

For Unto Us A Child Was Born

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In a few days, most of the Christian world will celebrate the birth of the Savior of Mankind, Jesus The Messiah, the Christ long prophesied and awaited by the Jews of old, and rejoiced over by all who are “called by His Name”, i.e. “Christians”. Jews have long denounced Him as a deluded blasphemer at worst, and a “fraud” at best, and are still awaiting their “messiah”. Christians over all the ages have celebrated His Coming as the fulfillment of prophesy, particularly that of **Isaiah 53**, written at least seven centuries before our Savior appeared among men.

We celebrate Jesus’ birthday on Dec. 25, even though virtually all Christians realize that there is little possibility that He was born on that date. So when was Jesus born? Technically it makes no difference regarding a date for His human birth, for our Bible is silent regarding His birth date, and nothing in Scripture commands His followers to celebrate that historic event. But this is what one of my pastors of the past taught about when Jesus was born, and it seems reasonable:

Luke 1:5—In the time of Herod King of Judea...Called “**Herod the Great**”, he ruled from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. when he died, and surely he was alive during Jesus’ birth (remember our modern calendars are several years “off” in their original reckoning of **when** Jesus was born).

Luke 2:1-2—In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census (for taxing purposes) should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) A Roman census was taken every 14 years; one was taken in 20 B .C. but the next census was ordered in 8 B .C., and probably required one to two years to complete (especially in Judea where the Jews were adamantly against censuses). We also know from history that Quirinius was the military governor of “Syria” (including the Roman territory called Palestine) from 9 B.C. to 4 B.C., having been sent there as “Legate” at least twice during those years.

It seems logical to conclude that Jesus’ birth must have occurred between 6 B.C. and 4 B.C. Remember that Herod the Great commanded his military to kill all male children 2 years old and under **before** he died in 4 B.C. My pastor’s best estimate was that our Savior was born in either 6 B.C. or 5 B.C.

The area outside of Bethlehem served as a holding area for animals (mostly sheep) used for Temple sacrifices, so the animals had to be available all year. It’s probably impossible to know with certainty the exact time of year, but my best “guess” is that Jesus was born in early spring, probably near to Passover. **Luke 2:8** tells us—“**And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.**” But since the flocks of sheep had to be kept out in the open fields even during the rainy winter months, His birth could have been other than during spring. Except for curiosity, what does it matter?

We’ve all been told that Dec. 25th was chosen by the early Church (in the 300’s A.D.) as Jesus’ “official” birthday. We do know that Dec. 25th was the beginning date of the Roman “Saturnalia”, a pagan celebration of the “Sun God’s (Mithras’) birth, lasting several weeks and which involved the giving of gifts. This “theory” has been popular only for the past century or two. The very early

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Church waffled over dates for Jesus' birth, and somewhere around the Dec. 21st beginning of winter was eventually chosen, but the historical "reasons" are somewhat murky.
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THE WISE MEN

There is much confusion regarding these "Wise Men", or Magi, among Christians. Undoubtedly they were very learned people, possibly what we would call "astrologers" today (but probably more than that). How many of them there were is really unknown, but since three gifts were given to the infant Jesus, it has long been assumed that there were three of these Magi. Perhaps, but they could have numbered only two, who brought multiple gifts, or ten, most of whom bore no gifts. Many Christians have mistakenly been led to believe (mostly by well meaning but ill-informed Church leaders and by profit hungry merchandisers over the years) that these "three wise men" visited the new born Jesus and Mary and Joseph while He was still in "the stable", or animal shelter, just after He was born in Bethlehem. Obviously their journey from somewhere in what is now Iran to Jesus' location in Judea took them several months, or longer, so the "newborn" Jesus was surely an infant or a toddler when they first beheld Him and offered their gifts.

(Matthew 2:11—"On coming to the HOUSE they saw the child with his mother Mary.") Scripture plainly states that the young Jesus was living in a residence during their visit, probably a house/carpenter shop belonging to Joseph.

THE WISE MEN'S STAR

Just exactly what was this "star" that the Magi followed to find Jesus? Did the "star" lead the Magi to a stable (doubtful) or to a "house" (probable) where the child, Jesus, was? Scripture tells us that King Herod sent them to Bethlehem, where it was prophesied that a "ruler" would arise. IF they did go to Bethlehem, eventually, it would appear that the child, Jesus, was no longer there. Scripture tells us that the "star" **"they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child (Jesus) was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed."** (Matthew 2:9-10).

Can we explain the "star" of the Magi scientifically? Many have tried to do so:

- Some scholars are certain that the "star" was a comet, which was always connected to an important historical event. Halley's Comet was visible in 11 B.C. but this would have been too early;
- Some astronomers and Biblical scoffers are certain that the "star" was a conjunction, or gathering, of two or more planets in the night

sky. Astronomical conjunctions do become visible from time to time, but two or more planets appearing to come close together may **not** appear as a single light source, nor would they be of sufficient magnitude to lead curious Magi over several months. There was a conjunction of

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3.) Some have proposed that the “star” was a supernova, or exploding

star, which do flare up into brilliance over a several months period;

but they DON'T appear to move, nor do they shine upon a particular

spot on Earth.

So what can we conclude about this “star”? I suggest that it CAN'T be explained by natural science. The “Shining Object In The Sky” that the Magi followed was sent by our Creator God, and was a **temporary and a supernatural event**—essentially a MIRACLE sent by our Heavenly Father—our TRIUNE GOD-- to announce to the world that the REAL STAR, Jesus the Messiah, the second Person of our Triune God, had left His Heavenly abode and in a human form had been born among mankind—He became EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US, come to show sinful humanity how to live with HIM forever! **That's the REAL miracle. A happy and a merry Christmas to all of God's Christian people!** And to those who do not identify as such—well, it's still not too late!