**THE BIRTH OF CHRIST: MYTHOLOGY VS. CHRONOLOGY**

Most careful Bible students recognize that “the traditional Christmas story” is fraught with errors. What is claimed in the story is NOT the way it really happened! Not only that, but we are given no directive to “celebrate” the birth of Jesus; such a celebration arises from “the commandments of men,” rather than the word of God (cf. Mt.15:7-9). In this article, I shall give the proper chronology of events as recorded in the Scriptures.

It should be noted that the division between “BC” and “AD” on our modern calendar is off by four years. According to the calendar, King Herod died in 4 BC. But the problem with that is the fact that Jesus was born shortly before Herod’s death (Mt.2:1,13,16,19-20). This proves that the “transition” from BC to AD is off by four years. *Simply put, this means that all dates in the Bible must be “shifted back” about four years.* This would place the birth of Jesus in 4 BC, rather than 1 AD (there is no year zero). It would also place the crucifixion in 29-30 AD, rather than 33 AD.

**First, we have the record of Jesus birth (Lk.2:1-20).** It was on this night that Mary *“brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger (feeding trough), because there was no room for them in the inn”* (v.7). This was also the night when the shepherds visited Him at the manger (v.8-16). And the fact that there were “shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night” (v.8), tells us that Jesus was NOT born on December 25th. Notice: “The Jews sent out their flocks into the mountainous and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the latter part of October or the first of November, when the cold weather commenced” (Albert Barnes, commentary on Luke 2:8).

**Eight days later, Jesus is circumcised (Lk.2:21).** The eight days are important, because that is what the Law of Moses commanded: “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. *And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised”’”* (Lv.12:1-3).

**Forty days after His birth, Jesus is presented at the temple (Lk.2:22-39).** We also know this from the Law of Moses: “And on the *eighth* day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. She shall then continue in the blood of her purification *thirty-three days****.*** She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled... *When the days of her purification are fulfilled,* whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then he shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female. *And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons*—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering.” (Lev.12:3-4, 6-8).

**Then, we have the visit of the wise men (Mt.2:1-12).** Several things are worthy of note here: First, this was *“AFTER* Jesus was born” (1:24-2:1, NKJV). Second, the wise men *“came into the HOUSE,”* not the manger (v.11) – as an aside, this Scripture says there were three GIFTS, not three wise men. This was followed by the flight of Joseph, Mary and Jesus into Egypt (Mt.2:13-15); which, in turn, was followed by Herod’s murder of the infants (Mt.2:16-18). An important marker in this section is the fact that Herod sought to kill “all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, *from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men”* (v.16). This crucial fact means that *some time had gone by “after Jesus was born”* before the wise men came to visit (though it’s not likely two full years). Hence, the wise men were NOT present at “the manger scene” – that is mere mythology! After the death of Herod (4 BC), Joseph, Mary, and Jesus return to Nazareth (Mt.2:19-23).

As you can see, there are some BIG differences between modern mythology and Biblical chronology!

--Lanny Smith