

# Chapter 7

## History Confirms the Biblical Jesus

### **The New Testament Jesus: Fact or Fiction?**

It is unfortunate that many people reject the Bible because they think that Jesus was not a historical person or that he could not have performed the miracles attested to him in the New Testament. Many scholars are unaware that the information in the four Gospels and the rest of the Bible is confirmed by historical discoveries.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, many researchers have shown that contrary to what many atheists claim there are no significant contradictions in the Bible.<sup>2</sup> It is true that there are some minor discrepancies, for instance in the four Gospels, but that only strengthens the case for their authenticity, because it shows that their authors did not conspire together to write their accounts.

Not only that, the four Gospels were written by eyewitnesses who risked their lives to tell the truth about Jesus. The martyr Paul was even a former enemy of the Church who converted to Christianity after he saw Jesus in a vision—which was not a hallucination, because there were others present who also saw a light and heard a voice (Acts 9:7; 22:9 NIV). In fact, the many supernatural post-resurrection appearances of Jesus were not hallucinations either, because many people witnessed him at the same time.

The New Testament even contains embarrassing information that is unlikely for its authors to have made up. For instance, it says that Jesus' own brother James did not become a Christian until after Jesus had died and that women were the first witnesses of the resurrection, at a time when Jewish society regarded the testimony of women as highly suspect.<sup>3</sup> There are even creeds that date to within two to five years after the crucifixion that affirm key Christian doctrines, such as the fact that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day.<sup>4</sup>

But this is not all. Around the mid- to late first century, the New Testament writings had been sent to Christian communities throughout the Near East, so it would have been impossible for someone or some group to have gathered these ancient versions and partial copies and to have then forged doctrines into the text. Yet even if some New Testament manuscripts had been corrupted, the apostles and hundreds or thousands of other eyewitnesses to the teachings of Christ would have soon proclaimed those changes to be false.

It is even true that no first century Jewish or Roman sources denounce the main New Testament details about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.<sup>5</sup> This was at a time when people did not believe a person could be resurrected from the dead, as Jesus was. The Jews, the Romans, and the Greeks would have been quite skeptical of the claim that Jesus had been resurrected, and they would have demanded good evidence before they would have believed.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter gives historical evidence for Christ's birth, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection, while other strong evidences that the Bible is true (manuscript evidence, etc.) are given in Chapter 10. Indeed, the fact that some of the greatest astrological signs in the heavens during the last 3,000 years occurred around the time the Gospels tell us Christ was born is one of the many reasons to take the New Testament seriously. As you will see, the most significant of these signs in the stars began in 3 B.C. and ended in 2 B.C.<sup>7</sup> The first century Jews even had remarkable techniques for remembering religious teachings. This means that the New Testament

could be reliable even if it was not recorded right as, or soon after, the events described in its pages occurred.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus even fulfilled more than sixty detailed prophecies that were written more than a century before he was born. This is proven by the Dead Sea Scrolls. Many Old Testament manuscripts that date before 100 B.C. that contain these Messianic prophecies are among them. The Hebrew Old Testament was completed between 400 and 250 B.C. and the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament, was completed between 250 and 150 B.C. Christians cite these prophecies because: it is miraculous that Jesus fulfilled them; they are not vague; there is no doubt he is the only person in history whose life fits them; many of the prophecies he fulfilled were beyond his control (like where he was born, the manner and time of his death, etc.); and there are far too many matches to be coincidental.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, if Jesus' life did not fit these prophecies, the Jews would have pointed it out, and surely that would have been reason enough not to follow him.

So, given the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus Christ, which are quite detailed, and, as you will see, the many other evidences that he is the true Christ, we know that Jesus must be whom he said he was. Among these evidences are many first and second century A.D. secular references to Jesus as a historical figure, and, although skeptics try to discount them, Christian scholars have done a great job of defending them.<sup>10</sup>

The evidence that follows shows that Jesus Christ was a historical figure. It also sets the stage for accepting the world saving truths found in the scriptures, as detailed in later chapters. To bolster the historicity of the New Testament, it will be shown that the main details relating to Jesus' birth, ministry, and death as given in the four Gospels are entirely consistent with history. It should also be pointed out that some people erroneously claim that Christianity was derived from certain Pagan religions, such as Mithraism, but that idea has been proven to be false.<sup>11 12</sup>

This chapter shows that Jesus was a historical person who was born in 2 B.C. and crucified in A.D. 32. This will be done because his teachings, if taken seriously, will be instrumental in bringing happiness and peace to the entire world. This book (as you have seen) is trying to establish that the Bible is true; and if the Bible is true, the prophecies within it are true, as well. The key role Bible prophecy will play in creating world peace is explained in Chapters 8 and 9.

### **Did the Flavians Invent Christianity?**

Some scholars claim that the apostle Paul and the authors of the Gospels did not exist and that Christianity was invented by Roman aristocrats around A.D. 73. Papias and Polycarp though testified after this year that they knew John, who wrote the Gospel of John. Emperor Domitian persecuted Christians in the late first century and then Emperor Trajan outlawed Christianity in the early second century. This would make no sense if the Flavian emperors before Domitian had invented Christianity.

Tacitus wrote that many Christians were alive in A.D. 63. This was confirmed by Suetonius and by some early Church Fathers. Chapter 8 proves that John wrote the Book of Revelation between A.D. 61 and 64. Thus Christianity was founded at least a decade before A.D. 73. Also, many Jews and Romans who lived in Palestine during the early first century A.D. were still alive in A.D. 73. Thus they or someone they had informed about the matter would have testified that Christianity was a fraud. Paul wrote that there were many Christian churches throughout the Roman empire decades before A.D. 73. Yet, if those churches had not existed at that time, many Jews and Romans would have pointed it out in protest.<sup>13</sup>

## Early Non-Christian References to Jesus

An amazing fact most opponents of Christianity will not mention is that no less than seventeen independent and reliable non-Christian witnesses from the first and second centuries A.D. (Roman and Jewish historians, the Jewish Talmud, etc.) directly or indirectly attest to the reality of Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup> Jesus' historicity did not begin to be doubted by scholars until the late eighteenth century. The arguments that Jesus did not exist though have since been disproven.<sup>15</sup>

This section starts with the earliest proof that Jesus was a Messiah figure during the early first century. It is the Christian inscriptions found in two mid-first century catacombs on the Mount of Olives, close to the Dominus Flevit Chapel.<sup>16</sup>

Within the first catacomb, a coffin was found with this inscription: "Simon son of Jonah." This is significant because this is the name of one of the Twelve Apostles (Matthew 10:2; 16:17). Since historical evidence shows that the apostle named "Simon son of Jonah" was indeed buried in Jerusalem, not in Rome as Catholics claim, this could be his tomb.<sup>17 18</sup> This catacomb also contained a coffin with the inscription "daughter of Simon the Priest." Could this be the daughter of the apostle just mentioned: Simon son of Jonah, also known as Simon Peter?<sup>19</sup>

Well, she could be his daughter, for there are inscriptions in this catacomb that honor someone named Jesus. These inscriptions are believed to date to the 30s and 40s A.D. They say things like: "Jesus, remember me in the resurrection," "Jesus, have mercy," and "Jesus Christ the helper [or redeemer]."<sup>20</sup> In fact, the names of other first century Christians who are mentioned in the New Testament were found inscribed on coffins within this catacomb (all of which also date to the first century). For instance, one coffin is inscribed with a number of crosses and the name "Shappira," and the New Testament is the only other first century writing that mentions this name (Acts 5:1).<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, within the other catacomb, which was near Bethany, there were coffins bearing the names "Lazarus," "Mary," and "Martha." In fact, some even bore the sign of the cross. These could be the coffins of the three prominent early Christians mentioned in John 11:1-2: "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)" (KJV). So, with these archaeological facts to build upon, early literary evidence that Jesus existed will be given next. Then, after that, a few more archaeological facts will be given, which, taken with the rest of the evidence, proves that Jesus existed during the early first century.

The first source for such literary evidence is *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.3.3. It states that Jesus was a historical person who was crucified during the early first century and rose again three days later. Called the *Testimonium Flavianum*, it was written in the early 90s A.D. by a Jewish historian named Josephus. He was born in A.D. 37 and died around A.D. 100. Although parts of the following quote are later Christian additions (in italics), the rest of it is reliable and is accepted by many scholars as historical evidence that Jesus existed.<sup>22</sup> But what is most significant is that all of the widely distributed ancient copies in many different languages (including Slavonic) dating clear back to the fourth and fifth centuries read like the following two quotes (minus the interpolations). In fact, the *Testimonium Flavianum's* style of writing is even a good match to the rest of Josephus' writings.<sup>23</sup>

The following translation from the Greek contains additions, or interpolations, which reflect the Christian bias of certain scribes. As mentioned, the interpolations are given in italics:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, *if indeed one ought to call him a man*. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. *He was the Messiah*. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. *On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him*. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.<sup>24</sup>

As you can see, despite the interpolations, the Greek still gives good evidence that Jesus was a historical person. We have to accept that he was a wise man, a teacher, converted many Jews and Gentiles, was condemned by Pilate, died by crucifixion, had many who were still devoted to him after his death, and finally, at the time of writing, many Christians still believed in him.

Here is a translation from a tenth century Arabic text of *Antiquities of the Jews*, which is much less likely to contain interpolations:

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and [he] was known to be virtuous. Many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.<sup>25</sup>

This Arabic version thus gives the Gospel accounts even more support. It adds to the list that Jesus was virtuous, that his disciples said he rose from the dead on the third day, and that he may have been the Messiah.

Why though did Josephus make such a brief mention of such a significant historical figure from shortly before his own time? Certainly, he would have known eyewitnesses to some New Testament events. Well, the reason for his brevity is simple: No Roman emperor would have been pleased if Josephus had written things that supported a growing movement among the Jews that followed a king they believed was greater than Caesar and who would return and destroy the corrupt governments of the world. It makes sense, then, that Josephus mentioned nothing in his histories that would have offended the Roman emperor.

The first Church Father to mention the *Testimonium Flavianum* was Eusebius. But he lived in the early fourth century. Critics argue that if it was in the original copy of *Antiquities of the Jews* then earlier Church Fathers would have mentioned it. These critics argue that it must be a forgery inserted into original book long after Josephus died. They even point out that the flow of the text is interrupted by the supposed forgery. The problem though is that there are many other places in his writings where the flow of the text is interrupted in a similar manner. The passage was not mentioned by Church Fathers before the fourth century because there was very little in the original text that could have been used to defend the early Church. They were debating whether Jesus was divine, not whether he existed. Critics also claim that Josephus, an orthodox Jew, would never have called Jesus “the Messiah,” and yet, scholars have shown that the correct

translation is that Jesus “was called the Messiah.”<sup>26</sup>

The next reliable reference by Josephus to mention is this: “. . . [the Jewish high priest, Ananias,] assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.”<sup>27 28</sup> This quote mentions James the brother of the Lord, who is mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19). Josephus states in this quote that James’ brother Jesus was called “Christ.” So, this quote gives more evidence that Jesus existed, to which may be added *Antiquities* 18.5.2. It states that Jesus’ cousin John the Baptist, who is mentioned many times in the New Testament, did exist.

The next piece of evidence that Jesus did exist comes from the Roman historian Tacitus, who around A.D. 115 wrote:

Nero fastened the guilt . . . on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty [a reference to crucifixion] during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome . . . (Brackets mine)<sup>29</sup>

This quote is very useful, especially considering the high quality of the histories written by Tacitus, in which he repeatedly distinguishes between hearsay and confirmed accounts. If there was evidence that Christianity was false, this Roman historian would have certainly mentioned it. It has been claimed that Pilate (“Pilatus”) was only a prefect, whereas Tacitus here calls him a procurator. But he probably held both titles, for Josephus also refers to Pilate as a “procurator.” Also, this quote insults Christians. Thus later Christians did not interpolate it. It even says that “Christus,” not Paul, founded the movement. (“Christus” is a Latin word meaning “Christ.”) And finally, it also says that the movement came from Judea, not from Paganism.<sup>30</sup>

Here are many other historical references of worth:

The Roman historian Suetonius wrote around A.D. 125 that, “[Claudius] expelled from Rome the Jews who were constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.”<sup>31 32</sup> Since “Chrestus” was a common Latin misspelling of “Christ” in the second century, Chrestus most likely refers to Christ. Suetonius did not make this mistake, though; it must have been in his source document. The original Latin implies that Chrestus was a title, not a name. If it were a name, it probably would have said “at the instigation of one Chrestus.” The account indicates that its readers would know who was being talked about. This suggests someone who was well-known.

Because this banishment of the Jews by Claudius occurred in A.D. 49, this quote tells us that there were many Christians living in Rome at that time. Many of these Roman Christians were thus alive during Jesus’ ministry. Thus they knew that he existed. Indeed, Suetonius even wrote that these Christians believed in a “novel and mischievous superstition” (probably a reference to Jesus’ resurrection).<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, in the British Museum, there is a first century letter written by a Pagan named Mara Bar-Serapion, which contains this statement: “What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. . . . Nor did

the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.” Although critics claim that this quote is unreliable, Christian scholars have shown otherwise.<sup>34</sup>

More evidence that Jesus existed comes from the Babylonian Talmud. It even supports his divinity, that he was taken to safety in Egypt, that he had a mother of royal descent and a father who was a carpenter, that he was conceived out of wedlock, that he had disciples, and that he died at the age of thirty-three.<sup>35 36</sup> Consider, for instance, the following quote:

On the eve of Passover Jesus the Nazarene was hung. . . . A herald went forth and cried, “He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.” But since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was hanged on the eve of Passover!<sup>37</sup>

This reference to his being “hanged” meant in the first century “crucified.” This verse does say that the Jews planned to stone him to death (according to their law), but in the end, the Romans took over and crucified him. One reason this quote is reliable is because the part of the Talmud it came from was written between A.D. 70 and 200.<sup>38</sup> It even states that Jesus’ influence was throughout Israel, and, as do other Talmud references, that he worked miracles.

It is also significant that the Talmud was written by Jews who would have had no reason to make up stories about Jesus that confirm the New Testament. Thus the above quote is powerful evidence that the New Testament Jesus did exist. Although scholars attack some of these claims, their arguments are false.<sup>39</sup> These Talmudic references to Jesus must be authentic because they are mentioned by non-Jewish writers in the second century, such as the Pagan philosopher Celsus (ca A.D. 170) and the Church Father Tertullian (late second century).<sup>40</sup>

The writings of Justin Martyr give more evidence that Jesus existed. The following quote, which was written around A.D. 150, referred Emperor Antoninus Pius to Roman records about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ:

And the expression, “They pierced my hands and my feet,” was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were fixed in His hands and feet. And after He was crucified, they cast lots upon his vesture, and they that crucified Him parted it among them. And that these things did happen you can ascertain in the “Acts” of Pontis Pilate.<sup>41</sup>

Two other non-Christian references to Jesus were made by Pliny and Lucian during the early second century. Because Pliny was a good historian and his statements refer to Jesus but not to his miracles, Pliny’s statements were neither interpolations or hearsay.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it is clear that less than one hundred years after the crucifixion even Caesar himself accepted that Jesus had existed. This section shows that by the early second century “a great multitude of every age, class, and sex stood accused of Christianity.”<sup>43</sup>

But this is not all. There is more historical, non-scriptural evidence that Jesus Christ existed. This evidence is given in the rest of this section. It also helps to establish the reality of the crucifixion. The year of the crucifixion is then documented later in this chapter.

Tertullian and Lucian, in the second century, mentioned that there was darkness at the time of the crucifixion, as does the Bible. They wrote that the event was even documented in the Roman archives.<sup>44</sup> According to the Christian historian Julius Africanus (ca A.D. 221), a Pagan

historian named Thallus (ca A.D. 52) also documented that there was darkness at the time of Jesus' crucifixion.<sup>45</sup>

Although some scholars claim that Thallus did not live during the first century, there are good reasons to believe that he did:

For instance, in all extant copies of *Antiquities* 18.6.4, Josephus mentions a Samaritan freedman of Tiberius (early first century) named "Thallus." A first century inscription also mentions an imperial freedman of Tiberius named "Thallus."<sup>46</sup> And finally, Tertullian implied Thallus was alive in the early 90s A.D., during the time of Josephus.<sup>47</sup>

Phlegon, an early second century freedman of Emperor Hadrian, also gave historical evidence that Jesus existed. For instance—according to Origen—Phlegon wrote that Jesus gave prophecies that later came true:

Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his Chronicles, not only ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events (although falling into confusion about some things which refer to Peter, as if they referred to Jesus), but also testified that the result corresponds to His predictions.

Origen also quoted from Phlegon that: "Jesus, while alive, was of no assistance to himself, but that he arose after death, and exhibited the marks of his punishment, and showed how his hands had been pierced by nails." Origen, Eusebius, and Julius Africanus also wrote that Phlegon mentioned the darkness at Christ's crucifixion.<sup>48</sup> That darkness though was not due to a solar eclipse, but there was a lunar eclipse two days later. The darkness at the time of the crucifixion was probably caused by a desert sandstorm.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, in modern times, on May 19, 1780, a similar darkness was well documented, which was caused by widespread forest fires (more on this in Appendix C). The dust from these fires even caused the moon to turn red.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, the dust from the sandstorm at the crucifixion also turned the moon red. This event was mentioned in the Report of Pilate and by Bishop Cyril of Alexandria.

Furthermore, even more archaeological evidence from the mid-first century will be given next to confirm that the New Testament is true. Although the Shroud of Turin is also powerful evidence that could be given here, the scientific evidence for its authenticity will not be documented until Chapter 11.

The family tomb of Simon Barsabas (dating no later than A.D. 42) gives more evidence that the biblical Jesus existed. This tomb is near Jerusalem in a mountainside close to the Kidron Valley. Within it several coffins inscribed with dedications to Jesus and marked with the sign of the cross were found. It is also remarkable that the family members buried in this tomb are mentioned in the Book of Acts.<sup>51</sup> But this is not all. The James Ossuary also gives evidence that Jesus Christ existed. It dates to the mid-first century. (The traditional date for James' death is A.D. 62.) The ossuary is inscribed in Aramaic with the words "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."<sup>52</sup>

Although some scholars assumed that the inscription was partially a forgery (since the Jesus portion had been cleaned after it was found), enough patina, such as dirt residue, still remained on that portion to give solid evidence that it is authentic.<sup>53</sup> A careful scientific study of the epigraphy of the inscription also strongly supports its authenticity. Still, some scholars claimed that antiquities dealer Oded Golan might have forged the part of the inscription that mentions Jesus.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the Israel Antiquities Authority experts have an ulterior motive for rejecting the box's authenticity: For as Jews, they would prefer to not find evidence that Jesus

existed. However, many other qualified experts, both Israeli and non-Israeli, who have carefully examined the inscription, proclaim it to be authentic.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, research continues to support that conclusion.<sup>56</sup>

### **When were the New Testament books written?**

The New Testament was not written long enough after the events it describes to be based on myth or legend: For instance, the four Gospels were written less than sixty years after the events they describe, and Paul's letters were written less than thirty years after the events they describe. The latest scholarship even shows that "most if not all of [the New Testament] books were written before A.D. 70," and that, indeed, some of them were probably written as early as "the 40s and 50s A.D." Also, the comparison of ancient New Testament manuscripts shows that they were accurately preserved (See: Chapter 10). The early Church Fathers (beginning with Clement during the late first century) even gave enough quotes from the New Testament to reconstruct almost the entire book.<sup>57 58</sup>

The New Testament is even based upon many reliable eyewitness testimonies. And, unlike the apocryphal gospels, it is full of details that only mid-first century Jews and others who lived in Palestine could have known. The arguments that they were composed at much later dates are thus undeniably weak.<sup>59</sup> The fact that the Book of Revelation was written during the 60s A.D. is proven in Chapter 8.

### **Josephus and the Date of Herod's Death**

The Bible says that King Herod the Great was alive when Jesus Christ was born. Most scholars still believe that Herod died in 4 B.C.; thus, Jesus could not have been born in 2 B.C. unless the 4 B.C. date for Herod's death is incorrect. This matter is solved primarily through the writings of Josephus. According to the best Greek copies of his book *Antiquities*, Herod's son Philip began to rule thirty-seven years before the twentieth year of Tiberius.<sup>60</sup> If Josephus used the Jewish calendar and the nonaccession-year system to date regnal years (which counts the first partial year as a whole year of reign), the best Greek copies suggest that Herod died in 4 B.C. Josephus also wrote that Herod died soon after a lunar eclipse, and there was a lunar eclipse visible from Jerusalem on March 13, 4 B.C. Thus, in part because of this date for Philip and the date of this eclipse, most scholars believe that Herod died in that year.

However, all extant copies of *Antiquities* made prior to A.D. 1544 from the Latin say that Philip died in the twenty-second year of Tiberius. One reason "the twenty-second year" is probably correct is because it is more likely for the number two to have been dropped during transmission than for it to have been added. If Josephus used the Julian calendar (from January 1 to December 31) and the accession-year system to date regnal years (which counts the first calendar year as the first year of reign), the best Latin copies state that Philip began to rule in 1 B.C. This suggests that Herod died in 1 B.C.<sup>61 62</sup>

Still, there are more reasons to reject the 4 B.C. eclipse date. For instance, Josephus wrote that two Rabbis were burnt alive on the day before the eclipse. But the day before the 4 B.C. eclipse was Adar 15, which is one of the high days of Purim. But the Jews did not perform executions on that holiday.<sup>63</sup> The execution also could not have happened after sunset on Adar 16. This is because that day was a lunar Sabbath, as will be explained later in this chapter. And besides, as you will see next, there is a much better candidate for this eclipse.

Now, if 4 B.C. were the only year from 7 B.C. to A.D. 1 when there was a lunar eclipse visible from Jerusalem, the date of Herod's death would be settled. However, there was a total lunar eclipse visible from Jerusalem on January 10, 1 B.C. Indeed, it fits well with all the facts concerning Herod's death and burial. There was another lunar eclipse on December 29, 1 B.C. But it cannot fit correctly into the chronology of Herod.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, the March 13, 4 B.C. eclipse and the December 29, 1 B.C. eclipse were only partial (less than 30 percent). Since Josephus wrote that after the martyrdom of the two rabbis the moon turned red with their blood, this is another reason to reject both of these eclipses. This is because they did not make the moon look red.<sup>65</sup> Also, the only eclipse Josephus mentioned was the one soon before Herod's death. Thus, out of the three aforementioned candidates, it is most likely that the ominous, blood-red eclipse on January 10, 1 B.C. would have been mentioned in his histories.

There are two other candidates for the eclipse soon before Herod's death. The first was on March 23, 5 B.C. This cannot be the correct eclipse though because there were not enough days between it and the next Passover for all of the events Josephus mentioned as happening during that time to have been accomplished. This will be explained further later in this section. Also, the chronology of Herod given by Josephus and confirmed by Roman records rules out the idea that this was the correct eclipse.

The other eclipse was on September 15, 5 B.C. But it also does not fit the chronology of Herod given by Josephus and certain Roman records. Also, there are seven months between this eclipse and the next Passover, which is far too long for the chronology of events that Josephus tells us occurred between the eclipse and the next Passover. At the time of the eclipse, Herod was at Jericho, which is very hot during late summer. Thus it is very unlikely that Herod would have went there during late summer to rest during his terminal illness. The January 10, 1 B.C. eclipse though was in mid-winter, which is when the climate at Jericho is quite comfortable.

Furthermore, during the year of the eclipse, the Jewish high priest Matthias performed his priestly duties for about nine or ten months until the eclipse, and, during that time, he stepped down for one day due to sexual impurity. This was on the Day of Atonement. However, counting back about nine or ten months from the September 15, 5 B.C. eclipse, there was no Day of Atonement during that time.<sup>66</sup>

According to a seventh century commentary on the scroll called the *Megillath Taanith*, Herod died on Kislev 7. However, M. Moise Schwab has done extensive research concerning this scroll and is certain that Shebat 2 is the correct date. This scroll, written during the first century A.D., mentions these two festival dates. It says that on Shebat 2 no mourning was permitted. This would make sense if this day commemorated the death of Herod, as he was despised by the Jews.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, given this information, the 4 B.C. eclipse is ruled out because there were months between it and the next occurrence of these two festival days. By the end of this chapter, you will see that Shebat 2 in 1 B.C. is the correct date. Thus Herod died on January 27, 1 B.C. (Shebat 2). (Hebrew months began on the second day of the hidden moon, with Nisan 1 always falling on the second day of the hidden moon nearest to the Spring Equinox, as will be explained later in this chapter.)

According to Josephus, Herod died and then was buried before the next Passover. Thus Herod could not have died in 4 B.C., because there was not enough time between that eclipse and the next Passover for the known events to have occurred during those twenty-nine days. The claim that the Passover after Herod's death was the one a year later is also ruled out by certain

facts. For instance, Archelaus would not have waited a whole year to assume the throne, and it was customary after the king's death for the treasury to be used in burial rites and then returned to Rome. It is thus quite unlikely that the Roman emperor would have waited thirteen months for that to happen.<sup>68</sup>

So, to determine when Herod died, the known events must be analyzed that occurred between the time of the eclipse and the time of his death and between the time of his death and the date of the next Passover: For instance, Herod became increasingly sick after the eclipse, underwent medical treatment for about a week, traveled about twenty-five miles to warm baths, ordered prominent men from throughout Judea to meet with him (people who arrived before he died, some of them having traveled 70 or 80 miles), his son Antipater was executed, and then Herod died five days later.

After the things just mentioned, certain events occurred between the time of his death and the date of the next Passover: For instance, after political and religious dignitaries arrived, barefoot family members carried his body about twenty-five miles from Jericho to the Herodian, during which time they stopped at the towns along the way so that people could pay their respects. This probably resulted in an average distance of about one mile per day once the time they stayed in the various towns along the way is included. The amount of time the general public mourned who were sympathetic to Herod must also be included: a total of thirty days. And the whole procession did not just happen; instead, it needed organizing: For instance, a military escort of proper size had to be assembled; about 500 Israelites also had to be assembled to carry the spices for the preservation of the body; and, as stated, the royal treasury had to be secured to be involved in the burial rites.

It is certain, then, that all of the events just mentioned in the last two paragraphs probably took about ten to twelve weeks, especially since Herod planned it to be, according to Ernest L. Martin, "the grandest kind of funeral that any man had ever had." Therefore, since the January 10, 1 B.C. lunar eclipse occurred about three months before the next Passover, which is plenty of time for the said events to have occurred, it is the only candidate that fits in light of the other evidences.<sup>69</sup> However, there are other problems to solve about the date of Herod's death—things that again concern the writings of Josephus.

Jewish historians writing in Judea dated the reigns of foreign kings from Tishri 1, whereas they dated the reigns of their own kings from Nisan 1, which was the beginning of their sacred year.<sup>70</sup> Herod was an Idumean who pretended to be a Jew. He was also appointed by Rome, was hated by the Jews, and embraced Greco-Roman culture and religion. Thus Josephus dated Herod's reign from Tishri 1. But he dated Roman regnal years from January 1. That was New Year's day on the Julian calendar. He wrote his histories in Rome. He thus used the Julian calendar to date Roman emperors so that Roman readers would understand. But he used the Jewish calendar to date Herod so that Jewish readers would understand.

The next paragraph shows that Herod was appointed king of Judea in late summer or early fall on or after September 18, 39 B.C. (Tishri 1). Although the consular year Josephus gives indicates that Herod left Jerusalem right after Pentecost in 40 B.C., many other historical facts prove that he left Jerusalem right after Pentecost in 39 B.C. The time period he was appointed king during is explained in the next paragraph based on ancient travel times via horseback and via ship.

He left Jerusalem right after Pentecost in early June. He then traveled to Masada. Then he traveled to the capital of the Nabataean kingdom. After that, he traveled to the coast and then sailed to Egypt. He thus probably left Egypt about five weeks after leaving Jerusalem. He then

sailed to Rhodes, and, during this journey, there was a severe storm for several days, which was caused by the Etesian winds, which blow during July and August. He then stayed in Rhodes for about one week till another storm abated. He then sailed to Rome and was named king right after he arrived. He probably arrived in Rome about ten weeks after leaving Egypt.<sup>71 72</sup>

Because Josephus used the accession-year system to date the regnal years of kings (which counts the first calendar year as the first year of reign), he dated Herod's first year to 38/37 B.C. Again, he dated each regnal year of Herod from Tishri 1 to Tishri 1. This Jewish month began on a new moon in September and ended on the next new moon in October. Josephus wrote that Herod came to power 107 years before Jerusalem was conquered in A.D. 70/71. This also points to 38/37 B.C. as Herod's first year. Josephus wrote that Herod ruled thirty-seven years from his appointment by the Romans. Herod thus died in 2/1 B.C.

Here is more evidence that Herod's reign began in 38/37 B.C. The Battle of Actium occurred on September 2, 31 B.C., and Josephus wrote that it was during Herod's seventh year of rule. Josephus also wrote that in year fourteen of Herod's reign Gallus made his expedition to Arabia, which occurred in 25 or 24 B.C. Furthermore, Josephus wrote that after Herod's seventeenth year of rule Augustus Caesar came to Syria in the spring of 20 B.C., while Marcus Apuleius and Publius Silius were consuls.<sup>73</sup>

The Hasmonean government began in 162/161 B.C. Josephus wrote that it ended 125 years after it was set up. This points to 37/36 B.C. Herod thus conquered Jerusalem and overthrew the Hasmonean king Antigonus on January 2, 36 B.C. Josephus also wrote that this conquest occurred in the consular year that went from March 1, 37 B.C. to March 1, 36 B.C. He also wrote that it occurred in the third month (of the Macedonian Olympic year), on the day of the fast, and exactly twenty-seven years after Pompey had conquered Jerusalem on January 1, 63 B.C.

Josephus also gives us another way to calculate that Herod's reign came to an end in 1 B.C. He wrote that after the execution of Antigonus, who was the previous king of Judea, Herod ruled another thirty-four years. Josephus wrote that Antigonus was killed 126 years after the government of the Hasmonians was set up. Thus Antigonus was killed in 36/35 B.C.<sup>74</sup> This was after about nine months of political exile in Antioch, Syria. Josephus wrote that Hyrcanus II began to rule in the month of Adar in 63 B.C. and that Antigonus died twenty-seven years and six months later.<sup>75 76</sup> Thus Antigonus was executed in the month of Tishri in 36 B.C. Herod's first regnal year after that was thus 35/34 B.C. His thirty-fourth and last regnal year after that was 2/1 B.C.

### **Herod Died when Varus was Governor**

Another reason many scholars date Herod's death to 4 B.C. is because Josephus states that P. Quintilius Varus was the governor of Syria when Herod died. Varus though was only known to have served as governor of Syria from 6 to 4 B.C. Thus dating Herod's death to 4 B.C. seemed like the only option. But it is now known that Varus had a second term beginning in 1 B.C. and ending in A.D. 1. This was when Gaius Caesar was the imperial legate of the East.<sup>77</sup>

Josephus also states that while Varus was governor of Syria he directed a war against the Jews in Palestine during the summer after Herod's death. The problem though is that there is no Roman record of such a war between 8 and 2 B.C. Ernest L. Martin though shows that this war happened in the summer of 1 B.C.<sup>78</sup> Thus Herod could not have died in 4 B.C.

## **Herod's Sons: Antedated Reigns**

Herod's son Antipater became co-ruler with him in 4 B.C. Because Antipater saw his two brothers Alexander and Aristobulus as politically threatening, during his first year he made false charges concerning them so that Herod would have them killed. Antipater then conspired to have Herod killed, as well, so Herod had him executed in 1 B.C.

The execution of Antipater left the kingdom to be inherited, upon Herod's death, by his three sons Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip. But these three sons of Herod each probably began to rule over some territory in 4 B.C. It becomes certain, based on the writings of Josephus, Dio, and on ancient coins (none of which read earlier than "year five"), that these three brothers antedated their reigns to 4 B.C., although their first regnal year was actually 1 B.C.<sup>79 80</sup>

After Herod killed his sons Alexander and Aristobulus, one reason his other sons Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip antedated their reigns to 4 B.C. was probably to lay claim to the royal blood that was lost at that time.<sup>81</sup> They also probably awarded to themselves Antipater's years of reign, who, as mentioned, was executed in 1 B.C.

## **The Early Church Fathers and the Year of Christ's Birth**

The consensus of the early Church Fathers is that Jesus Christ was born within the first nine months of 2 B.C. They were: **Irenaeus** (ca A.D. 130-202), **Clement of Alexandria** (ca A.D. 150-ca 215), **Tertullian** (ca A.D. 160-ca 225), **Hypolotus of Rome** (ca A.D. 170-236), **Julius Africanus** (ca A.D. 170-ca 240), **Origen** (ca A.D. 185-ca 253), **Eusebius of Caesarea** (ca A.D. 264-ca 340), and **Epiphanius** (ca A.D. 315-403).<sup>82 83</sup> This is solid evidence that Jesus was born in the spring of 2 B.C.

## **Year of the Census**

Luke 2:1-2 states that because Mary and Joseph were of the "house and line of David" they had to travel to Bethlehem for a Roman census, or registration, while those of non-Davidic lineage were only required to go into "[their] own city." This registration occurred while Mary was pregnant with Jesus. The three censuses near the birth of Christ were in 9/8 B.C., 3/2 B.C., and A.D. 6/7. The A.D. 6/7 census though is ruled out because Jesus was born while King Herod was still alive, which was before January 27, 1 B.C.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, since a later section proves that the biblical date for the first year of Jesus' ministry is A.D. 29 and that his age at that time was thirty, the 3/2 B.C. census must be the one referred to by Luke, since A.D. 29 minus thirty years is 2 B.C. These facts thus show that Jesus was born in 2 B.C.

Luke 2:4-7 states:

Joseph also went up from Galilee . . . to . . . Bethlehem . . . in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (NASB)

Luke 2:7 says that there was no room in the inn after Joseph and Mary had been enrolled in the census. This suggests that many other people who had traveled to Bethlehem for this census were staying in the inn there at that time. Thus Joseph and Mary came to Bethlehem for this census in April of 2 B.C. This is documented later in this chapter. This was a good time of year for a census because the weather was mild, the crops had been planted, and harvest had not yet begun.

Now, most Bible translations of Luke 2:2 state this census occurred when Quirinius was governor of Syria, which included Judea. This has been a problem though because conventional history suggests that he was not governor of Syria until A.D. 6. But it is now known that he had an earlier term as governor there from 3 to 2 B.C. This is proven by the *Titulus Tiburtinus*. The claims that L. Calpurnius Piso or S. Saturninus was the governor of Syria during this time have been disproven.<sup>85</sup> Thus Luke 2:2 dates the birth for Christ to 3 or 2 B.C. The rest of this section proves that there was, indeed, a Roman census throughout the Roman world from 3 to 2 B.C.

It is now known that in 3 B.C. an empire-wide Roman oath of allegiance combined with a census began, which was finished in the fall of 2 B.C.<sup>86</sup> Luke 2:1 states that: “[During the year when John the Baptist was born] Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world” (NIV Brackets mine). This decree was probably made in the fall of 3 B.C. This was during the same year, if reckoned from Nisan to Nisan, of the birth of John the Baptist early in the fall of 3 B.C. The oath of allegiance was completed before Augustus’ Silver Jubilee began in February of 2 B.C.

Non-biblical sources confirm that there was a Roman census in 3/2 B.C. For example, the fifth century historians Orosius and Moses of Khorene wrote that there was a Roman census in 3/2 B.C. They based this claim on Roman and Armenian records. Likewise, an ancient inscription found in eastern Turkey states that there was a Roman oath of allegiance in 3 B.C. This was confirmed by Josephus. He wrote that about twelve to fifteen months before Herod died “the whole Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Caesar.” So, if Herod died on January 27, 1 B.C., the Judean oath taking was most likely in the fall of 3 B.C. The census though was later in the spring of 2 B.C.

This date range of 3/2 B.C. is also confirmed by a statement that Emperor Augustus made. He said that during his thirteenth consulship (2/1 B.C.), on February 5, 2 B.C., he received the title *Pater Patriae* (“Father of the Country”) from the Roman senate and all Roman citizens. This suggests that an oath of allegiance took place during the previous year. Indeed, 2 B.C. was also special because it was the 750<sup>th</sup> year from Rome’s founding and the Silver Jubilee (25<sup>th</sup> year) of Caesar Augustus’ rule, which Jubilee began in February of 2 B.C. and ended in February of 1 B.C. Thus the census must have been completed during that twelve month period.<sup>87</sup>

### **Month of John the Baptist’s Birth**

Luke 1:5-24 gives an account of a priest named Zechariah, who served in the Jewish temple, at Jerusalem, during the course of Abijah, which served twice a year, either around June (the first course) or December (the second course). Luke 1:24 states that soon after this his son John, who later became known as “John the Baptist,” was conceived. It is also certain that because of Jewish purification laws John was conceived a little over two weeks after Zechariah completed his priestly course. Therefore, if Luke 1:5 refers to the first course of Abijah, John was born in the spring. But if it refers to the second course, he was born in the fall.<sup>88</sup> As you will see, it must

have been the second course; thus, because Luke 1:35-36 says that Jesus was conceived six months after John was conceived, it is certain that Jesus was born in the spring.

### **Spring Birth for Jesus**

The most fitting time of year for the birth of the Savior is spring. Spring signifies new life, flowers, and warmth, as nature's benevolence returns after the Spring Equinox, when days once again become longer than night until their culmination on the day of the Summer Solstice. Thus since Christ called himself "the light of the world" and the Spring Equinox heralds the time when light triumphs over darkness, the fact that Jesus was born soon after it is quite significant.

In addition, more evidence that Jesus was born in the spring comes from Luke 2:8, which mentions shepherds "keeping watch over their flocks by night" (KJV). This actually rules out a late fall to late winter (November through March) birth for Jesus. This is because the Talmud says that during that time period at the higher elevations in ancient Israel (e.g., Bethlehem) sheep were kept sheltered at night because of the cold.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, spring was lambing season (late March to early April), which was when shepherds watched "over their flocks by night" to protect the newborn lambs. Thus, since Christ was called "the Lamb of God," lambing season was a perfect time for his birth.<sup>90</sup>

### **Astrology and the Star of Bethlehem**

Remarkably, computers can show what occurred in the night sky during the years leading up to Jesus Christ's birth. Research in this area shows that an April 6, 2 B.C. birth for Christ is quite likely. This section documents that there were many impressive signs in the heavens between 7 and 2 B.C. that pointed to the immanent birth of the Savior.<sup>91</sup>

The first signs to herald the birth of Christ were the three conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces in 7 B.C. This happens once about every 900 years. These conjunctions were fitting because Jesus Christ ushered in the Age of Pisces. The next sign was on August 8, 3 B.C. when the coming of Jesus Christ, the "messenger of Yahweh," was heralded by Mercury ("the messenger"), the Sun ("the supreme father"), and the Moon ("considered a mother") were in Leo ("the chief sign of the zodiac") during the new moon.

Furthermore, on August 10, 3 B.C., still during the new moon, there was a "morning star" conjunction of Venus (symbolizing "the goddess") and Jupiter (symbolizing the "father of the gods") near the end of the sign Cancer—the last sign of the astrological year. A "morning star" is the brightest star in the morning sky right before sunrise. Jesus called himself "the bright morning star" (Revelation 22:16; See also: 2 Peter 1:19). Thus this conjunction pointed to the coming of Jesus Christ.

The next sign was the retrograde motion of Jupiter ("the king planet") that caused it to be conjunct with Regulus ("the king star") three times during the period from 3 to 2 B.C. This was unusual since the last time this occurred was 15/14 B.C. and the next time it occurred was in A.D. 69/70. This in the context of the other signs pointed to the coming of a king.<sup>92</sup>

This was then followed on June 15, 2 B.C., during the full moon, by a very rare occultation, or merging, of the "evening stars" Jupiter and Venus. This had last happened hundreds of years beforehand and would not happen again for about the same amount of time. This occultation was in the first few degrees of Leo, which is the beginning sign of the astrological year. This was also the chief sign of the zodiac—which the Jews called the Lion of Judah in association with the

Messiah. This extremely close occultation in the context of the August 10, 3 B.C. conjunction of Venus and Jupiter and the massing of planets in Leo on August 25, 2 B.C. marked the beginning of a new age.<sup>93</sup>

Another sign was the retrograde motion of Jupiter in Leo on December 21, 3 B.C. during the full moon. This heralded the coming of the Light of Truth, who was the Lion of Judah. Jupiter then continued to be retrograde until December 25, 3 B.C. Jupiter was retrograde again from December 21 to December 25 in 2 B.C., when Jupiter appeared to stop (due to retrograde motion) in Virgo (“the virgin”).<sup>94</sup> This represented how Jesus was safe in Egypt, since Virgo is associated with the kind Egyptian goddess Isis.

The previous two signs ended on the day the Babylonians (and later the Romans) celebrated the birth of the sun god.<sup>95</sup> On December 21, the length of day is at its shortest, and then, it seems to stay the same until December 25, when it becomes discernible that the sun rises a little earlier and travels a little higher in the sky. The daytime then lengthens, slowly approaching the number of hours in a night, as night itself lessens. Thus December 25 symbolizes a turn in the battle of light against darkness, as it is assured that eventually the light will attain victory over the darkness.<sup>96</sup>

The wise men, or magi, probably knew when the Messiah would be born, even to within a few months accuracy, based on prophecies handed down to them from the prophet Daniel. They also may have known that Daniel 9:24-27 foretold that Jesus would begin his ministry in A.D. 28/29 and would die in A.D. 32/33, as explained in Chapter 8. (Certainly, the Mesoamerican record authenticated in Chapter 13 foretold that Jesus would be born in 2 B.C. This is documented later in this chapter.) However, before the magi are discussed more, a few more signs will be discussed and a few more details about some of the signs that were already discussed shall be given.

It was on the night of April 7, 2 B.C. in the land of Judea that the Savior was born. This was on April 6 in the Americas. The angelic announcement to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks “by night” certainly supports a late night birth. It is also significant that the sun at this time was in Aries, which is a fitting sign for he who was known as the “Lamb of God.” This is because the animals ruled by Aries are sheep and, especially, rams. Also, those with their sun-sign in Aries are prone to harm from sharp instruments.<sup>97</sup>

Also, according to Kathryn L. Silverton, a Czechoslovakian physician named Eugene Jonas made discoveries in the 1950s that give evidence for astrology. For instance, he discovered that the gender of the zodiac sign the moon is in when a baby is conceived determines the gender of that baby. (He used this to predict gender with an accuracy of about 85 percent, while later studies achieved a 98 percent accuracy.)<sup>98</sup> Tradition states that Mary’s pregnancy with Jesus lasted ten months, and ten lunar months before April 6, 2 B.C. is exactly June 14, 3 B.C.<sup>99</sup> So, if Jesus was actually conceived on June 14, 3 B.C., according to this astrological theory the moon should have been in a masculine sign at that time. The sign it was in was Leo, which is indeed masculine!

Once the magi saw the new star on the night Jesus was born, they probably soon after began their journey in search of him. This new star will be discussed later in this chapter. It turns out that when Jupiter and Venus merged on June 15, 2 B.C. they appeared as one very bright star in the direction of Judea from the point of view of the magi as they were travelling to Jerusalem.<sup>100</sup>

These magi were most likely involved with the government of the Parthian Empire. Thus some of them probably lived in its capital, whereas the others probably lived in other major Parthian cities. Perhaps some of them were each the head of a different order of magi. Two of the

former Parthian capitals were about 850 miles from Jerusalem, as the crow flies. The magi probably gathered at the then current Parthian capital about one-and-a-half months after the new star appeared. They then traveled for about one-and-a-half months via camel more than 800 miles from the Parthian capital to Jerusalem. They probably arrived about three months after the birth of Jesus. Thus, including preparation time, they probably arrived in Jerusalem in early July of 2 B.C. These magi, who practiced astrology, were probably Zoroastrian priests.

However, how do we know that these magi were astrologers? Well, only astrologers could have interpreted the meaning of the conjunctions, associated constellations, and so on, in the years leading up to Jesus Christ's birth. Also, these magi were certainly men of God, because they came to worship Jesus, and because, when God warned them in a dream of Herod's evil plans, they were obedient unto His direction.<sup>101</sup> In fact, contrary to popular opinion, the Bible does not condemn astrology if it is used for a good purpose.<sup>102</sup>

Now, Jesus—in accordance with Jewish Law—was presented at the temple in Jerusalem forty days after his birth (Luke 2:22-24). Also, Joseph and Mary gave an offering for the poor that same day. Thus the magi's visit and giving of gifts was sometime after this, for the offering would not have been necessary if they had already received the precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.<sup>103</sup>

The visit of the magi was between early June and mid-July, when Jupiter was visible near the horizon right after sunset. As will be explained, this is solid evidence that the magi visited Herod during that time. The magi probably met with Herod during the first week of July in 2 B.C. This was when Jesus was about three months old. After Herod told them to go to Bethlehem to find little Jesus, they began to travel there in the early evening, a distance of about five miles.

As they traveled to Bethlehem, the Star of Bethlehem (Jupiter) would not have been visible, although it was still going before them as stated in Matthew 2:9. This was due to the rotation of the earth. The magi then rejoiced when Jupiter became visible in the western sky near the horizon once the sun had set (Matthew 2:10). This suggests that if Mary and Joseph were living in a house directly to the western side of Bethlehem, Jupiter would have led the magi straight to it. This is because the planet would have seemed from the point of view of the magi to be hovering directly above it (Matthew 2:9). This could only happen if the planet was near the horizon.

Matthew 2:13-14 states that, after being warned in a dream that Herod planned to slaughter all of the male children in Bethlehem age two and younger, Joseph fled to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. (This slaughter probably involved only about a dozen children, so considering the magnitude of Herod's other atrocities and of the atrocities of other ancient rulers, it is not all that surprising that Josephus did not mention it.)<sup>104</sup>

The magi thus visited Jesus while Jupiter was an evening star, which only happens for about a month once a year. This visit was thus between early June and mid-July in 2 B.C. When this star became visible right after sunset as the magi traveled to Bethlehem, it was in Leo, which is associated with the Messiah, as explained earlier in this section. Thus the astrological signs in 7 B.C. and from 3 to 2 B.C. (and, as will be explained, the new star in April of 2 B.C.) confirm that Jesus was born on April 6, 2 B.C.

## **The Beginning of John's and Jesus' Ministries**

Luke 3:1 says that John began his ministry "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." Some scholars claim this should be counted from when Tiberius began to reign with

Augustus in late October of A.D. 12. But the ancient sources show that his reign should be reckoned from Augustus' death on August 19, A.D. 14. The question though is: What system did Luke use to count regnal years?

There are three possibilities: The nonaccession year system counts the first partial calendar year as the first full year of reign. The dated-year system begins and ends the first year on the day a king began to rule. And the accession-year system counts the first calendar year (from new year to new year) as the first year of rule. The first system dates the first year of John's ministry to A.D. 27/28 or 28/29. The second system dates the first year of his ministry to A.D. 28/29. And the third system dates the first year of his ministry to A.D. 28/29 or from January 1, A.D. 29 to December 31, A.D. 29.

The first system is ruled out for a few reasons: The Church Father Eusebius dated the fifteenth year of Tiberius to the fourth year of the 201<sup>st</sup> Olympiad, according to the second or third system.<sup>105</sup> The Syrians used the third system during the first century. The Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians used the third system, as well. The kings of Judah almost always used the third system.<sup>106</sup> And Josephus also used it.<sup>107</sup> The Romans used the second system and the third system.<sup>108</sup>

Luke may have been a Syrian who lived at Antioch.<sup>109</sup> Luke 3:1 certainly lists one leader of Syria who ruled during the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Also, Antioch is mentioned eighteen times in the Bible, and sixteen of them are in the Book of Acts, written by Luke. Thus Luke may have used the Syrian calendar. It begins each year in the fall on Tishri 1. According to two Syrian coins, the fifteenth year of Tiberius began in the fall of A.D. 28 and ended in the fall of A.D. 29. This was according to the third system. This would place the beginning of John's ministry in the month of Tishri when it was warm enough to baptize people in the Jordan River within the Judean Desert. That month began on September 8 in A.D. 28.<sup>110</sup>

Many scholars though believe that Luke was a Jew. The ancient Jews who lived in Israel dated the reigns of foreign kings from Tishri 1. Thus, on the Jewish calendar, the fifteenth year of Tiberius went from the fall of A.D. 28 to the fall of A.D. 29, according to the third system. Yet, Luke wrote these verses in the Roman style, to a Roman official, and about a Roman emperor. Thus he may have used the second system, which was used by Roman historians.<sup>111</sup> It would place the fifteenth year of Tiberius from August 19, A.D. 28 to August 18, A.D. 29.<sup>112 113</sup>

This section has thus shown that Luke either used the second system, which is independent of any calendar, or the third system and the Syrian, Jewish, or, much less likely, the Roman calendar. This proves that John began his ministry between Tishri 1, A.D. 28 and December 31, A.D. 29.

The scriptures say that on the day Jesus was baptized he "began to be about thirty" (Luke 3:23). This must be his exact age, because God gives precise years for important chronologies. Thus on the day Jesus was baptized his age began to round off to thirty years; therefore, he was twenty-nine years and six months old. John thus baptized Jesus in the fall on October 5, A.D. 28 (Tishri 1). This was a day of rest on which there were trumpet blasts and sacrifices. This heralded the beginning of his redemptive work among the Jews.

He then went into the wilderness later that day, where he fasted and was then tempted by Satan (Mark 1:9-12). He stayed there for forty days. The Jewish Day of Atonement was during this time on October 16, A.D. 28. Thus at this time John was thirty—since he was born six months before Jesus, and because of the age requirement for priestly service.<sup>114</sup>

This law is found in the Torah, the Mishnah, and the writings of Irenaeus. It is based on how long it takes Saturn to return to the same place in the zodiac, as seen from earth. It takes between

almost twenty-nine and soon after thirty years for it to return. This suggests that the magickal effect of the Saturn return begins by the time a person is thirty. Jesus understood the technical reasons for this law, so he began his private ministry after his Saturn return, weeks before he turned thirty. His Saturn return was in May of A.D. 28. He could have begun his ministry at any time after this return. To simplify things, priests and rabbis could not begin their ministries until they turned thirty.

Six months after being baptized Jesus turned thirty. He did call his first disciples weeks before he turned thirty. And, later, he did his first miracle (turning water into wine) a few days before Passover. He made it clear though that his public ministry had not yet begun, because he said, "My time has not yet come" (John 2:9-13 NIV). Then, on Passover, he began to teach openly and to perform miracles in public (John 2:13, 23), which shows that he had already turned thirty.<sup>115</sup>

In addition, another verse also shows that Jesus began his ministry in A.D. 29. It has been mistranslated though to state that the Jews told Jesus at Passover on the first day of his ministry: "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" (John 2:20 RSV). It has been assumed this refers to the entire temple complex, which had been worked on for forty-six years, beginning in 20 B.C. Thus this would place the first year of the Savior's ministry in A.D. 27/28.

However, the Greek word translated "temple" here is *naos*, which refers just to the inner sanctuary. Indeed, this verse should be translated, "How can you possibly raise up in three days an inner sanctuary that has stood for forty-six years?" The inner sanctuary was completed in late 19 B.C. The public ministry of Jesus Christ thus began forty-six years later between late A.D. 28 and late 29.<sup>116 117</sup>

Thus Jesus and John began their public ministries after they turned thirty. John began his ministry during the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar in A.D. 28/29. Then Jesus began his public ministry six months later at Passover. This was forty-six years after the inner sanctuary was completed in late 19 B.C. Thus Jesus began his public ministry on April 14, A.D. 29. Therefore, if one counts back thirty years from that date, it confirms that Jesus was born on April 6, 2 B.C. This is confirmed by the census and signs of 3/2 B.C.

Now, the rest of this chapter documents, among other things, that Jesus' ministry was four days short of lasting three years and that he was crucified on a Saturday right before Passover. The next section explains how early Church tradition supports a Saturday crucifixion. The section after that documents how to calculate the date of Passover, and the section after that proves that Jesus was crucified on a Saturday three days before the first day of the Jewish week.

## **The Church Fathers and a Saturday Crucifixion**

Early Church Fathers, such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, wrote that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday. The New Testament though says that Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week. But this was on the Jewish calendar. It was not on the Roman calendar. The assumption that this was the Roman first day of the week led to the idea that Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday. The earliest known tradition that Jesus died on a Friday comes from the second century Church Father Justin Martyr.<sup>118</sup> After assuming that the resurrection was on a Sunday and that there was one Sabbath between the crucifixion and the resurrection, some early Church Fathers dated the crucifixion to Friday.

A similar misconception arose when the Jewish day for the crucifixion was assumed to be the Roman one. The Jews would have referred to the day Jesus was crucified as the fifth day of the week. If some early Christians assumed this referred to the first century Roman calendar, it would have led them to claim that Jesus died on a Wednesday—the fifth day of the first century Roman week. Indeed, one early Christian tradition states that Jesus was crucified on that very day. A crucifixion on Wednesday would have seemed correct if it was assumed that Jesus was resurrected on a Saturday after a double Sabbath (i.e., Nisan 15 and then the weekly Sabbath). This resurrection day tradition could have come from the assumption that the Jewish calendar day for the resurrection, the first day of the week, was the Roman first day of the week, which in the first century was Saturday.<sup>119</sup>

It must be understood that during the first century, when these traditions developed, most people were illiterate. Thus most ideas were spread through word of mouth, which led to misconceptions. Also, it was very difficult to write, copy, and preserve written documents. Although most of the important doctrines were preserved, many church traditions became mixed with error. It is thus clear that an understanding of the Roman and Jewish calendars explains why early Church Fathers thought that Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday or Friday and also why a tradition arose that he was resurrected on Sunday.

## **The Biblical Calendar**

To date the crucifixion, the biblical calendar must be understood. The New Testament states that Jesus was crucified right before Passover on the fourteenth of the month of Nisan. Jesus Christ prophesied that he would be in the tomb for three days and three nights. Because the resurrection was in the morning on the first day of the Jewish week, this prophecy dates the crucifixion to the fifth day of the Jewish week. This section explains the true biblical calendar to help prove that Jesus died on a Saturday:

The first day of the month of Nisan begins on the second day of the hidden moon nearest to the Spring Equinox. The hidden moon is when the moon is not visible for two or three days. The dark moon is the first day of the hidden moon. The new moon during 29-day months is the second day of the hidden moon. The new moon during 30-day months is the second and third days of the hidden moon. The new lunar crescent begins to shine on the second day of the hidden moon. This is confirmed by Psalm 81:3, which based on the Babylonian Talmud and the Septuagint probably originally stated, “Sound the ram’s horn at the new moon, when the moon is hidden, at a day of our feast.”

That each Jewish month began on the second day of the hidden moon is confirmed by the writings of Philo (a Jewish leader who lived at the time of Christ), by a Christian sepulchral inscription from A.D. 269, and by the Cairo Sandstone Stele.<sup>120</sup> This means that Passover dates can be calculated with a planetarium program. The first day of each ancient Jewish month is calculated based on the days when the first visible lunar crescents appeared. Each first visible lunar crescent is always seen right after sunset right at the beginning of the first day after the new moon.

The biblical calendar is simple: The twenty-ninth day after the first visible lunar crescent is the first day of the month. The new moon lasts until the next first visible lunar crescent, or, if the first visible lunar crescent could not be sighted, the new moon lasts for two days. The 28-day Sabbath cycle begins once the new moon is over. Thus each month lasts twenty-nine or thirty days. It is really that simple.

The Bible states that the weekly Sabbath was determined by the moon. It was not based on an unending cycle of seven day weeks. God stated in Leviticus 23:2-3 that, “. . . My appointed times [mow'ed] are these: For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest . . .” (NASB). Psalm 104:19 states, “[God] made the moon to mark the appointed times [mow'ed] . . .” (ESV). The weekly Sabbath was thus an appointed time determined by the moon.

The 28-day Sabbath cycle is thus composed of four weeks, each with six work days and one day of rest. This day of rest is called a lunar Sabbath. The biblical calendar thus places the Sabbath days either on or one day before or after the four major phases of the moon—the first quarter, full moon, second quarter, and the day of the dark moon. Each of these weeks has six work days because it took six periods of time to create the universe and then create Adam.

Biblical months are twenty-nine or thirty days long. Lunar Sabbath scholars agree that during each 30-day month an extra day was added between the last Sabbath of the previous month and the first day of the 28-day Sabbath cycle. Most such scholars claim that it was the last day of each 30-day month. Thus they claim that it was the day before the new moon. But the scriptures prove that it was actually the second day of the new moon.

1 Samuel 20:5 states, “And David said to Jonathan, Behold, the new moon [begins] tomorrow . . . and I shall be hidden in the field until the third evening” (IBV Brackets mine). Thus David did not want to attend the new moon feast. He knew that the new moon feast could last one or two days, so he hid in a field for two days to be sure that he returned home after the new moon (1 Samuel 20:25, 27). Amos 8:5 states, “When will the new moon be over that we may sell grain, and the [Sabbaths] that we may market wheat? . . .” (NIV Brackets mine from the LXX). This means that on the first day of the month the Israelites did not know how long the new moon would last or what days the Sabbaths would fall upon during that month. The Sabbaths could only be calculated after the new moon was over.

The new moon was thus never one of the six work days or one of the seventh day Sabbaths. This is proven in Ezekiel 46:1, which states: “Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened” (ESV). This rules out the idea that the last day of each 30-day month was a transitional day right after the fourth Sabbath of that month but the day before the new moon of the next month.

Lunar Sabbath scholars claim that the scriptures mention Sabbaths that fell on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> days of the month. Yet other scholars claim that the scriptures mention Sabbaths that fell on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> days of the month. They also point out verses in scripture that mention work being done on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month.<sup>121</sup> The truth is that the lunar Sabbaths can only fall on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup> or on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> days of the month. The new moon is always a period of rest from regular work, during which there is also one or two feasts.<sup>122</sup> But sacred and vital work is allowed.<sup>123</sup>

The biblical calendar was outlawed in the fourth century A.D. This was long after both the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the destruction of the Jewish nation later in A.D. 135. After that, the knowledge of the true biblical calendar was lost for many centuries. Many modern rabbis thus assume that the first visible lunar crescent marked the first day of the biblical month, when it actually marked the first day of the 28-day Sabbath cycle.

When calculating ancient biblical dates, the second day of the hidden moon was the first day of the month, and the first visible lunar crescent most likely marked the beginning of the first day of the 28-day Sabbath cycle. The day after the day of the first visible lunar crescent was only the

first day of the 28-day Sabbath cycle when the first visible lunar crescent could not be sighted. However, the day of the first visible lunar crescent can now be predicted with perfect accuracy, which allows the first visible lunar crescent to always be right at the beginning of the first day of the 28-day Sabbath cycle. Thus this calendar is truly in harmony with the cycles of nature.

### **The Date of Christ's Crucifixion**

Another way to determine the year Jesus was born is to determine when his crucifixion occurred and then subtract thirty-three years from that date. These thirty-three years are his thirty year age at the beginning of his ministry plus the three year length of his ministry. This length for his ministry is confirmed by scriptures that indicate Jesus went through four Passovers during his ministry. Because God gives precise years for important chronologies, He must have given the exact number of Passovers during the ministry of Jesus.

John 2:13, 23 mentions the first Passover, which occurred at the very beginning of his ministry. What Jesus says in John 4:35 shows that it is then some ten months later from the first Passover of his ministry, making the feast mentioned in John 5:1 most likely the second Passover of his ministry. John 6:4 then mentions the third Passover of his ministry, and John 11:55 mentions the fourth Passover, which began on the day of his crucifixion. His ministry thus lasted four days less than three years. Since it began on Passover in A.D. 29, that means his crucifixion occurred in A.D. 32.<sup>124</sup>

Matthew 12:39-40 says that Jesus would be in the "heart of the earth" for "three days and three nights." This refers to how long his body would be in the tomb. Therefore, counting forward three days and three nights from when he was put in the tomb, between 3:00 p.m. and sunset on Saturday, it is only possible for Jesus to have been resurrected on a Tuesday. This was the first day of the Jewish week on Nisan 17, A.D. 32. Many scholars though believe Jesus was crucified on a Friday (at noon) and was then resurrected at dawn on Sunday morning. The problem though is that this would not have been a total of three days and three nights in the tomb.

The body of Jesus was in the tomb for one partial day, two whole days, and three whole nights. This was called three days and three nights because the Jews reckoned part of a day or night as a whole day or night: "A day and night are [each] an Onah (a portion of time) and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it" (Brackets mine).<sup>125</sup> The Talmud and other Jewish literature show that a twenty-four hour period is not one Onah. It is two Onahs. There is a night Onah and a day Onah.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, a Saturday crucifixion followed by a Tuesday morning resurrection fits Matthew 20:19, which says that on the third day after the crucifixion Jesus would be raised to life. For indeed, his resurrection on Tuesday was on the third day from his 3:00 p.m. death on Saturday.

Next, Passover facts are given to help determine the date of the crucifixion. These facts show that the four Gospels do not contradict each other about when Passover was celebrated. They also prove that Jesus Christ died right when the national Passover Lamb was slain in the Jewish temple, after which the other Passover lambs began to be killed. Thus he literally took upon himself the sins of all mankind.<sup>127</sup>

One problem though is that some scholars claim that the national Passover Lamb was sacrificed at the beginning of Nisan 14, whereas other scholars claim that it was sacrificed near the end of Nisan 14. In fact, other scholars claim that a Passover Lamb was sacrificed at both

times during the first century A.D. But that argument is wrong. When the Passover Lamb was sacrificed matters because, according to scripture, Jesus Christ became the true Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7); thus, he died when the national Passover Lamb was sacrificed. But that could not have happened if the national Passover Lamb was sacrificed at the beginning of Nisan 14, since the four Gospels state that he died near the end of that day. The rest of this chapter proves that, indeed, the national Passover Lamb was sacrificed near the end of Nisan 14.

Exodus 12:6 states that during Mosaic times the Passover lambs were slain on Nisan 14 “between the two evenings.” Likewise, Deuteronomy 16:6 says “thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun.” These two verses indicate that the Passover lambs were to be slain between noon and sunset on Nisan 14. Thus noon was the first evening, when the sun begins to go down after reaching its zenith, and sunset was the second evening.<sup>128</sup> The Book of Jubilees, which was written by Jews in the second century B.C., also confirms that the Passover lambs were sacrificed during that time on Nisan 14.<sup>129</sup>

The details about the first Israelite Passover and their Exodus from Egypt indicate that the Passover lambs were slain, at that time, near the end of Nisan 14, “between the two evenings,” and eaten in haste that night, on Nisan 15. They ate it prepared to leave at any moment (Exodus 12:8-22).<sup>130</sup> After the angel of death passed over the homes of the Israelites (with lambs blood smeared on their doorposts) at midnight, they stayed inside until dawn, at which time they left their homes to gather in Ramesses (Exodus 12:22, 37). The Israelites had taken treasures from the Egyptians before this day and had collected the remains of Joseph.

That morning the Egyptians made them leave Ramesses (Exodus 12:31-33, 39). Numbers 33:3 states that this was on Nisan 15. It then took them the rest of the day to travel about twenty-five miles to western Succoth, in view of the Egyptians. The Israelites then crossed the border of Egypt early on that night, and they then camped in eastern Succoth (Deuteronomy 16:1). Moses later commanded the Israelites to celebrate their Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:42). This celebration was called the Feast or Festival of Unleavened Bread, which lasted from Nisan 15 to Nisan 21.

Exodus 12:18 states, “In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening” (ESV). Numbers 28:16 states, “On the fourteenth day of the first month is the LORD’s Passover, and on the fifteenth day of this month is a feast. Seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten” (ESV). These two quotes state that the Feast of Unleavened Bread began at the beginning of Nisan 15. This day went from sunset to sunset. The Passover sacrifice though was on Nisan 14.

Luke 22:1 states, “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover” (ESV). Likewise, Ezekiel 45:21 states, “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall celebrate the Feast of the Passover, and for seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten” (RSV). These two verses state that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was also called the Feast of Passover.

Ezekiel 45:21 was just quoted. The days it mentions began and ended at sunrise. At the time of King Solomon, the Jews probably changed from beginning days at sunset to the Egyptian custom of beginning days at sunrise. This was probably done because of the influence of the Egyptian Rosicrucian Order, which traced its wisdom to Adam, Abraham, and Moses, as explained in Chapter 14. The Jews though always kept the Sabbaths from sunset to sunset. Because the Greeks reckoned days from sunset to sunset, the Jews probably began to reckon days from sunset to sunset again in the fourth century B.C. during the Hellenistic Period. This was when the influence of Greek power and culture on Israel and other Middle Eastern nations

was at its peak.

Furthermore, the first century A.D. Jewish historian Josephus wrote that, “. . . we keep a feast for eight days, which is called the feast of unleavened bread.” Because he was a Pharisee, he here used sunrise to sunrise days, according to their custom. This made this festival last two partial days plus six whole days. He also wrote that, “. . . on the feast of unleavened bread, which was now come, it being the fourteenth day of the [Syro-Macedonian] month Xanthicus . . .” (Brackets mine).<sup>131</sup> This was the fifteenth day of Nisan on the biblical calendar. He also wrote that, “The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of passover, and falls on the fifteenth day of the month, and continues seven days . . . But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month . . .”<sup>132</sup> This quote uses Jewish calendar days, which were reckoned from sunset to sunset during the first century A.D.

The last seven paragraphs help to prove that during the first century A.D. the national Passover Lamb was sacrificed near the end of Nisan 14 and then eaten at the beginning of Nisan 15. Jesus Christ thus died when the national Passover Lamb was slain. But why do three of the four Gospels state that the Last Supper, which was eaten soon after sunset on the night of Nisan 14, was a Passover meal?

This contradiction can only be resolved if there were two Passover meals: the Christian Passover meal on the night of Nisan 14 and the Jewish Passover meal on the night of Nisan 15. This means the Last Supper was a new Passover ceremony instituted by Jesus Christ. The claim that there were two times for the Jewish Passover during the first century A.D. is without support. As explained next, the Festival of Passover went from sunset at the end of Nisan 14 to sunset at the end of Nisan 21.

This is confirmed by Josephus. He wrote that the Passover lambs were slain between 3:00-5:00 p.m. on Nisan 14. The Passover lambs were killed at that time during the first century (instead of right before sunset as it used to be), because the population of Israel had greatly increased. Because the number of lambs killed at Passover each year had increased to more than 200,000, the Jews needed hours to kill them—not just about half an hour before sunset.<sup>133</sup>

Josephus wrote that they were eaten after sunset and that none of the meat was allowed to be left over at sunrise the next morning. He also stated that at the end of Nisan 14—after the Passover lambs were killed—the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread began, which he stated continued until sunset at the end of Nisan 21. The afternoon from 3:00-5:00 p.m. before the eating of the Passover lambs was called Passover because the sacrifice of the national Passover lamb took place then. This sacrifice represented the blood that was smeared on door posts the night before the Israelite Exodus from Egypt. That blood caused the destroying angel to pass over those homes, instead of killing each firstborn who lived there.<sup>134</sup>

That Jesus was crucified a few hours before Passover is also supported by the quote given earlier from the Babylonian Talmud, which says that Jesus was crucified “on the eve of Passover.” The biblical calendar proves that Passover in A.D. 32 was on Saturday, April 10. The lunar Sabbath then fell on Monday, April 12 because the first visible lunar crescent was not visible at the end of the first day of the month. This caused the new moon to end the next day at sunset by default. As explained in the previous section, this caused the Sabbaths to fall on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> days of this month. As will be documented, the Christ, as our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), was killed right as the priest slew the national Passover Lamb in the temple.

There is proof that the New Testament does not contradict itself about when Passover occurred. The Jews called the day before Passover was eaten the day of Preparation. For instance, John 19:14 states that Jesus was crucified on the “day of Preparation of the Passover,”

while John 19:42 calls it simply the “Jewish day of Preparation” (ESV). This was when each family assured that all leaven was removed from where they would celebrate the seven day Festival of Unleavened Bread.

This section has shown that the Last Supper, which was eaten on the night before the crucifixion, could not have been a Jewish Passover meal. This is because the Jewish Passover did not begin until later that day in the afternoon. As stated, many scholars believe that the four Gospels contradict themselves about when the Passover occurred. This is because some New Testament verses say that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, and yet other verses say the Passover meal was eaten after Jesus was crucified. This is addressed more in the next few paragraphs.

The Last Supper was actually a new Passover ceremony instituted by Christ in which bread and wine were consumed in remembrance of him. This represented the acceptance of Christ’s “body” and “blood” as an atonement for sin. This acceptance of Christ’s body and blood is like unto how the Israelites smeared lambs blood on their door posts to cause the destroying angel to pass over their homes the night before the Exodus. Throughout the land of Egypt, this angel killed, on this night, the firstborn of each household that did not have lamb’s blood smeared on their door posts. This night was the first Passover. Nonetheless, although previously required by God, after Christ’s atonement such animal sacrifice was no longer necessary.

Now, the following three verses say that the Last Supper was a Passover meal. Matthew 26:18 reads: “. . . My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples” (ESV). Mark 14:14 reads: “. . . Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” (NIV). Likewise, Luke 22:11 reads: “. . . Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” (NIV). Thus Jesus instituted a new Passover ceremony. It is now called taking the sacrament.

Jesus stated at the Last Supper: “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16 NIV). As stated, the bread and wine of the Last Supper represented Jesus Christ’s body and blood, which represent his atoning light and love. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God; he is the true Passover. The destroying angel passes over those who partake of him. The early Christians celebrated this new Passover ceremony on Nisan 14, as confirmed by the Church Fathers Polycrates, Polycarp, Melito, and Apollinaris.<sup>135</sup>

As touched upon, the contexts of Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12, and Luke 22:7 show that the Last Supper was on the night before Jesus was crucified. Most translations of these three verses suggest that this meal was on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is a problem though because that festival began on Nisan 15, whereas the Last Supper was on Nisan 14.

The correct literal translations though solve this problem: Matthew 26:17 states, “on the And first unleavened came the disciples to Jesus, saying to Him, Where will You we may prepare for You to eat the Passover?” (IBV). Mark 14:12 states, “And on the first day of the unleavened, when the Passover they killed, say to Him the disciples of Him, Where do You wish going we may prepare that You eat the Passover?” (IBV). And Luke 22:7 states, “came And the day of the unleavened, on which must be killed the passover” (IBV).

Thus the correct translations of these verses do not even mention the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They instead refer to the day of unleavened on which the Passover was killed, which was Nisan 14. This was then followed by the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread, during which all the bread the Jews ate was unleavened. The Talmud states that in most circumstances all leaven had to be removed from each Jewish home by noon on Nisan 14 (or before sunset if an exception

could be made).<sup>136</sup> Each home was then kept that way for seven days. Thus, because all leaven had to be removed on Nisan 14, it was called the first day of the unleavened. But it was not a feast day.

Exodus 12:15 states, “Seven days unleavened bread you shall eat; indeed on day the first you shall cause to cease [taking] leaven from your houses” (IBV Brackets mine). This means that at sunset at the beginning of Nisan 15 the Jews had to be done taking leaven from their homes. They were to complete taking leaven from their homes on Nisan 14. This is supported by the Latin Vulgate, which reads, “Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread: in the first day there shall be no leaven in your houses” (Exodus 12:15). It is also supported by the Complete Jewish Bible, which reads, “For seven days you shall eat unleavened cakes, but on the preceding day you shall clear away all leaven from your houses . . .” (Exodus 12:15 chabad.org).

It should now be clear that Jesus ate the Last Supper with his disciples after sunset on Friday on the night on Nisan 14 (Mark 14:17). Thus the Last Supper was not a Jewish Passover meal. It should also be clear that the Jews ate the Passover meal on the night of Nisan 15. This meal in the year A.D. 32 began on a Saturday. This was after Jesus was crucified. There are more reasons though why the Last Supper was not a Jewish Passover meal. For instance, John 13:29 says the apostles supposed that Judas left right after the Last Supper to either buy some things that would be “needed for the Feast or to give something to the poor” (NIV). But no shops are open during the Feast of Passover. Thus, if it were during that feast, the other disciples would not have wondered if Judas went shopping.

These facts thus show that the Last Supper was a special meal done in honor of the true Passover Lamb, who was to die the next day for mankind’s sins. The next three paragraphs give the final proof that the Last Supper was not a Jewish Passover meal and that the New Testament does not contradict itself about when the Feast of Passover happened.

Mark 14:43 states that, on the night the apostles had eaten the Last Supper, Judas came with an armed crowd to arrest Jesus. Yet the Jews were not allowed to bear arms during the Feast of Passover.<sup>137</sup> Jesus was then taken before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Senate) in the morning on the day of his crucifixion, yet they would not have met during the Feast of Passover. Thus Jesus was arrested and crucified before Passover.<sup>138</sup>

Furthermore, John 18:28 states, “Then [the Jews led] Jesus from Caiaphas unto the [Roman] hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover” (KJV Brackets mine). And John 19:13-14 states, “Therefore when Pilate heard [the Jews demand that Jesus be not released], he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat . . . Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. . . .” (NASB Brackets mine).

And finally, Matthew 26:5 and Mark 14:2 state that the chief priests and elders of the Jews did not want the crucifixion to occur on the “feast day,” which started on Saturday at sunset. In fact, Matthew 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54, and John 19:14-16 all state that Jesus was crucified on the preparation day—the day before the Passover was eaten.

Jesus Christ was thus placed on the cross on Saturday, April 10, A.D. 32, at about the Jewish sixth hour, or 12:00 noon our time (Matthew 27:45-46; Luke 23:44; John 19:14). Although Mark 15:25 seems to contradict this by saying that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, the truth is that it does not. This is because Mark was writing to a Jewish audience; therefore, he used the Jewish reckoning.<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, Matthew, Luke, and John were writing to a Hellenistic audience; therefore, they used the Roman reckoning. And so, according to Matthew 27:45-50, Jesus died at the Jewish ninth hour, 3:00 p.m. our time. This was right when the priest was

slaying the national Passover Lamb in the temple to atone for Israel's sins! Thus Christ literally took upon himself the sins of all mankind, so that those who accept his blood sacrifice may be protected from eternal destruction.

It was on Saturday Nisan 14 after 3:00 p.m. but before sunset that the body of Jesus was laid in a tomb near the crucifixion site (John 19:41). The High Sabbath then began at sunset at the end of Nisan 14 (Leviticus 23:5-7). As explained, during the first century A.D., the Festival of Unleavened Bread began at the end of Nisan 14 and ended at the end of Nisan 21. During this time, Jesus was resurrected on the day of the Jewish Feast of First Fruits, which was always the day after the second Sabbath in the month of Nisan (Leviticus 23:10-11).<sup>140</sup> This was on Nisan 17 in A.D. 32. It is fitting, then, that he was the "firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20-24), which means that he was the first to be resurrected during his Naros cycle. He also rose from the dead when Hamal, which means "lamb," the brightest star in his sun sign, Aries, first rose again in the morning at its brightest, in the east, right before sunrise.

Luke 23:56 states that before the Sabbath some women prepared spices for the burial of Jesus. This means they prepared these spices on Saturday before sunset, and thus before the annual Sabbath on Nisan 15. Mark 16:1 states that, after the weekly Sabbath on Monday, after sunset, Mary Magdalene and two other women bought other spices, so they could go to the tomb in the morning and anoint Jesus. There is no contradiction between these two accounts.

Matthew 27:62-66 states that in the morning on Nisan 15 the chief priests and the Pharisees asked Pilate to have Jesus' tomb sealed and guarded for three days. This Pilate agreed to. This was done so the disciples of Jesus could not steal his body and then claim that he had risen from the dead on the third day after the crucifixion. The tomb was still being guarded by Roman soldiers at sunrise on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-4). This means that no one stole his body to then falsely claim that he had been resurrected.

Matthew 28:1-2 states: "After the [Sabbaths], at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone, and sat on it" (NIV). The tomb thus remained sealed until Tuesday morning. The word "Sabbaths" in brackets is the correct translation of the original Greek.<sup>141</sup> The two Sabbaths were Nisan 15 on Sunday and the weekly Sabbath on Monday. This confirms that the crucifixion was on a Saturday "three days and three nights" before the resurrection.

As stated, there was a total lunar eclipse visible from Mesoamerica on Monday, April 12, A.D. 32, while Jesus' body lay in the tomb. The last section of this chapter and Chapter 13 document that Israelites lived in Mesoamerica who descended from settlers who arrived there around 600 B.C. According to the teachings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which claims to be based upon ancient magickal teachings and is one of the foremost of such Orders, any type of magick may be done during an eclipse. The best time to finish the atonement may have thus been during a lunar eclipse—with a total eclipse being more fitting than a partial one. This eclipse thus helps to date the crucifixion.

More evidence that the crucifixion was in A.D. 32 concerns Pilate, who was the Roman governor of Judea at the time of the crucifixion—having been appointed by Sejanus. Ancient accounts state that Pilate was ruthless towards the Jews, and yet, when he tried Jesus before the Jewish people, he seemed weak and open to pressure from them. This change from ruthlessness to weakness must have occurred when Sejanus, who wanted to exterminate the Jews, was executed on October 18, A.D. 31 for plotting against the Roman Emperor Tiberius. This is when the emperor proclaimed that from then on the Jews should be treated fairly. Thus this helps to rule out all dates for the crucifixion before A.D. 31.<sup>142</sup>

The early Church Fathers, the census, the first term of Quirinius as governor of Syria, and the heavenly signs date the birth of Jesus to 3/2 B.C. Thus since he began to be about thirty when he was baptized means he was baptized in A.D. 28/29. This was during the first year of John's ministry and during the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. This was when John was thirty years old. Jesus began his ministry forty-six years after the sanctuary was completed. Thus Jesus began his ministry in A.D. 29/30. Indeed, he was thirty years old at that time.

The crucifixion must have been on a Saturday, three days and three nights before dawn on the first day of the Jewish week. It occurred two days before a total lunar eclipse. It must have occurred after Sejanus was executed in A.D. 31. This rules out A.D. 27 to 30. The April 10, A.D. 32 date for the crucifixion is documented further in the rest of this chapter. The final proof though that Jesus was crucified in A.D. 32 comes from Daniel 9:25-27, as documented in the next chapter. It proves that he was crucified in the middle of the seven year Sabbath cycle that went from A.D. 29 to 36.

### **The Jewish Day of Atonement**

On the Jewish Day of Atonement, the Jewish high priest would choose two goats and then cast lots to determine which one was to be sacrificed. The goat that would not be sacrificed was then set loose into the wilderness, after the high priest had laid his hands upon it to confer the sins of Israel upon it. Thus it was called the scapegoat. The Day of Atonement in A.D. 28 was on October 16. This was during the time that Jesus fasted in the wilderness for forty days. Thus, on that day, he took on himself the role of the goat that was set loose into the wilderness as an atonement for sin (Leviticus 16:7-10).<sup>143</sup>

The Jewish Talmud confirms that Jesus took on the role of the scapegoat, which was set loose into the wilderness. It states, counted exclusively, that the lot always fell on the same goat for forty years, from A.D. 31 until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. This meant that the same life was the source of atonement from then on. This miracle thus began on the Jewish Day of Atonement before Jesus was crucified. The Jewish scapegoat could offer atonement that lasted one year, but this miracle told the Jews that they needed to look elsewhere for atonement during that Jewish year from Tishri to Tishri. The Israelites knew who Jesus was at this point. He was to be their source of atonement from then on.

Also, a red cloth was tied to the goat that was set loose into the wilderness, after a portion had been ripped off that was then tied to the temple door, after which the cloth would symbolically turn white if the sins of the Israelite nation were forgiven. However, for forty years beginning in A.D. 31, the red cloth ceased turning white, because the Jews now needed to look elsewhere for atonement. Also, in A.D. 31, the temple doors began to open themselves, which led Jewish leaders to proclaim it as an omen that the temple would be destroyed.<sup>144</sup>

### **Mesoamerican Scripture and the Date of Christ's Birth and Death**

An ancient Mesoamerican record gives even more evidence that Jesus was a historical figure, and it also confirms that he was born in 2 B.C. and died in A.D. 32. Indeed, after researching for years to find out if this record is authentic, the facts convinced me that it is a true ancient Mesoamerican record. The truth is that the uneducated person who translated it, during the late 1820s, could not have known many of the facts within it. In fact, there is now much scholarly

support for it, finally giving it a high degree of scientific plausibility, as will be seen in Chapter 13.

This record, amid primarily spiritual content, gives the history of a group of Israelites who sailed across the ocean from the Middle East around 592 B.C. under the guidance of a prophet named Lehi. They then landed in Mesoamerica with the help of God and by His divine command, and eventually, most of those who remained faithful became known as the Nephites. In fact, two other groups also came to Mesoamerica: the first at the time of the Tower of Babel and the second right before the Babylonian captivity (early sixth century B.C.). The fact that the Bible says that all of Zedekiah king of Judah's sons were killed seems, at first, to contradict the account in this record of this final group. This is because the record states that one of Zedekiah's sons, whom it calls Mulek, later became king of a people in Mesoamerica known as the Mulekites. However, this contradiction is only in the minds of skeptics, since Zedekiah could have conceived an unborn child who was carried to safety before birth.

This ancient record also gives a prophecy that foretold the precise year when Jesus was to be born. In 1 Nephi 10:4, it states: “. . . six hundred years from the time that [the prophet Lehi and his family] left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world” (Brackets mine). This prophecy was not just an approximation, because 3 Nephi 1:4, 21 and 26 shows that Christ would be born precisely 600 years after Lehi's departure.

So, to determine when Jesus was born, the date Lehi left must first be determined. 1 Nephi 1:4 states, “For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah . . . there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.” Lehi began to prophesy unto the Jews in Jerusalem after these prophets had begun to prophesy. Thus the six hundred years began after Zedekiah's first year of reign.

Nevertheless, it was Jehoiakim, whose reign began in 608 B.C., who is here called “Zedekiah,” not the King Zedekiah whose reign began in 597 B.C. This is plausible because Jeremiah 27:1 in the Masoretic Text and the Dead Sea Scrolls refers to Jehoiakim as “Zedekiah.” This is because, as a mark of subservience, foreign kings renamed many Israelites and their leaders. Nebuchadnezzar thus probably gave the name Zedekiah to Jehoiakim.

Lehi prophesied, before he left, that many would be taken captive after Jerusalem was destroyed (1 Nephi 1:13). This foretold the first destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians in 601 B.C. and when many (over 10,000 Jews) were taken to Babylon in 597 B.C. However, after the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., only a few were taken captive. These things, then, indicate that Lehi left Jerusalem no later than 601 B.C.

Furthermore, after many Jews were taken captive, the king normally associated with the name Zedekiah began his reign as stated in 597 B.C. This thus means that he cannot be the Zedekiah referred to in 1 Nephi 1:4 because, if he were, Lehi would have been prophesying about a captivity that had already happened.

In 594 B.C., eight years after leaving Jerusalem, Lehi's son Nephi prophesied that most of the Jews who remained in Jerusalem would be destroyed, except for a few who would be taken captive. This prophecy was fulfilled in 587 B.C. (Again, this was the second destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians.) Lehi prophesied unto the Jews until one year before the first destruction of Jerusalem. He thus left with his family in 602 B.C. right before Nebuchadnezzar attacked and subdued Jerusalem. This points to a 2 B.C. birth of Christ, because he was born “six hundred years from the time that [Lehi] left Jerusalem.”<sup>145</sup>

The Mixtec calendar gives even more evidence that Jesus was born on April 6/7 Mesoamerican time. This day was reckoned from sunset to sunset. The Mixtec calendar began on the day 6 Mak. This day repeats every 365 days. The GMT correlation dates April 7, 2 B.C. as 13 Lamat 6 Mak. This is significant because the Mesoamerican record that gave the 600-year prophecy about when Christ would be born states that there were Israelites living in Mesoamerica who made the day after the sign of his birth the first day of their calendar (3 Nephi 2:8). The seer who translated that record even stated that Jesus was born on April 6. This was April 7 in Israel.<sup>146</sup>

Chapter 13 gives evidence that Jesus Christ visited the faithful in Mesoamerica after his resurrection. The Mayan name for Jesus Christ is Kukulkan, whom the Aztecs called Quetzalcoatl. Some scholars claim that he was born on the day 1 Reed on the Mayan calendar. But this was not the birth date of Christ. It was the birth date of the Toltec ruler named Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl. He was born in the tenth century A.D.<sup>147</sup>

As stated, the Nephite people, a minority among the Maya, made the day of the sign of his birth the first day of their year. This sign was a new star, which was seen the night before Christ was born (3 Nephi 1:13), when it was nighttime in Mesoamerica but daytime in Israel. It is remarkable that other ancient records also mention a new star at about this time.

An ancient Chinese record states that, "In the third year of the Chien-p'ing period, the third month, day 46," a new star appeared in the constellation Aquila.<sup>148</sup> It is likely though that, given its antiquity, the original source stated that, "In the fifth year of the Chien-p'ing period, the third month, day 56." Thus the "fifth year" was miscopied as the "third year," and "day 56" was miscopied as "day 46." This is because the number three and five and the number 46 and 56 were very similar in the ancient Chinese rod number system, which was used by astronomers from probably about the fourth century B.C. until about the seventeenth century A.D.<sup>149</sup> The "third month" though is correct. It limits the month to March/April.

The Chinese calendar has a 60-day cycle with day zero as December 25, 371 B.C. (Julian). This was when the new moon fell upon the day of the Winter Solstice.<sup>150</sup> The original Chinese date for the appearance of this Messianic star, which was "in the fifth year of the Chien-p'ing period, the third month, day 56," was thus on April 8, 2 B.C. (Julian). This was April 6 on the Gregorian calendar. There is even a neutron star in Aquila called PSR 1913+16, which scientists state came from a parent star that went supernova between 1500 B.C. and A.D. 1000.

Numbers 24:17, 19 states that the prophet Balaam foretold that "a star shall arise out of Jacob [through his son Judah]." He uttered this prophecy while gazing upon the standard of the Tribe of Dan. This is significant because this standard bore the image of an eagle, which represented the constellation Aquila. The magi were probably aware of this prophecy and then recognized the heavenly sign it pointed to and became alerted to the time of Christ's coming.<sup>151</sup>

The first day on the Nephite calendar began at sunset on April 6, 2 B.C. This is supported by the fact that days began and ended at sunset on the Mayan calendar.<sup>152</sup> Thus the new star was seen on the night of April 6, 2 B.C., while the Jews in Jerusalem were experiencing daytime. Hence they are nine hours ahead of Mesoamerica on our modern calendar.<sup>153</sup>

This Mesoamerican record states that Jesus died on the fourth day of the thirty-fourth year (3 Nephi 8:5). The Mixtec calendar intercalated one extra day every four years unlike the Mayan calendar. These are thus full solar years.<sup>154</sup> The first year of the calendar the Nephites instituted right after Christ was born began at sunset on April 6, 2 B.C. This was April 7 in Jerusalem. Thirty-three years plus three more days after that brings the date to sunset on April 9, A.D. 32. This was about 3:00 a.m. in Jerusalem. If the partial day is then added, it points to 3:00 p.m. that

day, which is when Jesus Christ died on the cross! This is very solid and precise evidence that Jesus died on April 10, A.D. 32.<sup>155</sup>

The modern Jewish calendar dates the Passover in A.D. 32 to April 12. The true biblical calendar though dates it two days earlier. The Mesoamerican record in question was translated when the true biblical calendar was not understood. Still, it got the number of days right between April 6, 2 B.C. and Passover in A.D. 32. This is solid evidence that it is a true ancient record.

This record shows that Jesus could not have been born in 4 or 3 B.C. This is because the fourth day of the thirty-fourth year after an April 6 birth in either of those years would not have fallen on a Passover, whether one uses a 365-day Mayan year or a 365.242-day Gregorian year. The fourth day of the thirty-fourth year after an April 6, 1 B.C. birth would date his death to April 1, A.D. 33. This would have been Passover on the modern Jewish calendar. But that date for his birth is ruled out by the chronology of Herod, which dates Herod's death to January of 1 B.C. Again, Herod was alive when Jesus was born. Passover in 1 B.C. was on March 31 on the true biblical calendar.

### **Modern Revelation and the Year of Christ's Birth and Death**

There are many theories about when Jesus was born. The years 4 B.C., 3 B.C., and 2 B.C. are the most popular. The correct year though is 2 B.C. He was then crucified in A.D. 32. The prophets Daniel and 'Abdu'l-Bahá confirm this: That 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a true prophet is shown in Chapters 8 and 9. He wrote that starting from the 457 B.C. decree of the Persian king Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, there were 457 years till Jesus' birth and 490 years till his death.

This period of 490 years is mentioned in Daniel 9:24. These are 70 "sevens" ( $70 \times 7 = 490$ ). Artaxerxes issued the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in the winter of his seventh year. That year went from Nisan 1 in 458 B.C. to Nisan 1 in 457 B.C. He blessed the Jews greatly, so his reign was reckoned from the first day on the Jewish sacred calendar. Jesus Christ was thus born 457 years later in 2 B.C. and died 490 years later in A.D. 32 counting exclusively with partial first and last years.

This means that Jesus was not born before 2 B.C. or crucified before A.D. 32. It also means that Jesus was not born after A.D. 1 or crucified after A.D. 34. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also wrote that Jesus died at the age of thirty-three.<sup>156</sup> This means that Jesus' ministry lasted three years, since he began his ministry when he was thirty. This confirms that Jesus died on the fourth day of his thirty-fourth year. Thus he was not born in 4 B.C. and he did not live thirty-six years and then die in A.D. 33.

### **Conclusion**

There are no significant contradictions in the New Testament. There are Old Testament prophecies that prove that Jesus is the Messiah. The biblical Jesus did exist. Archaeological evidence and many first and second century non-Christian sources prove that he did. The key events in the four Gospels are confirmed. This includes the census while Quirinius was the governor of Syria, the heavenly signs, and the birth, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. Herod did not die in 4 B.C. He died in 1 B.C. after Jesus was born. The 2 B.C. date of Christ's birth is proven through the early Church Fathers, the date of the census, the heavenly

signs, a modern prophet, and by counting back thirty years from the date of the beginning of his ministry.

The A.D. 29 date for the beginning of his ministry is proven through the fifteenth year of Tiberius and the forty-sixth year from the completion of the Jewish inner sanctuary. The New Testament states that Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, three days and three nights after being put in the tomb. This was after a double Sabbath. Because his ministry began in A.D. 29 and lasted three years, it is certain that he was crucified in A.D. 32. This year for his crucifixion is confirmed by the forty years of atonement and temple miracles from A.D. 31 to 70. The crucifixion was two days before a total lunar eclipse, and after Sejanus was executed in A.D. 31. And it must be at the end of the 490-year period of Daniel 9:24 and in the middle of the final Sabbath cycle of Daniel 9:25-27, as explained in the next chapter. These facts prove that Jesus died in A.D. 32. The 2 B.C. date for the birth of Jesus and his A.D. 32 date of death are confirmed by an ancient Mesoamerica scripture.

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