

# THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

According to the testimony of God's Word, astronomy, and history, Jesus Christ was born on September 11 in 3 B.C.

Bruce Mahone

Throughout history, several dates have been proposed for the birth of Jesus Christ. Historical sources from the first three centuries of Christianity do not refer to any holiday for observing his birth. It was not a major concern of the early Church. However, by the fourth century, pagan practices were becoming firmly entrenched in Christianity. Numerous deities, rituals, and holidays were being taken from local religions and given Christian names. One such holiday was the birthday of the unconquered sun. This was celebrated in Rome on December 25, around the time of the winter solstice. This holiday was adapted to Christianity and called the "Feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness." Eventually, it became the most popular date for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. God's Word, however, teaches very clearly that Jesus Christ could not have been born in December. The second chapter of Luke, along with several related scriptures, shows very clearly that Jesus Christ was born in early September on the day for reckoning reigns of the kings of Judah. God did many wonderful things to prepare for the birth of His Son.

*Luke 2:1:*

*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that*

*all the world should be taxed.*

This decree from Caesar affected the entire Roman Empire. The term "all the world" is used here as a figure of speech to emphasize the immense land area that Rome controlled. The word "taxed" should properly be translated "registered." A decree went out that all the Roman Empire should be registered.

There is historical evidence of a registration in 3 B.C. for all those under the control of Rome. This registration was to be an official declaration of political allegiance to Caesar Augustus in preparation for his Silver (twenty-fifth anniversary) Jubilee. Considering the other evidence for dating the birth of Jesus Christ (Biblical, historical, astronomical), this is the only known registration that Luke 2:1 could be referring to. September was an appropriate time for such a registration. The crops would have already been harvested, and the weather would be mild for travel. Also, it was the start of the Judean civil year.<sup>1</sup>

*Luke 2:2:*

*(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)*

This registration was first made when Cyrenius was in a position of authority in Syria. Historical sources indicate that Cyrenius was not yet governor of Syria in 3 B.C. However, the word "governor" in this verse simply refers to any leader, chief, or commander. He must have been a legate specially appointed to oversee this special registration.

1. The September, 3 B.C., dating of this event is further substantiated by the evidence of Josephus regarding the death of Herod the Great as well as astronomical calculations pertaining to an associated lunar eclipse. See Victor Paul Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*, (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1982), chapter 3.

*Luke 2:3, and 4:*

*And all went to be taxed [registered], every one into his own city.*

*And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David).*

Joseph was of the house and lineage of David, so he went to Bethlehem to be registered with his relatives. The timing of this registration, as well as Joseph's genealogy, his marriage to Mary, and Mary's pregnancy all worked together to fulfill the prophecy of Micah.

*Micah 5:2:*

*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

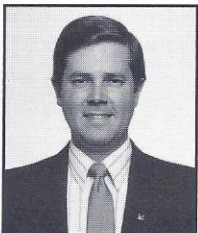
Jesus Christ indeed was born in Bethlehem. How interesting that a registration intended to honor the emperor of Rome culminated in honoring the birth of the king that God had promised His people for generations.

*Luke 2:5:*

*To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*

Joseph took his wife, Mary, with him to be registered. This indicates that she was also of the lineage of David. Two old Aramaic manuscripts emphasize this by their wording: "That there they might be enrolled, because they were both of the house of David."

Mary was in her ninth month of pregnancy, "being great with child." She and Joseph had been through the betrothal and wedding ceremonies. They were living together as husband and wife. Both of the Aramaic manu-



Bruce Mahone, a graduate of the Seventh Way Corps, works in the Research Department at The Way International.



scripts mentioned above omit the word "espoused" in Luke 2:5. By this time, Mary was simply referred to as Joseph's wife. She was under his full legal protection.

*Luke 2:6 and 7:*

*And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.*

*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

While in Bethlehem, Mary brought forth her firstborn son. Since Jesus was her firstborn son, she must have had several other children as well. This is further explained in the Gospel of Matthew.

*Matthew 13:55 and 56:*

*Is not this [Jesus] the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?*

Jesus Christ had at least four brothers and at least three (the verse says "all," not "both") sisters. The idea that Mary was a virgin throughout her lifetime is an idea born in paganism.

After Jesus was born, Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes. This was an Eastern custom pertaining to childbirth. Whenever a prince was born to a royal family, he would be "salted" and "swaddled." The salting was accomplished by washing the infant in salted water. The salt symbolized truth and honesty. Salting indicated that the child would always speak the truth and stand by his words.

Once the child was "salted," he would then be "swaddled." The entire length of his body was wrapped with strips of fine linen about two inches wide (swaddling clothes). Part of his face was, of course, left uncovered to allow normal breathing. This wrapping was a sign to God that the parents would raise the child to walk straight and upright before the Lord, free from any crookedness or deception. The swaddling clothes were left on the child for a brief period of time, then removed.

*Luke 2:8:*

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

In the vicinity of Bethlehem, shepherds were "abiding in the field." This indicates that they were most likely using a cultivated field as their sheepfold for the night. In the late summer or early fall, Eastern farmers would often hire shepherds to keep flocks in their fields at night. That way, the ma-

nure of the sheep would fertilize the fields. December weather in Bethlehem would have been much too cold for shepherds to watch their flocks in the field at night. Frost, heavy rains, and even snow occur from November to February in that area. The travel necessary for a massive registration would also have been much too treacherous at that time of year. September is a much more logical time for all of these reasons.

It is also interesting to note that David the shepherd was anointed to be king by the Prophet Samuel in this same Bethlehem area. How wonderful that God would call shepherds to witness the swaddling of Israel's true king. *Luke 2:9-11:*

*And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*

*And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

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### **Jesus Christ was born in early September on the day for reckoning reigns of the kings of Judah.**

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The words "came upon" should be translated "stood by." The shepherds were struck with fear by the angel's sudden and brilliant appearance. However, the angel encouraged them not to fear. He brought good news of great joy. The savior whose arrival they had anticipated was finally here! What rejoicing this must have caused in their hearts.

*Luke 2:12:*

*And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

The sign to them that they would find the promised Messiah was that he would still be wrapped in swaddling clothes. God's timing is truly magnificent. Even though the newly born infant would only be wrapped in the linen clothes for a brief period, God knew that the shepherds would arrive in time to see this ceremony confirming the birth of their new king.

*Luke 2:13 and 14:*

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth*

*peace, good will toward men.*

The multitude of the heavenly host was simply other angels. God's Word does not state that they were singing, wearing halos, or floating in the air. They were with the other angel who stood by the shepherds. And they said, "Glory to God in the highest. . . ." At the birth of Jesus Christ, God's anointed, they glorified God. What God had promised since Genesis 3:15, the coming of the promised seed, had finally occurred.

*Luke 2:15 and 16:*

*And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.*

*And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.*

The shepherds moved quickly upon the instructions given to them. They did not question or doubt the message God sent via the angels. They simply acted. And they found the babe in the manger, as the angel had told them. What they saw filled their hearts with awe, and they spread the glad tidings.

*Luke 2:17 and 18:*

*And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*

*And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*

Those that heard responded with wonder at the amazing news.

God did not call King Herod or the religious leaders to witness the swaddling of His Son. Instead, He sent an angel to some humble shepherds who would obey, act, and spread the news to others.

*Luke 2:19 and 20:*

*But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*

*And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.*

Mary, however, pondered these things in her heart. She put them in her "lockbox," deep in her heart, where she kept the most personal, meaningful treasures of her life. The shepherds were thankful for what they had seen and heard, glorifying and praising God. What wonderful believing men they must have been!

We have already seen that the birth of Christ could not have occurred in December. It must have been in the early fall, around September, and in the year of 3 B.C. To arrive at a more specific date, one must look at the truths of God's Word regarding this event that



are written in the stars.

*Genesis 1:14:*

*And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.*

The "seasons" spoken of in this verse indicate periods of time, not just spring, summer, fall, and winter. The word "signs" indicates marking things of significance that are to come. A prophecy in Isaiah speaks of a significant thing that was to come at a set period of time.

*Isaiah 7:14:*

*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Matthew 1:23 quotes from this verse, confirming that it spoke of the birth of Jesus Christ. The word "virgin" simply means "a young woman." Mary had not had sexual intercourse at the time of Jesus Christ's conception. However, afterwards Joseph "took unto him his wife" (Matthew 1:24). This means that they commenced their sexual activities, as any young married couple would. Another record dealing with a woman is found in the Book of Revelation.

*Revelation 12:1-5:*

*And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:*

*And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

*And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.*

*And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

*And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*

The "wonder" here means "sign." A sign appeared in heaven. This refers to the stars, as noted previously in Genesis 1:14. The sign was of a woman clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars. When God originally set the stars in motion, He called them all by their names (Psalms 147:4). Twelve groups of these stars had special significance. Today, they are referred to as the signs of the zodiac. Although much information has been lost about them, ancient astronomers did record and preserve many of the basic truths about these signs. Astrology, however, is an unscriptural

degradation of what God originally planned.

In the zodiac, the constellation Virgo is the only one that refers to a woman in travail. The "crown of twelve stars" refers simply to the twelve constellations (signs) of the zodiac. This woman was also "clothed with the sun." This refers to a period of about twenty days when the sun on its yearly course would pass through the main body of Virgo. In 3 B.C., the sun was in this position from August 27 through September 15.

The verse above also states that the moon would be "under her feet." This astronomical configuration only occurred once in this period, on September 11. It was visible in Palestine between sunset and moonset that evening, from 6:18 p.m. to 7:39 p.m. The sun was passing through Virgo, and the moon appeared just below her feet.

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### **Salting indicated that the child would always speak the truth and stand by his words.**

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Such precise timing! Understanding the Gospel records and the prophecies from Isaiah and Revelation, one can utilize astronomical data and calculate the birth of Jesus Christ to within an eighty-one-minute period. For "she brought forth a man child" when she was "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet." That could have come to pass only on the evening of September 11 in 3 B.C.

Another unique grouping of stars occurred later that night, which served to confirm the birth of the Messiah, our promised seed. The Book of Genesis gives some wonderful information that pertains to it.

*Genesis 49:9 and 10:*

*Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?*

*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

Judah is the tribe of David, the tribe of Mary, and the tribe of Joseph. Jesus Christ came forth from this tribe. And, as verse 9 indicates, Judah is represented by a lion. Leo is the sign of the zodiac corresponding to a lion.


Verse 10 says that "the sceptre shall

not depart from Judah." A sceptre is the staff of rulership held by a king. Jupiter is known in astronomy as the "king planet." It is the largest planet in our solar system and was associated by the ancients with kings.

The next phrase ". . . nor a lawgiver from between his feet. . ." has another interesting insight. The Hebrew word for "foot" is *regel*. It relates directly to the star name "Regulus." Regulus is the brightest star in the constellation Leo and is known as "the king star." It is also known as "the heart of the lion" and is associated with rulership and dominion. Jesus Christ is spoken of as "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" in Revelation 5:5.

Later on during the same night, Jupiter and Regulus could be seen approaching conjunction in the constellation Leo. Although the actual astronomical conjunction did not occur until September 14, to the naked eye their close rendezvous was apparent. When a star and a planet are in conjunction, they line up and point toward the North Pole. That the king star and the king planet would be in conjunction confirmed that a king would be born. That the conjunction occurred in Leo confirmed that he would be the king of Israel, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, as prophesied in Genesis and in Revelation.<sup>2</sup>

In 3 B.C., September 11-12 fell on Tishri 1. This day commenced the civil year in Judea. Tishri 1 was known as the Day of Trumpets. From morning until evening, trumpets were blown in Jerusalem. This was done in acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God over all. The years of the reigns of Hebrew kings, such as David and Solomon, were counted from Tishri 1 to Tishri 1. The blowing of trumpets was also a part of the coronation ceremony for a new king (II Kings 11:12-14).

In 3 B.C., trumpets were blown from morning to evening in Jerusalem, only a few miles from Bethlehem. Yet, they did not only acknowledge the sovereignty of God as King over all. They also celebrated the birth of His only begotten Son, the king whom God had sent for Israel, the Messiah, our promised seed. 

*The reader is encouraged to study Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed for further detail and insight.*

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2. Several other astronomical conjunctions from August of 3 B.C. to August of 2 B.C. served to announce the birth of Jesus Christ. They all involved Jupiter in the constellation Leo. See *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*, chapters 4-6.



# The ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

**It was the year of years, the spiritual turning point of history—  
from the time Jesus Christ began to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,  
around Pentecost in 27 A.D., until Pentecost in 28 A.D., the day of  
the original receiving of the gift of holy spirit.**

Walter J. Cummins

**T**he ministry of Jesus Christ did not exceed one year. He began as the lamb of God in the spring of one year and was sacrificed as the Passover lamb in the spring of the following year. Thus he was a lamb of the first year as required by the law. Jesus Christ fulfilled all the law. The forty-sixth year of the building of the Temple (John 2:20), the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius

Caesar (Luke 3:1), and the thirtieth year of Jesus Christ (Luke 3:23) all dovetail in the year 27 A.D. as pointed out in a previous article.<sup>1</sup> So Jesus Christ began to make himself known in the spring of 27 A.D. and publicly opened his ministry at Nazareth after Pentecost that year. His ministry culminated at the Passover in the spring of 28 A.D. Then, fifty days after his resurrection came Pentecost, the birth of the Church of God. That year was the acceptable year of the Lord.

*Luke 4:18 and 19:*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,*

*and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*

*To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

This declaration at Nazareth in 27 A.D. opened Jesus Christ's public ministry by proclaiming the acceptable year. However, a number of things transpired earlier in the year before Jesus could begin. First of all, John the Baptist began to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. He prepared the hearts of the people to receive God's Word like all the prophets in the Old Testament had done.

*Luke 1:16 and 17:*

*And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.*

*And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobe-*



Walter J. Cummins  
coordinates the  
Research Department at  
The Way International.

1. For more detail on the one-year ministry of Jesus Christ, see "The Ministry of Jesus Christ," *The Way Magazine*, March/April 1987.



# THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

John baptizing around Jordan  
Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-18

## February 16, Shebat 20: Baptism of Jesus

First voice from heaven  
Forty days of temptations

Matthew 3:13-4:11; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-4:13

## March 28, Nisan 1: Jesus returns to John after temptations (John 1:29)

Two weeks preceding Passover—John 1:19-2:12

## April 2, Nisan 6: Wedding at Cana

## April 10-17, Nisan 14-21: Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread

Jesus and disciples baptize in Judea.

Jesus passes through Samaria; woman at well near Sychar.

Jesus returns to Cana; second miracle in Galilee.

John 2:13-4:54

John imprisoned around Pentecost

Luke 3:19,20

## June 1, Sivan 7: Pentecost (John 5:1-47) — June 7, Sivan 13: Teaching in Nazareth

The Proclamation of the Acceptable Year of the Lord

followed by teaching and ministering at various locations throughout Galilee  
Matthew 4:12-14:12 (not all chronological); Mark 1:14-6:31; Luke 4:14-9:10a

## August 7, Ab 15: Feast of Wood Offering

The miracle of feeding the about five thousand

Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10b-17; John 6:1-15

Ministering around Galilee

Matthew 14:22-15:31; Mark 6:45-7:37; John 6:16-66

The miracle of feeding the about four thousand

Matthew 15:32-39a; Mark 8:1-9

Crossing over and ministering around the Sea of Galilee

Matthew 15:39b-16:12; Mark 8:10-26

## September 20, Tishri 1: Jesus thirty years old

Jesus at Caesarea Philippi one week before the transfiguration

Matthew 16:13-28; Mark 8:27-9:1; Luke 9:18-27; John 6:67-71

## September 29, Tishri 10: Transfiguration

Second voice from heaven

Matthew 17:1-18:35; Mark 9:2-50; Luke 9:28-62; John 7:1-10

## October 4-11, Tishri 15-22: Feast of Tabernacles

John 7:11-10:21

The sending out of the Seventy

Luke 10:1-24

On the road to Jerusalem

Luke 10:25-42

## December 13-20, Kislev 25-Tebeth 2: Feast of Dedication

John 10:22-39

Jesus spends much of the winter in Perea.

Luke 11:1-17:10; John 10:40-42

Raising of Lazarus at Bethany

John 11:1-53

Then he teaches as he passes for one last time through Judea,  
then Samaria, then Galilee, then Perea, then Jericho—  
on his way to Jerusalem for Passover.

Matthew 19:1-20:34; Mark 10:1-52; Luke 17:11-19:28; John 11:54

Third voice from heaven

## April 22, Nisan 8: Jesus to Jerusalem, six days before Passover

## April 28, Nisan 14: Crucifixion — May 1, Nisan 17: Resurrection

Matthew 21:1-28:1; Mark 11:1-16:1; Luke 19:29-23:56; John 11:55-19:42

Post resurrection appearances

Matthew 28:2-20; Mark 16:2-20; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-21:25

Seen of apostles forty days

Seen of over five hundred on one occasion

## June 10, Iyyar 28: Ascension

## June 20, Sivan 8: Pentecost

27 A.D.

**JANUARY**

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**FEBRUARY**

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**MARCH**

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**JUNE**

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**JULY**

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**AUGUST**

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28 A.D.

**JANUARY**

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**FEBRUARY**

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**MARCH**

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**JUNE**

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27 A.D.

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dient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

John walked in the presence of God with the same powerful spirit with which Elijah had walked. Hence, many people were prepared to receive God's Word. Jesus Christ was God's Word in the flesh, so by John's ministry many were naturally prepared to accept Jesus Christ, the Messiah whom John recognized and declared.

*Mark 1:7-11:*

*And [John] preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.*

*I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.*

*And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:*

*And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

After John baptized Jesus Christ he did not cease to baptize others. He continued until his imprisonment. However, John's entire ministry probably did not last over six months. He began baptizing in the Jordan area where it was warmer during the winter months, but by summer he had been put in prison by Herod the Tetrarch.

Immediately after he was baptized, Jesus went into the wilderness of Judea where he was tempted for forty days. Upon his return from the wilderness, John saw him and pointed him out to his disciples as the lamb of God.

*John 1:29-37:*

*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

*This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

*And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*

*And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode on him.*

*And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

*And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

*Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;*

*And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!*

*And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

From this point Jesus began to acquaint himself with followers of John and others. A few days later he performed his first miracle, turning water into wine, and shortly thereafter went to Jerusalem for the Passover in the spring of 27 A.D. (Nisan 14, April 10). These activities are recorded in John 2. Then after Passover, according to John 3, Jesus and his disciples went into the countryside of Judea. But where was John at that time? In prison? No.

### **As the people came, Jesus kept teaching them and ministering the Word of God to their every need.**

*John 3:22-24:*

*After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.*

*And John also was baptizing in AEnon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.*

*For John was not yet cast into prison.*

John was still ministering to the people after Passover. He had not yet been put into prison. But he made an interesting declaration at that time as recorded in John 3:30: "He [Jesus Christ] must increase, but I must decrease." John's ministry was coming to a close, but Jesus Christ was coming close to the beginning of his ministry. Then John 4 tells us Jesus went to Samaria and Galilee where he ministered to a few and performed a second miracle in Galilee prior to returning to Jerusalem for the next feast, recorded in John 5. That feast was Pentecost in 27 A.D. (Sivan 7, June 1).

*John 5:1:*

*After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

At that feast we observe a change in John's situation. There Jesus spoke of John in the past tense.

*John 5:33-36:*

*Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.*

*But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.*

*But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.*

John had borne witness of Jesus. John "was" a burning and shining light. But by the feast of Pentecost in John 5, John had been imprisoned by Herod, and Jesus declared that the works given to him to do by the Father were greater witness than that of John. Two records make it very clear that Jesus Christ did not "begin" to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven until John had been put in prison.

*Matthew 4:12 and 17:*

*Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

*Mark 1:14:*

*Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.*

Between Jesus' baptism in the winter of 27 A.D. and Pentecost (June 1) in 27 A.D., John's ministry continued until his imprisonment. Jesus performed a few miracles, taught God's Word to some, and continued to "increase." But now in June of 27 A.D. after John's imprisonment, Jesus "began" to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven. The activities recorded in the Gospels regarding these next three months prove it to be a very busy time filled with the teaching of God's Word, healings, and miracles brought to pass by a very loving, compassionate, and hard-working teacher. At times multitudes thronged to hear him and to be delivered. At times the work was so demanding that Jesus had to withdraw to the wilderness to get quiet and pray, a time followed by more days filled with joyful service.

*Luke 16:16:*

*The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

Before moving to Capernaum, Jesus' home for that busy summer, he publicly opened his ministry at his former home town, Nazareth, declaring the great significance of the year ahead.

*Luke 4:16-21:*

*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*

*And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set*



*at liberty them that are bruised,  
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.  
And he closed the book, and he gave it again  
to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes  
of all them that were in the synagogue were  
fastened on him.*

*And he began to say unto them, This day is  
this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

Jesus Christ began to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, after John was imprisoned around Pentecost. From this Pentecost in 27 A.D. until the Pentecost in 28 A.D. was the year of years, the spiritual turning point of history. It was truly the acceptable year of the Lord. During that summer Jesus taught and ministered to the multitudes in Galilee. In the autumn he was ordained the high priest on the mountain of transfiguration and began a new phase of his life and ministry—declaring his suffering and glory.<sup>2</sup> Then he returned to Jerusalem for the third major Judean feast, the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7—9). Afterwards he came again into Galilee where he commissioned the seventy in Luke 10. He returned in December to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-39). During the winter following, he ministered beyond Jordan in Perea. Before returning to Jerusalem for Passover, he traveled once again through Samaria, Galilee, and Perea. Arriving at Jerusalem for Passover, he presented himself as the perfect Passover sacrifice. Three days later he was raised from the dead. Forty days later he ascended and ten days after the ascension was Pentecost, the day of the original receiving of the gift of holy spirit. This was the acceptable year of the Lord.

The four Gospels each have their own unique purposes in declaring the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. To follow the order of events chronologically over this acceptable year of the Lord, one has to understand those unique purposes. The Gospel of John portrays Jesus as the Son of God. It focuses on his attendance at each of the Judean feasts in Jerusalem fulfilling all the law as the perfect lamb of God, God's only begotten Son. From this Gospel, we see the outline of the acceptable year.

The other three Gospels fill in the details, especially his ministry and teaching outside of Judea. In Matthew, Jesus is the king. In Mark he is the servant. In Luke he is the Son of Man. During the summer of 27 A.D. Matthew begins with Jesus declaring the Kingdom of Heaven of which he was the

king. In Matthew 5:1—7:29 he taught the multitude on the mountain, setting the standard for his kingdom. This teaching is unique to Matthew. In the records following, from 8:1 to 16:12, we see the king ministering and teaching the people while confronting the enemies of the kingdom. The events are not all chronological, but they are arranged logically to show the heart and care of the anointed king for his people.

**At times the work was  
so demanding that  
Jesus had to withdraw to  
the wilderness to get  
quiet and pray,  
a time followed by more  
days filled with joyful  
service.**

In Mark Jesus is the servant, ministering to others. During the summer he taught and served as recorded in Mark 1:14—8:26, where the records are chronological. The gospel is filled with the service he rendered, but it contains no major teaching like Matthew's teaching on the mountain. There is, however, a unique statement in Mark 2:13.

*Mark 2:13:*

*And he went forth again by the sea side; and  
all the multitude resorted unto him, and he  
taught them.*

The people needed God's Word and kept coming to him. As they came, Jesus kept teaching them and ministering the Word of God to their every need. These accounts truly depict his life of loving service.

In Luke Jesus is the Son of Man, a perfect man with great compassion and pathos for others. After beginning to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, he showed wonderful tender care for his fellow man, helping them in their weaknesses and bearing their burdens. Then in Luke 6:17-49 he taught a multitude in the "plain" with deep human feelings of care and concern. This teaching was similar, but not identical, to his teaching on the "mountain" in Matthew. Then he continued throughout the summer to minister in that same loving manner to all. These events from Luke 4:14 to 9:17 are chronological as are the ones in the Gospel of Mark.

In the autumn of 27 A.D. we see the record of Jesus' transfiguration in all three of these gospels followed by

Luke's unique record of sending out the seventy to cities where he would come and teach. After the Feast of Dedication in December, Jesus went to Perea beyond Jordan.

*John 10:22, 39-42:*

*And it was at Jerusalem the feast of dedication, and it was winter.*

*Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,*

*And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.*

*And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.*


*And many believed on him there.*

Now, the Gospel of Luke is unique at this point, recording extensively Jesus' teaching and ministering to the people in Perea during the winter as well as during a final trip through Samaria, Galilee, and Perea again before the Passover in 28 A.D. This is covered in Luke 11:1—19:28. Only in chapters 18 and 19 do we see accounts that are also recorded in Matthew and Mark. While in Perea Jesus taught many of the same things he had taught in Galilee the summer before. But there were more fellow human beings with a similar need to hear God's Word and be delivered. What a wonderful Son of Man he was.

At Passover in the spring of 28 A.D., he offered himself as the lamb of God. The king died for his people, a compassionate human being, offering the greatest service of all. He is the Son of God. The acceptable year of the Lord ended on Pentecost, June 20 (Sivan 8), in 28 A.D., and a new acceptable time began with the receiving of the holy spirit and the birth of the Church.

*II Corinthians 6:2:*

*(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)*

The acceptable year of the Lord paved the way for the "accepted time" the Church enjoys today, when people can be born again and filled with holy spirit. Today believers enjoy all the spiritual benefits and legal rights that Jesus Christ acquired for them by this dynamic acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus Christ was God's plan of redemption for all mankind. The acceptable year was the fulcrum of all history because all other historical events hinge on this singular and significant year. In the Old Testament the believers anticipated this year of jubilee with great hope. Today the believers look back on this year with great thanksgiving. 

2. See "The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ," *The Way Magazine*, September/October 1987.