

**Luke 1:4-9 (KJV)**

4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. 5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, **of the course of Abia**: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. 8 And it came to pass, **that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course**, 9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

**1 Chr 24:7-19 (KJV)**

7 Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, 8 The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, 9 The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, 10 The seventh to Hakkoz, **the eighth to Abijah**, 11 The ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, 12 The eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, 13 The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, 14 The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, 15 The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses, 16 The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, 17 The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul, 18 The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to Maaziah. 19 These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

This was the *eighth* of the priestly courses of ministration in the Temple (I Chron. 24:10), and occurred, as did the others, twice in the year.

The "Courses" were changed every week, beginning each with a Sabbath. The reckoning commenced on the 22d day of Tisri or Ethanim (see Jewish Sacred Months). This was the eighth and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles = the "Great Day of the Feast" (John 7:37), and was a Sabbath (Lev. 23:39)

The first course fell by lot to Jerhoiarib, and the eighth to Abia or Abijah (I Chron. 24:10). Bearing in mind that *all* the courses served together at the three Great Feasts, the dates for the two yearly "ministrations" of Abiah will be seen to fall as follows:

The first\* ministration was from 12-18 Chisleu = December 6-12. [\* Reckoning of course from *Ethanim* or *Tishri* –the *First* month of the civil year. The sacred year was six months later, and began on 1st *Nisan*.] The second ministration was from 12-18 Sivan = June 13-19.

**The Jewish Sacred Months**

(the Civil months are six months later than the Sacred months).

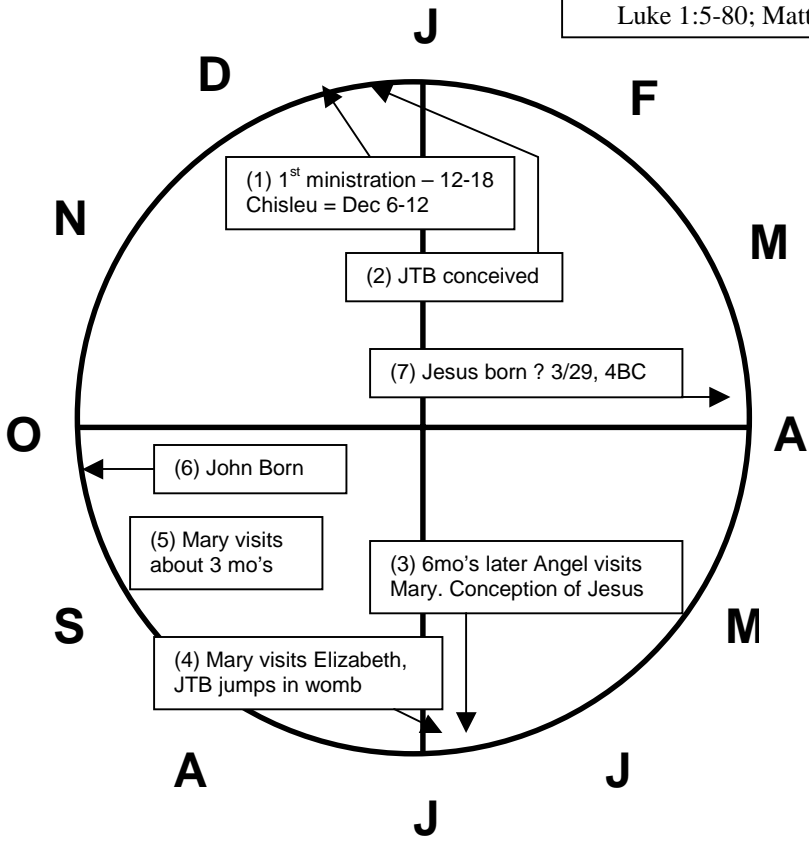
Sacred Month	Name of Month	Corresponding English Month	Festival During that Month	
1	Abib, or Nisan	April	14 <sup>th</sup> day	The Passover
			16 <sup>th</sup> day	Firstfruits of Parley Harvest Period
2	Zif	May	14 <sup>th</sup> day	Second Passover, for those who could not keep the first
3	Sivan	June	6 <sup>th</sup> day	Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks. Firstfruits of Wheat harvest, and Firstfruits of all the ground.
4	Thammuz	July		
5	Ab	August		
6	Elul	September		
7	Tisri, or Ethanim	October	1 <sup>st</sup> day	Feast of Trumpets
			10 <sup>th</sup> day	Day of Atonement
			15 <sup>th</sup> day	Feast of Tabernacles, Firstfruits of Wine and Oil
8	Bul	November		
9	Chisleu	December	25 <sup>th</sup> day	Feast of Dedication
10	Tebeth	January		
11	Shebat	February		
12	Adar	March	14 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> days	Feast of Purim

# The Real Christmas Story

# Timing of the Lord's Birth

Luke 1:5-80; Matt. 1:18-25; 1 Chr. 24-19

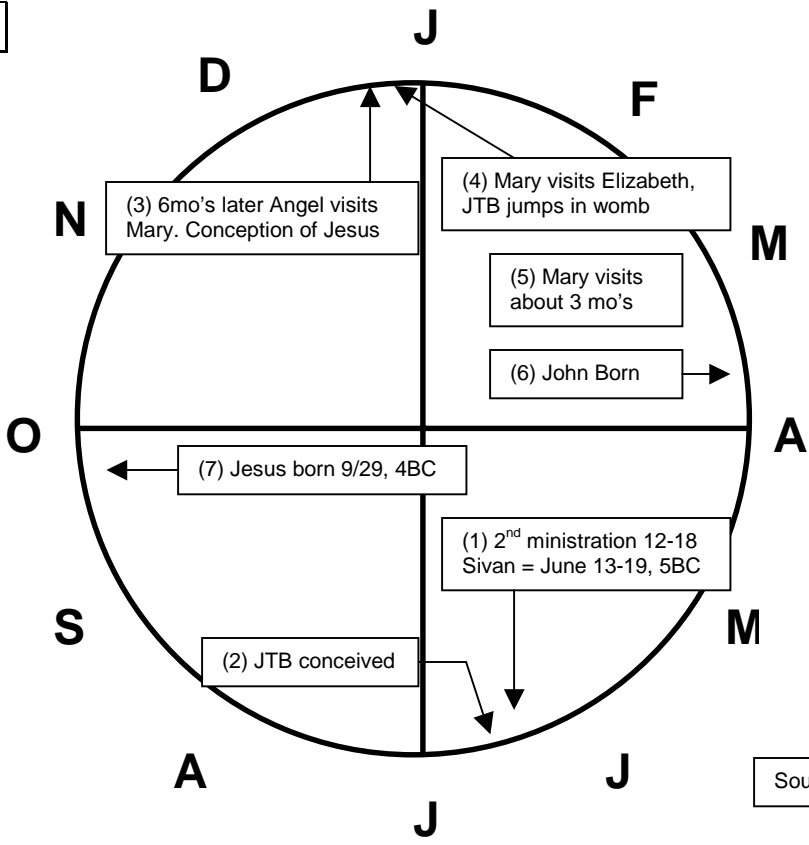
1<sup>st</sup> course of Abia



★ 2<sup>nd</sup> course of Abia

Arguments for the timing anchored after the 2<sup>nd</sup> course of Abia:

- (1) Pregnant Mary would not travel in dead of winter for census.
- (2) Shepherds and flocks would not be found in open fields at night in winter.
- (3) Roman taxation would be during peak harvest, not during off season.
- (4) Most Jewish people were going up to Jerusalem for Feast of Tabernacles. Roman tax easy to collect at this time.



(1) Luke 1:5, 1 Chron 24:10, John 7:37, Lev. 23:39.  
 (2) Luke 1:23, 39  
 (3) Luke 1:36-38  
 (4) Luke 1:39-55  
 (5) Luke 1:56  
 (6) Luke 1:57-80  
 (7) Luke 2:1-21

Source – Appx 179, Companion Bible

APPENDIX 179.

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I. PARALLEL DATINGS OF THE TIMES OF OUR LORD.  
 II. DATES OF "THE BEGETTING" AND THE NATIVITY, ETC.  
 III. "THE COURSE OF ABIA".

A.M. = Anno Mundi; i. e. in the year of the world. B.C. = Before Christ. Reckoned as from 4004 A.M.  
 A.C. = Anno Christi; i. e. in the year of Christ. Reckoned from the Nativity, in 4000 A.M. and 749-750 A.U.C.  
 A.U.C. = Anno Urbis Condite; i. e. the year in which the City (Rome) was founded.

I.

PARALLEL DATINGS OF THE TIMES OF OUR LORD.

A.M.	B.C.—A.D.	A.C.	A.U.C.
3000	44		0
1	43		710
2	42		11
3	41		12
4	40		13
5	39		14
6	38		15
7	37		16
8	36		17
9	35		18
3070	34		19
1	33		720
2	32		21
3	31		722
4	30	Decree of Senate of Rome	23
5	29		24
6	28		25
7	27		26
8	26		27
9	25		28
3050	24		29
1	23		730
2	22		31
3	21		32
4	20		33
5	19		34
6	18		35
7	17		36
8	16		37
9	15		38
3000	14		39
1	13		740
2	12		41
3	11		42
4	10		43
5	9		44
6	8		45
7	7		46
8	6		47
9	5		48
(See Ap. 60) 4000	4	THE NATIVITY	0
1	3	1st taxing of Census	1
2	2	Luke 2:1	2
3004	1	0 A.D.	4
5	1		5
6	2		6
7	3		7
8	4		8
9	5		9
4010	6		50
1	7		700
2	8	Christ in 12 the Temple	61
3	9		62
4	10	2nd Census (?)	63
5	11		64
6	12		65
7	13		66
8	14		67
9	15		68
4020	16		69
1	17		70
2	18		71
3	19		72
4	20		73
5	21		74
6	22		75
7	23		76
8	24		77
9	25		78
4030	26	3rd Census (?)	79
1	27	The Ministry	80
2	28	of our Lord	81
3	29		82
4	30		83
5	31		84
6	32		85
7	33		86
8	34		87
9	35		88
4040	36		89
1	37		90
2	38		91
3	39		92
4	40		93
5	41		94
6	42		95
7	43		96
8	44		97
9	45		98
4050	46		99
1	47		100
2	48		101
3	49		102
4	50		103
5	51		104
6	52		105
7	53		106
8	54		107
9	55		108
4060	56		109
1	57		110
2	58		111
3	59		112
4	60		113
5	61		114
6	62		115
7	63		116
8	64		117
9	65		118
4070	66		119
1	67		120
2	68		121
3	69		122
4	70		123
5	71		124
6	72		125
7	73		126
8	74		127
9	75		128
4080	76		129
1	77		130
2	78		131
3	79		132
4	80		133
5	81		134
6	82		135
7	83		136
8	84		137
9	85		138
4090	86		139
1	87		140
2	88		141
3	89		142
4	90		143
5	91		144
6	92		145
7	93		146
8	94		147
9	95		148
4100	96		149
1	97		150
2	98		151
3	99		152
4	100		153
5	101		154
6	102		155
7	103		156
8	104		157
9	105		158
4110	106		159
1	107		160
2	108		161
3	109		162
4	110		163
5	111		164
6	112		165
7	113		166
8	114		167
9	115		168
4120	116		169
1	117		170
2	118		171
3	119		172
4	120		173
5	121		174
6	122		175
7	123		176
8	124		177
9	125		178
4130	126		179
1	127		180
2	128		181
3	129		182
4	130		183
5	131		184
6	132		185
7	133		186
8	134		187
9	135		188
4140	136		189
1	137		190
2	138		191
3	139		192
4	140		193
5	141		194
6	142		195
7	143		196
8	144		197
9	145		198
4150	146		199
1	147		200
2	148		201
3	149		202
4	150		203
5	151		204
6	152		205
7	153		206
8	154		207
9	155		208
4160	156		209
1	157		210
2	158		211
3	159		212
4	160		213
5	161		214
6	162		215
7	163		216
8	164		217
9	165		218
4170	166		219
1	167		220
2	168		221
3	169		222
4	170		223
5	171		224
6	172		225
7	173		226
8	174		227
9	175		228
4180	176		229
1	177		230
2	178		231
3	179		232
4	180		233
5	181		234
6	182		235
7	183		236
8	184		237
9	185		238
4190	186		239
1	187		240
2	188		241
3	189		242
4	190		243
5	191		244
6	192		245
7	193		246
8	194		247
9	195		248
4200	196		249
1	197		250
2	198		251
3	199		252
4	200		253
5	201		254
6	202		255
7	203		256
8	204		257
9	205		258
4210	206		259
1	207		260
2	208		261
3	209		262
4	210		263
5	211		264
6	212		265
7	213		266
8	214		267
9	215		268
4220	216		269
1	217		270
2	218		271
3	219		272
4	220		273
5	221		274
6	222		275
7	223		276
8	224		277
9	225		278
4230	226		279
1	227		280
2	228		281
3	229		282
4	230		283
5	231		284
6	232		285
7	233		286
8	234		287
9	235		288
4240	236		289
1	237		290
2	238		291
3	239		292
4	240		293
5	241		294
6	242		295
7	243		296
8	244		297
9	245		298
4250	246		299
1	247		300
2	248		301
3	249		302
4	250		303
5	251		304
6	252		305
7	253		306
8	254		307
9	255		308
4260	256		309
1	257		310
2	258		311
3	259		312
4	260		313
5	261		314
6	262		315
7	263		316
8	264		317
9	265		318
4270	266		319
1	267		320
2	268		321
3	269		322
4	270		323
5	271		324
6	272		325
7	273		326
8	274		327
9	275		328
4280	276		329
1	277		330
2	278		331
3	279		332
4	280		333
5	281		334
6	282		335
7	283		336
8	284		337
9	285		338
4290	286		339
1	287		340
2	288		341
3	289		342
4	290		343
5	291		344
6	292		345
7	293		346
8	294		347
9	295		348
4300	296		349
1	297		350
2	298		351
3	299		352
4	300		353
5	301		354
6	302		355
7	303		356
8	304		357
9	305		358
4310	306		359
1	307		360
2	308		361
3	309		362
4	310		363
5	311		364
6	312		365
7	313		366
8	314		367
9	315		368
4320	316		369
1	317		370
2	318		371
3	319		372
4	320		373
5	321		374
6	322		375
7	323		376
8	324		377
9	325		378
4330	326		379
1	327		380
2	328		381
3	329		382
4	330		383
5	331		384
6	332		385
7	333		386
8	334		387
9	335		388
4340	336		389
1	337		390
2	338		391
3	339		392

APPENDIX 179: PARALLEL DATINGS, ETC. (cont.).

II.

DATES OF "THE BEGETTING" (*hē gennēsis*, Matt. 1. 18, 20 (see R.V. marg.). John 1. 14-) OF OUR LORD AND HIS BIRTH. (Luke 2. 7. John 1. -14.)

78   78	156   156	234   234
TRUTH 1=25-26 DEC. (5 B.C.)	20=12-13	29=15-16
(20) 2=26-27 (7)	21=13-14	30=16-17
3=27-28	22=14-15	ELUL 1=17-18
4=28-29	23=15-16	(20) 2=18-19
5=29-30	24=16-17	3=19-20
6=30-31	25=17-18	4=20-21
7=31-1	26=18-19	5=21-22
8=1-2 JAN. (4 B.C.)	27=19-20	6=22-23
9=2-3 (31)	28=20-21	7=23-24
10=3-4	29=21-22	8=24-25
11=4-5	NISAN 1=22-23	9=25-26
12=5-6	(30) 2=23-24	0=26-27
13=6-7	3=24-25	1=27-28
14=7-8	4=25-26	2=28-29
15=8-9	5=26-27	3=29-30
16=9-10	6=27-28	4=30-31
17=10-11	7=28-29	5=31-1 SEPTEMBER
18=11-12	8=29-30	(20) 6=1-2
19=12-13	9=30-31	7=2-3
20=13-14	10=31-1	8=3-4
21=14-15	11=1-2 APRIL	9=4-5
22=15-16	(30) 12=2-3	10=5-6
23=16-17	13=3-4	11=6-7
24=17-18	14=4-5	12=7-8
25=18-19	15=5-6	13=8-9
26=19-20	16=6-7	14=9-10
27=20-21	17=7-8	15=10-11
28=21-22	18=8-9	16=11-12
29=22-23	19=9-10	17=12-13
30=23-24	20=10-11	18=13-14
SERAT (20) 2=24-25	21=11-12	19=14-15
3=25-26	22=12-13	20=15-16
4=26-27	23=13-14	21=16-17
5=27-28	24=14-15	22=17-18
6=28-29	25=15-16	23=18-19
7=29-30	26=16-17	24=19-20
8=30-31	27=17-18	25=20-21
9=31-1	28=18-19	26=21-22
10=1-2 FEBRUARY	29=19-20	27=22-23
(20) 11=2-3	30=20-21	28=23-24
12=3-4 (Leap Year)	ZIF (20) 1=21-22	29=24-25
13=4-5	2=22-23	30=25-26
14=5-6	3=23-24	1=26-27
15=6-7	4=24-25	2=27-28
16=7-8	5=25-26	3=28-29
17=8-9	6=26-27	4=29-30
18=9-10	7=27-28	5=30-31
19=10-11	8=28-29	6=31-1
20=11-12	9=29-30	7=1-2
21=12-13	10=30-1	8=2-3
22=13-14	11=1-2 MAY	9=3-4
23=14-15	(31) 12=2-3	10=4-5
24=15-16	13=3-4	11=5-6
25=16-17	14=4-5	12=6-7
26=17-18	15=5-6	13=7-8
27=18-19	16=6-7	14=8-9
28=19-20	17=7-8	15=9-10
29=20-21	18=8-9	16=10-11
30=21-22	19=9-10	17=11-12
ADAR (20) 1=22-23	20=10-11	18=12-13
2=23-24	21=11-12	19=13-14
3=24-25	22=12-13	20=14-15
4=25-26	23=13-14	21=15-16
5=26-27	24=14-15	22=16-17
6=27-28	25=15-16	23=17-18
7=28-29	26=16-17	24=18-19
8=29-1	27=17-18	25=19-20
9=1-2 MARCH	28=18-19	26=20-21
(31) 10=2-3	29=19-20	27=21-22
11=3-4	30=20-21	28=22-23
12=4-5	SIVAN (30) 2=21-22	29=23-24
13=5-6	3=22-23	30=24-25
14=6-7	4=23-24	1=25-26
15=7-8	5=24-25	2=26-27
16=8-9	6=25-26	3=27-28
17=9-10	7=26-27	4=28-29
18=10-11	8=27-28	5=29-30
19=11-12	9=28-29	6=30-31
78   78	156   156	234   234

Days on Jewish reckoning, 290 | 290 days, on Gentile reckoning.

According to Jewish reckoning.	According to Gentile (Western) reckoning.
TRUTH 29 days.	DECEMBER 7 days.
SERAT 30	JANUARY 31
ADAR 29	FEBRUARY 29
NISAN 30	MARCH 31
ZIF 29	APRIL 30
SIVAN 30	MAY 31
THAMMUS 29	JUNE 30
AB 30	JULY 31
ELUL 29	AUGUST 31
ETHANIM 15	SEPTEMBER 29
290	290

290 days=40 weeks-forty sevens, the perfect period of human gestation (7x5x8=280).  
 The Component Numbers of 290 are highly significant in this connection.  
 7 denotes Spiritual Perfection.  
 5 " Divine Grace.  
 8 " Resurrection, Regeneration, &c. (Ap. 10).  
 1st TRUTH=25th December (5 B.C.)  
 15th ETHANIM=29th September (4 B.C.)  
 From 1st TRUTH to 15th ETHANIM (inclusive)=290 days.  
 From 25th DECEMBER (5 B.C.) to 29th SEPTEMBER (4 B.C.)=290 days.

1. It thus appears without the shadow of a doubt that the day assigned to the Birth of the Lord, viz. December 25, was the day on which He was "begotten of the Holy Ghost", i.e. by *pneuma hagion*=divine power (Matt. 1. 18, 20 marg.), and His birth took place on the 15th of *Ethanim*, September 29, in the year following, thus making beautifully clear the meaning of John 1. 14, "The Word became flesh" (Matt. 1. 18, 20) on 1st Tebeth or December 25 (5 B.C.), "and tabernacled (Gr. *eskēnōsen*) with us", on 15th of *Ethanim* or September 29 (4 B.C.).  
 The 15th of *Ethanim* (or *Tisri*) was the first day of the

Feast of Tabernacles. The circumcision therefore took place on the eighth day of the Feast=22nd *Ethanim*=October 6-7 (Lev. 23. 33-43). So that these two momentous events fall into their proper place and order, and the real reason is made clear why the 25th of December is associated with our Lord, and was set apart by the Apostolic Church to commemorate the stupendous event of the "Word becoming flesh"—and not, as we have for so long been led to suppose, the commemoration of a pagan festival.

2. An overwhelmingly strong argument in favour of the



## APPENDIX 179: PARALLEL DATINGS, ETC. (cont.).

correctness of this view lies in the fact that the date of "the Festival of Michael and All Angels" has been from very early times the 29th day of September, on Gentile (Western) reckoning.

But "the Church" even then had lost sight of the reason why this date rather than any other in the Calendar should be so indissolubly associated with the great Angelic Festival.

The following expresses the almost universal knowledge or rather want of knowledge of "Christendom" on the subject: "We pass on now to consider, in the third place, the commemoration of September 29, the festival of Michaelmas, *par excellence*. It does not appear at all certain what was the original special idea of the commemoration of this day" (Smith's *Dict. of Chr. Antiqq.* (1893), vol. ii, p. 1177 (3)).

A reference, however, to the Table and statements above, makes the "original special idea" why the Festival of "Michael and All Angels" is held on September 29 abundantly clear. Our Lord was born on that day, the first day of the "Feast of Tabernacles" (Lev. 23. 33). This was on the *fifteenth* day of the seventh Jewish month called *Tisri*, or *Ethanim* (Ap. 51. 5), corresponding to our September 29 (of the year 4 B.C.).

The "Begetting" (*gennēsis*) Day of the Lord was announced by the Angel Gabriel. See notes on Dan. 8. 16, and Luke 1. 19.

The "Birth" Day, by "(the) Angel of the Lord", unnamed in either Matthew and Luke.

That this Angelic Being was "Michael the Archangel" (of Jude 9), and *Mikā'el hassar haggādōl*—"Michael the Great Prince"—of Dan. 12. 1, seems clear for the following reason: If, "when again (yet future) He bringeth the First-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the Angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1. 6; quoting Ps. 97. 6)—then this must include the great Archangel Michael himself. By parity of reasoning, on the First "bringing" into the world of the only begotten Son, the Archangel must have been present. And the tremendous announcement to the shepherds, that the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9. 6) was on earth in the person of the Babe of Bethlehem, must therefore have been made by the same head of the heavenly host (Luke 2. 9-14). In mundane affairs, announcements of supremest importance (of kings, &c.) are invariably conveyed through the most exalted personage in the realm. The point need not be laboured.

3. The fact of the Birth of our Lord having been revealed to the shepherds by the Archangel Michael on the 15th of *Tisri* (or *Ethanim*), corresponding to September 29, 4 B.C.—the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles—must have been known to believers in the Apostolic Age. But "the mystery of iniquity" which was "already working" in Paul's day (2 Thess. 2. 7) quickly enshrouded this and the other great fact of the day of the Lord's "begetting" on the first day of the Jewish month *Tebeth* (corresponding to December 25, 5 B.C.)—as well as other events connected with His sojourn on earth,<sup>1</sup>—in a rising mist of obscurity in which they have ever since been lost.

The earliest allusion to December 25 (modern reckoning) as the date for the Nativity is found in the *Stromata* of Clement of Alexandria, about the beginning of the third century A.D. (See note 3, p. 197).<sup>2</sup>

That "Christmas" was a pagan festival long before the time of our Lord is beyond doubt. In Egypt Horus (or Harpocrates<sup>3</sup>), the son of Isis (Queen of Heaven), was born about the time of the winter solstice.<sup>4</sup> By the time of the early part of the fourth century A.D., the real reason for observing Christmas as the date for the miraculous "begetting" of Matt. 1. 18 and "the Word becoming flesh" of John 1. 14 had been lost

<sup>1</sup> Notably the day of the crucifixion, &c. (see Ap. 156, 165).

<sup>2</sup> His statements are, however, very vague, and he mentions several dates claimed by others as correct.

<sup>3</sup> Osiris reincarnated.

<sup>4</sup> See Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. III, p. 79 (Birch's ed.).

sight of. The policy of Constantine, and his *Edict of Milan*, by establishing universal freedom of religion furthered this. When many of the followers of the old pagan systems—the vast majority of the empire, it must be remembered—adopted the Christian religion as a cult, which Constantine had made fashionable, and the "Church" became the Church of the Roman Empire, they brought in with them, among a number of other things emanating from Egypt and Babylon, the various Festival Days of the old "religions". Thus "Christmas Day," the birthday of the Egyptian Horus (Osiris), became gradually substituted for the real *Natalis Domini* of our blessed Saviour, viz. September 29, or *Michaelmas Day*.

4. If, however, we realize that the centre of gravity, so to speak, of what we call the Incarnation is the *Incarnation itself*—the wondrous fact of the Divine "begetting", when "the Word became flesh" (see notes on Matt. 1. 18 and John 1. 14)—and that this is to be associated with December 25, instead of March—as for 1,600 years Christendom has been led to believe—then "Christmas" will be seen in quite another light, and many who have hitherto been troubled with scruples concerning the day being, as they have been taught, the anniversary of a Pagan festival, will be enabled to worship on that Day without alloy of doubt, as the time when the stupendous miracle which is the foundation stone of the Christian faith, came to pass.

The "Annunciation" by the Angel Gabriel marked the *gennēsis* of Matt. 1. 18, and the first words of John 1. 14.

The announcement to the shepherds by the Archangel Michael marked the Birth of our Lord. John 1. 14 is read as though "the Word became flesh (R.V.), and dwelt among us", were one and the same thing, whereas they are two clauses.

The paragraph should read thus:

"And the Word became flesh;

(Gr. *ho logos sarx egeneto*.)

And tabernacled with (or among) us."

(Gr. *kai eskēnōsen en hēmin*.)

The word *tabernacled* here (preserved in R.V. marg.) receives beautiful significance from the knowledge that "the Lord of Glory" was "found in fashion as a man", and thus *tabernacling* in human flesh. And in turn it shows in equally beautiful significance that our Lord was born on the first day of the great Jewish Feast of *Tabernacles*, viz. the 15th of *Tisri*, corresponding to September 29, 4 B.C. (modern reckoning).

The Circumcision of our Lord took place therefore on the eighth day, the last day of the Feast, the "Great Day of the Feast" of John 7. 37 ("Tabernacles" had eight days. The Feast of Unleavened Bread had seven days, and Pentecost one. See Lev. 23).

5. The main arguments against the Nativity having taken place in December may be set forth very simply:

(i) The extreme improbability, amounting almost to impossibility, that Mary, under such circumstances, could have undertaken a journey of about 70 miles (as the crow flies), through a hill district averaging some 3,000 feet above sea-level, in the depth of winter:

(ii) Shepherds and their flocks would not be found "abiding" (Gr. *agraudō*) in the open fields at night in December (*Tebeth*), for the paramount reason that there would be no pasturage at that time. It was the custom then (as now) to withdraw the flocks during the month *Marchesvan* (Oct.-Nov.)<sup>1</sup> from the open districts and house them for the winter.

(iii) The Roman authorities in imposing such a "census taking" for the hated and unpopular "foreign"

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the Lebanon shepherds are in the habit of keeping their flocks alive during the winter months, by cutting down branches of trees in the forests in that district, to feed the sheep on the leaves and twigs, when in autumn the pastures are dried up, and in winter, when snow covers the ground (cp. *Land and Book*, p. 204), but there is no evidence that the Bethlehem district was afforested in this manner.

APPENDIX 179: PARALLEL DATINGS, ETC. (cont.)

tax would not have enforced the imperial decree (Luke 2. 1) at the most inconvenient and inclement season of the year, by compelling the people to enroll themselves at their respective "cities" in December. In such a case they would naturally choose the "line of least resistance", and select a time of year that would cause least friction, and interference with the habits and pursuits of the Jewish people. This would be in the autumn, when the agricultural round of the year was complete, and the people generally more, or less at liberty to take advantage, as we know many did, of the opportunity of "going up" to Jerusalem for the "Feast of Tabernacles" (cp. John 7. 8-10, &c.), the crowning Feast of the Jewish year.

To take advantage of such a time would be to the Romans the simplest and most natural policy, whereas to attempt to enforce the Edict of Registration for the purposes of Imperial taxation in the depth of winter,—when travelling for such a purpose would have been deeply resented, and perhaps have brought about a revolt,—would never have been attempted by such an astute ruler as Augustus.

6. With regard to the other two "Quarter Days", June 24, March 25, these are both associated with the miraculous (Luke 1. 7) "conception" and birth of the Forerunner, as December 25 and September 29 are with our Lord's miraculous "Begetting" and Birth; and are therefore connected with "the Course of Abiah."

III.

"THE COURSE OF ABIA" (Luke 1. 5).

This was the eighth of the priestly courses of ministration in the Temple (1 Chron. 24. 10), and occurred, as did the others, twice in the year.

The "Courses" were changed every week, beginning each with a Sabbath. The reckoning commenced on the 22nd day of Tisri or Ethanin (Ap. 51. 5). This was the eighth and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles—the "Great Day of the Feast" (John 7. 37), and was a Sabbath (Lev. 23. 39).

The first course fell by lot to Jehoiarib, and the eighth to Abia or Abijah (1 Chron. 24. 10).

The conception of John Baptist	on or about 23rd SIVAN	= June 24	in the year 5 B. C.
The <i>Gennesis</i> (Begetting) of our Lord	" "	1st TEBETH = December 25	" " 5 "
The birth of John Baptist	" "	4th—7th NISAN = March 25-28	" " 4 "
The birth of our Lord	" "	15th TISRI = September 29	" " 4 "

or, placing the two sets together naturally:—

{ The conception of John	23rd SIVAN	= June 23-24	" " 5 "
{ The birth of John	7th NISAN	= March 28-29	" " 4 "
{ The Miraculous "Begetting"	1st TEBETH	= December 25	" " 5 "
{ The NATIVITY	15th TISRI	= September 29	" " 4 "

Bearing in mind that all the courses served together at the three Great Feasts, the dates for the two yearly "ministrations" of Abiah will be seen to fall as follows:

- The first<sup>1</sup> ministration was from 12-18 Chisleu = December 6-12.
- The second ministration was from 12-18 Sivan = June 13-19.

The announcement therefore to Zacharias in the Temple as to the conception of John the Baptist took place between 12-18 SIVAN (June 13-19), in the year 5 B. C. After finishing his "ministration", the aged priest "departed to his own house" (Luke 1. 23), which was in a city<sup>2</sup> in "the hill country" of Juda (verse 39).

The day following the end of the "Course of Abia" being a Sabbath (Sivan 19), he would not be able to leave Jerusalem before the 20th.

The thirty miles journey would probably occupy, for an old man, a couple of days at least. He would therefore arrive at his house on the 21st or 22nd. This leaves ample time for the miraculous "conception" of Elizabeth to take place on or about the 23rd of SIVAN<sup>3</sup>—which would correspond to June 23-24 of that year. The fact of the conception and its date would necessarily be known at the time and afterwards, and hence the 23rd SIVAN would henceforth be associated with the conception of John Baptist as the 1st TEBETH would be with that of our Lord.

But the same influences that speedily obscured and presently obliterated the real dates of our Lord's "Begetting" and Birth, were also at work with regard to those of the Forerunner, and with the same results. As soon as the true Birth day of Christ had been shifted from its proper date, viz. the 15th of Tisri (September 29), and a Festival Day from the Pagan Calendars substituted for it (viz. December 25), then everything else had to be altered too.

Hence "Lady Day" in association with March 25 (new style) became necessarily connected with the Annunciation. And June 24 made its appearance, as it still is in our Calendar, as the date of "the Nativity of John the Baptist", instead of, as it really is, the date of his miraculous conception.

The Four "Quarter Days" may therefore be set forth thus: first in the chronological order of the events with which they are associated, viz.:

<sup>1</sup> Reckoning of course from *Ethanin* or *Tisri*—the First month of the civil year. The sacred year was six months later, and began on 1st *Nisan*.

<sup>2</sup> The "city" is not named (possibly *Juttah*, some 30 miles to the south of Jerusalem).

<sup>3</sup> The conception of John the Baptist was, in view of Luke 1. 7, as miraculous as that of Isaac; but it is not necessary to insist upon the complete period of *forty sevens* (p. 198) in the case of Elizabeth. Therefore the birth of the Forerunner may have been three or four days short of the full two hundred and eighty days,—as indicated in the above table.