijah	6. Mijamin

1 Chr 24:10	7. Hakkoz	8. Abijah
1 Chr 24:11	9. Jeshuah	10. Shecaniah
1 Chr 24:12	11. Eliashib	12. Jakim
1 Chr 24:13	13. Huppah	14. Jeshebeab
1 Chr 24:14	15. Bilgah	16. Immer
1 Chr 24:15	17. Hezir	18. Apses
1 Chr 24:16	19. Pethahiah	20. Jehezkel
1 Chr 24:17	21. Jachim	22. Gamul
1 Chr 24:18	23. Delaiah	24. Maazi

1 Chr. 24:19 These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

Now each one of the 24 "courses" of priests would begin and end their service in the Temple on the Sabbath, a tour of duty being for one week (2 Chr 23:8, 1 Chr 9:25).

On three occasions during the year, all the men of Israel were required to travel to Jerusalem for festivals of the Lord, so on those occasions all the priests would be needed in the Temple to accommodate the crowds. Those three festivals were Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16).

The Yearly Cycle of Service in the Temple.

The Jewish calendar begins in the spring, during the month of Nisan, so the first "course" of priests, would be that of the family of Jehoiarib, who would serve for seven days. The second week would then be the responsibility of the family of Jedaiah. The third week would be the feast of Unleavened Bread, and all priests would be present for service. Then the schedule would resume with the third course of priests, the family of Harim. By this plan, when the 24th course was completed, the general cycle of courses would repeat.

This schedule would cover 51 weeks or 357 days, enough for the lunar Jewish calendar (about 354 days). In a period of a year, each group of priests would serve in the Temple twice on their scheduled course.

In addition to the 3 major festivals, they would serve for a total of about five weeks of duty. Based on the huge crowds and all the sacrifices – all of the priests served the 3 weeks of the Holy Days.

The Conception of John the Baptist.

Now back to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Luke 1:23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. Luke 1:24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, ..

Beginning with the first month, Nisan, in the spring (March-April), the schedule of the priest's courses would result with Zacharias serving during the 10th week of the year. This is because he was a member of the course of Abia (Abijah), the 8th course, and both the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15-21 Nisan) and Pentecost (6 Sivan) would have occurred before his scheduled duty. This places Zacharias' administration in the Temple as beginning on the second Sabbath of the third month, Sivan (May-June).

	1st Month	2nd Month	3rd Month
	Abib - Nisan (March - April)	Zif - Iyyar (April - May)	Sivan (May - June)
First Week	Jehoiarib (1)	Seorim (4)	All Priests (Pentecost)
Second Week	Jedaiah (2)	Malchijah (5)	Abijah (8)
Third Week	All Priests (Feast of Unleavened Bread)	Mijamin (6)	Jeshuah (9)
Fourth Week	Harim (3)	Hakkoz (7)	Shecaniah (10)

Having completed his Temple service on the third Sabbath of Sivan, Zacharias returned home and soon conceived his son John.

So John the Baptist was probably conceived shortly after the third Sabbath of the month of Sivan.

The Conception of Jesus Christ.

Now the reason that the information about John is important, is because according to Luke, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy:

Luke 1:23-24 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months,

From the end of June (Sivan) + 5 months puts us at the end of November.

Luke 1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

Luke 1:27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. Note that verse 26 above refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, not Elul, the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar, and this is made plain by the context of verse 24 and again in verse 36:

Luke 1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. **Mary stayed with Elizabeth for the last 3 months of her pregnancy, until the time that John was born.**

Luke 1:56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house. V 57 Now

Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

Now working from the information about John's conception late in the third month, Sivan, and advancing six months, we arrive late in the 9th month of Kislev (Nov-Dec) for the time frame for the conception of Jesus.

It is notable here that the first day of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated on the 25th day of Kislev, and Jesus is called the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46). This does not appear to be a mere coincidence.

In the book of John, Hanukkah is called the feast of dedication (John 10:22). **Hanukkah is an eight day festival**, celebrating the relighting of the menorah in the rededicated Temple, which according to the story, stayed lit miraculously for eight days on only one day's supply of oil.

Jesus observed the Feast of Chanukah (also called the "Feast of Dedication" or Festival of Lights...in John 10:22) while he was on earth. John gives us an indication that Jesus was in fact conceived during the Festival of Lights (Chanukah) when he speaks of him at the beginning of his Gospel:

JOHN 1:4 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. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. 9 That was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

Quickly after Gabriel's visit, Mary went to see her relative Elizabeth:

LUKE 1:39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40

and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. LUKE 1:56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

The Birth of John the Baptist.

Based on a conception shortly after the third Sabbath of the month of Sivan, projecting forward an average term of about 10 lunar months (40 weeks), we arrive in the month of Nisan. It would appear that John the Baptist may have been born in the middle of the month, which would coincide with Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It is interesting to note, that even today, it is customary for the Jews to set out a special goblet of wine during the Passover Seder meal, in anticipation of the arrival of Elijah that week, which is based on the prophecy of Malachi: Every Seder – they open the door and symbolically look for Elijah!

Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Jesus identified John as the "Elijah" that the Jews had expected: **John came in the Spirit of Elijah.**

Mat 17:10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? v 11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. v 12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. v 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

The angel that appeared to Zacharias in the temple **also indicated that John would be the expected "Elias"**

Luke 1:17 And he shall **go before him in the spirit and power of Elias**, 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.

So then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th day of the 1st month, Nisan, and this is a likely date for the birth of John the Baptist, the expected "Elijah".

The Birth of Jesus Christ.

If you are going to tax an agricultural farming society and do a census –Which time of year would they have money to pay it? **Harvest Time and what better time that when all the males in Israel are commanded to go to the Feast in Jerusalem.**

Three times a year all males had to go to Jerusalem.!

Since Jesus was conceived six months after John the Baptist, and we have established a likely date for John's birth, we need only move six months farther down the Jewish calendar to arrive at a likely date for the birth of Jesus.

From the **15th day of the 1st month**, Nisan, we go to the **15th day of the 7th month**, Tishri. And what do we find on that date?

It is the festival of Tabernacles! = **The 15th day of Tishri begins the third and last festival** of the year to which all the men of Israel were to gather in Jerusalem for Temple services. (Lev 23:34)

Jesus Tabernacled with us. (John 1:14)

In John 1:14 it says, 'And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. 'The word for **dwelt** used here, and it is only used 4 times in the New Testament, is literally rendered, **'tabernacled'**.

So the new Immanuel came among us. **He tabernacled among us.** But in a way that was totally new and unexpected.

Jesus is compared to the old Tabernacle - Hebrews 9 Compared in form. In the old tabernacle God came in the form of *an imposing cloud of fire*. In the new tabernacle God came in the form of a little Baby.

Immanuel.

Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Immanuel means "God with us". The Son of God had come to dwell with, or tabernacle on earth with His people.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled) among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Ex 25:8-9 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Strong's: No OT:5521 booth = *cukkah* (sook-kaw'); booth, tabernacle, tent.

The word in the Hebrew for **"dwell"** is **succah** and the name of the Feast of Tabernacles in Hebrew is Sukkot, a festival of rejoicing and celebration:

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the

inn. Luke 2:8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. Luke 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

Luke 2:6-7 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Strongs No NT:4683 swaddling clothes = sparganoos (a strip; meaning to strap or wrap with strips); (**Linen strips from the priests garments**)

Manger: Strongs No 5336. phatne, (to eat); a crib (for fodder): stall i.e. What the cattle eat out of...

Gen 33:17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the **place is called Succoth**. (Another name for Tabernacles)

Lev 23:41,42 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

Here Joseph is in **his sukkah** on the **feast of Sukkot** and Yeshua is being born at the appointed time!

We are given a clue about the time of the birth by the angel who appeared to the shepherds and said "Fear not. For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:10). There are actually two clues here. Succot is known as "The Season of our Joy", and it is also known as the "**Festival of the Nations (or Gentiles)**".

The angel was actually giving them a greeting for **the Festival of Succot**. This is the only festival where the

gentile nations are positively encouraged to participate with negative results if they do not. (Z'achariah 14:16-19).

In addition, the narrative indicates that it was shepherds to whom the angels delivered their message, which is interesting in that for thousands of years Jewish literature ascribes a tradition known as "Ushpizin", only to Succot, and it is practiced even to this day.

Ushpizin - Ushpizin is a tradition stemming from the Zohar (Zohar 5:103b) - a Kabbalistic text, where we invite a different honorable guest to join us in the Sukkah each night. Traditionally these guests have been Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David.

After entering the Succah, and reciting certain prayers, the ceremony of Ushpizin bids us to partake in the privilege of inviting and welcoming the "Shakinah or God's Presence" and the seven "faithful shepherds" who enter the succah with us as exalted guests. These guests come to observe how their descendants FULFILL the mitzvah (commandment) of the Succah, in which they dwell under God's protection, in accordance with what God had promised in the Torah.

These seven faithful shepherds of Israel are: Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'acov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Melech (King) David. Back in the Luke narrative, though the text does not specify "seven" shepherds who went to visit Mary there seems to be a hint, when one reads between the lines. Moreover, the purpose of their visit is recorded to be very similar with that of the Ushpizin, in which the text states that it was to "see this thing that had happened, which the Lord has told us about." (Luke 2:15).

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. v 11 For unto you is born

this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Why was there no room at the inn? Bethlehem is only about 5 miles from Jerusalem, and all the men of Israel had come to attend the festival of Tabernacles as required by the law of Moses. Every room for miles around Jerusalem would have been already taken by pilgrims, so all that Mary and Joseph could find for shelter was a stable.

So, if you have followed the above reasoning, based on the scriptural evidence, a case can apparently be made that Jesus Christ was born on the 15th day of the month of Tishri, on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which corresponds to the September - October time-frame of our present calendar!

COMPARISONS OF THE TIME-LINES

Jewish month	Begins the New moon of	John the Baptist	Jesus
1. Abib / Nisan	March-April	<i>Birth of John 15 Nisan</i>	4
2. Zif / Iyyar	April-May		5
3. Sivan	May-June	Conception of John after 3rd Sabbath	6
4. Tammuz	June-July	1	7
5. Ab / Av	July-August	2	8
6. Elul	August-September	3	9
7. Ethanim / Tishri	September-October	4	<i>Birth of Jesus 15 Tishri</i>
8. Bul / Marheshvan / Heshvan	October-November	5	
9. Chisleu / Chislev / Kislev	November-December	6	Conception of Jesus 25 Kislev ?
10. Tebeth / Tevet	December-January	7	1
11. Shebat / Shevat	January-February	8	2
12. Adar	February-March	9	3

The Feast of Tabernacles is an **eight day feast (Lev 23:36, 39)**. Why eight days?

It may be because an infant was dedicated to God by performing circumcision on the eighth day after birth: Circumcision = **Covenant of Blood**.

Luke 2:21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

So the infant Jesus would have been circumcised on the eighth and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a Sabbath day.

The Jews today consider this a separate festival from Tabernacles, and they call it Shemini Atzeret. ((The last great Day))

Le 12:1-3 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And in the **eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised**.

Lev. 12:4,6,8 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

Luke 2:22-24 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they (Joseph and Mary) brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;(As it is written in the law

of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

Here we have Yeshua, in the temple, on the eighth day of Sukkot shedding blood fulfilling the covenant of circumcision!

And Mary too poor to afford a lamb could only bringing the required bird offerings. **But she had a lamb, the Lamb of God!**

Luke 2:25,28-32 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Tabernacles Future Fulfillment

It is also interesting to note the Tabernacles was a feast of in-gathering of the Harvest (Exodus 23:16 and 34:22).

If Jesus' first coming was indeed on 15 Tishri, the first day of Tabernacles, then it is quite reasonable to presume that the harvest of this earth, the in-gathering of the second coming of Jesus Christ, will also occur on precisely the same date. The unknown factor **would be the year** that this would happen.

SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL CALCULATIONS

Elizabeth (John's mother) was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36). We can determine the approximate time of year Jesus was born if we know when John was born.

John's father, Zacharias, was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5).

Historic calculations indicate Zacharias service corresponded to **June 13-19** in that year. It was during this time of temple service that Zacharias learned that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a child (Luke 1:8-13). After he completed his service and traveled home, Elizabeth conceived (verses 23-24).

This means Elizabeth's conception of John took place near the end of June, adding nine months brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for John's birth.

By using simple addition we add another six months, the difference in ages between John and Jesus, this brings us to the end of September or Mid October as the likely time of Jesus' birth (The Month of Tishrei / Feast of Sukkot /Tabernacles). *The Companion Bible, 1974, Appendix 179, p. 200.*

Shepherds would not be watching the flocks in the fields during the dead of winter. The Mishna (*rabbinic commentary*) states that, because of winter weather, the flocks around Bethlehem were normally brought into a protective corral called a "sheepfold" from November through February. This means no sheep or shepherds outdoors in December "*Luke,*" *Adam Clark's Commentary, Vol. 5, p. 370.*

Joseph would not have taken Mary (nine months pregnant) by donkey, a distance of over 100 miles in the dead of winter.

The exceptional crowds seeking housing with the result that there was "no room in the inn" (Luke 2:7) are proof that it was one of the national Feast periods when all the males are commanded to go to Jerusalem. They travel from around the world to appear for those commanded Festivals.

The Romans were known to take their censuses according to the prevailing customs of the occupied territories. In Israel, they would opt to have people report to their home provinces at a time that would be convenient for them and not in the middle of winter. The best time of taxation would be after the harvest in the fall and this also coincided with one of the major Biblical Feasts known as Sukkot (Tabernacles). This Feast meant all the people would be in one place with their funds from the recent harvest.

The nativity accounts in the Gospel took place during one of the major Biblical Holy Days and not during December. The only major holy day that takes place in the fall is Sukkot (Tabernacles) The Messiah came to "dwell" in the midst of His people as perfectly typified in the Feast of Tabernacles.

So, God in the flesh (Jesus) would have come to Tabernacle (Sukkot) with mankind on the first day of Tabernacles. The tabernacle of Moses was a type of God dwelling with His people in the desert.

On the eight day of Tabernacles God commanded that a special day called, the Eighth Day of Assembly was to be set apart as a holy assembly. "For seven days you are to bring an offering made by fire to Adonai; on the eighth day you are to have a holy convocation and bring an offering made by fire to Adonai ; it is a day of public assembly; do not do any kind of ordinary work." Lev 23:36

Why would God command a special memorial on the eighth day of Sukkot? This day could contain another connection to the birth of Jesus Christ. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a **minister of the circumcision** for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Rom 15:8 KJV

Jesus' birth took place on the first day of Sukkot. If this is true what would take place on the eighth day after a Jewish boy is born? On the eighth day a

Jewish baby boys takes the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant through circumcision (Gen 17).

Jesus was presented on the eighth day after His birth (incarnation). "When the time came for their purification according to the Torah of Moshe, they took him up to Jerusalem to present the child. "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to God." Luke 2:22-23

Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of Passover and Pentecost fulfilling both feasts with 100% accuracy, why would the Lord not come and dwell (Sukkot / Tabernacle) with His people at the precise time that the Fall Feasts indicate?

The Fall Feasts give us the bibles narrative of the Messiah dwelling with humankind at His birth (as the Lamb of God) and also at His future return (as the King of Kings), and it all happens in the month of Tishrei (Sept. / Oct.) not December.

Christ's 3 ½ year ministry traces backward (from a March/April crucifixion) to a Sept/October birthday, not a December birth. He was cut off in the midst of the week according to Daniel 9 and that occurred in March.

Be a Berean and "**Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly studying/dividing the Word of Truth.**" 2 Tim. 2:15. May your beliefs be your own and you be approved unto God.

If you are going to study, further many may will find these facts troubling?

Why was it a crime to keep Christmas (it was outlawed) in Massachusetts in Early American History? Why did the Protestant Churches in America did not celebrate Christmas for over 200 years?