

## Prayer Birthday

Picture Last night New Moon August 20, 2020.

Picture 3 BC New Moon below her Feet

**Rev 12:1** And there appeared a great sign in the heavens, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head,

**Rev 12:2** and having *a babe* in womb, she cries, being in travail, having been distressed to bear.

John wrote this in 90 AD, but this event took place in 3 BC. Or is it yet future? Was John prophesying about something else other than the birth of Yehshua?.

Let's read the rest carefully.

Picture Same day with Serpent below ready to devour the child.

**Rev 12:3** And another sign was seen in the heavens. And behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads!

This is now talking about the 7 resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire that we talked about in our Who is Babylon teaching. The 10 horns are the ten toes or ten Kings at the end of this age.

### **Lets take a moment to look at Satan. Prophecy Against the Prince of Tyre**

**Eze 28:1** The Word of Jehovah came again to me, saying,

**Eze 28:2** Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre. So says the Lord Jehovah: Because your heart *is* lifted up, and you have said, I *am* a god, I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet you *are* a man and not God, though you set your heart as the heart of gods;

**Eze 28:3** Behold, you *are* wiser than Daniel; all secret things are not hidden from you!

**Eze 28:4** With your wisdom and with your understanding you have made riches for yourselves, and have worked gold and silver into your treasuries.

**Eze 28:5** By your great wisdom *and* by your trade you have multiplied your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches.

**Eze 28:6** Therefore so says the Lord Jehovah: Because you have set your heart as the heart of gods,

**Eze 28:7** behold, therefore I will bring awesome strangers *of* the nations. And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, and they shall defile your brightness.

**Eze 28:8** They shall bring you down to the Pit, and you shall die the deaths of those slain in the heart of the seas.

**Eze 28:9** Will you yet say before him who kills you, I *am of the gods*? But you *are* a man, and not God, in the hand of him who kills you.

**Eze 28:10** You shall die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers. For I have spoken, says the Lord Jehovah.

### **A Lament over the King of Tyre**

**Eze 28:11** And the Word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

**Eze 28:12** Son of man, lift up a lament over the king of Tyre, and say to him, So says the Lord Jehovah: You seal the measure, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

**Eze 28:13** You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* your covering, the ruby, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the turquoise, and the emerald, and gold. The workmanship of your tambourines and of your flutes was prepared in you in the day that you were created.

**Eze 28:14** You *were* the anointed cherub that covers, and I had put you in the holy height of God *where* you were; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

**Eze 28:15** You *were* perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you.

**Eze 28:16** By the multitude of your goods they have filled your midst *with* violence, and you have sinned. So I cast you profaned from the height of God, and I destroy you, O covering cherub, from among the stones of fire.

**Eze 28:17** Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have spoiled your wisdom because of your brightness. I will cast you to the ground; I will put you before kings, that they may behold you.

**Eze 28:18** By the host of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trade, you have profaned your holy places; so I brought a fire from your midst; it shall devour you, and I will give you for ashes on the earth, before the eyes of all who see you.

**Eze 28:19** All who know you among the peoples shall be astonished at you; you shall be terrors, and you *will not be* forever.

### **The Restoration of Jacob**

**Isa 14:1** For Jehovah will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel and set them in their own land; and the stranger shall be joined with them, and they shall cling to the house of Jacob.

**Isa 14:2** And the peoples shall take them and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah for slaves and slave girls. And they shall be captives of their captors; and they shall rule over their oppressors.

### **Israel's Remnant Taunts Babylon**

**Isa 14:3** And it shall be in the day that Jehovah shall give you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear, and from the hard bondage which was pressed on you,

**Isa 14:4** you shall take up this song against the king of Babylon and say, How the exacter, the gold gatherer has ceased!

**Isa 14:5** Jehovah has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers

**Isa 14:6** who struck peoples in wrath, a blow without turning away, ruling the nations in anger, a persecution without restraint.

**Isa 14:7** All the earth is at rest *and* is quiet; they break out into singing.

**Isa 14:8** Yea, the fir trees rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*, Since you have fallen, no woodcutter will come up against us.

**Isa 14:9** Hell from below is moved for you, to meet *you* at your coming. It stirs up the dead for you, all the he-goats of the earth. It has raised from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

**Isa 14:10** All of them shall speak and say to you, Are you also as weak as we? Are you like us?

**Isa 14:11** Your pride is brought down to the grave, *and* the noise of your harps. The maggot is spread under you, and the worms cover you.

**Isa 14:12** How you are fallen from the heavens, O shining star, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!

**Isa 14:13** For you have said in your heart, I will go up *to* the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.

**Isa 14:14** I will go up above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.

**Isa 14:15** Yet you shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the Pit.

**Isa 14:16** Those who see you shall stare and closely watch you, *saying*, Is this the man who made the earth to tremble; who shook kingdoms;

**Isa 14:17** *who* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed its cities; *who* did not open the house for his prisoners?

**Isa 14:18** All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

**Isa 14:19** But you are cast out of your grave *like* a hateful branch, *and like* the clothing of those who are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; like a dead body trampled under foot.

**Isa 14:20** You shall not be joined with them in burial, because you ruined your land *and* killed your people; the seed of evildoers shall never be famous.

**Isa 14:21** Prepare slaughter for his sons, because of the iniquity of their fathers, so that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world *with* cities.

**Isa 14:22** For I will rise up against them, says Jehovah of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and son, and grandson, says Jehovah.

**Isa 14:23** I will also make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the broom of ruin, says Jehovah of Hosts.

### **An Oracle Concerning Assyria**

**Isa 14:24** Jehovah of Hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so it shall come to pass; and as I have purposed, it shall stand;

**Isa 14:25** to break Assyria in My land, and on My mountains, trample him under foot. Then his yoke shall be removed from them, and his burden shall be taken off their shoulders.

**Isa 14:26** This *is* the purpose that *is* purposed on all the earth; and this *is* the hand that *is* stretched out on all the nations.

**Isa 14:27** For Jehovah of Hosts has purposed, and who shall reverse *it*? And His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

Take note that Assyria, Babylon and Satan are all related here.

Returning to Revelation

**Rev 12:4** And his tail drew the third *part* of the stars of heaven, and cast them onto the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman being about to bear, so that when she bears he might devour her child.

**Rev 12:5** And she bore a son, a male, who is going to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her child was caught up to God and *to* His throne.

**Rev 12:6** And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, so that they might nourish her there a thousand, two hundred *and* sixty days.

From the days of examining the lambs at Passover 2030 when the Two Witnesses are killed until Atonement 2033 when Satan is locked away, is 3 ½ years.

This nation of Spiritual Israel will be born at Passover in 2030.

**Exo 4:22** And you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord: Israel *is* My son, My first-born.

**Exodus 19:5-6** (MKJV)

**5** And now if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all the nations; for all the earth *is* Mine.

**6** And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These *are* the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel.

**Jeremiah 31:9** (MKJV)

**9** They shall come with weeping, and with prayers I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way; they shall not stumble in it, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim *is* My firstborn.

### Hosea 2:14

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her and lead her to the wilderness, and speak to her tenderly.

### James 1:18 (MKJV)

**18** Of *His own* will He brought us forth with *the* Word of truth, for us to be a certain firstfruit of His creatures.

### **The Lord Will Restore Israel**

Eze 20:33 *As* I live, says the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, I will reign over you.

Eze 20:34 And I will bring you out from the people, and I will gather you out of the lands in which you are scattered among them, with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm and with fury poured out.

Note that Yehovah has said with FURY twice now. He is very MAD.  
Where have we seen this word before?

Lev 26:27 And if you will not for all of this listen to Me, but will walk contrary to Me,

Lev 26:28 then I will walk contrary to you also in fury. And I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.

Lev 26:29 And you shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters you shall eat.

Lev 26:30 And I will destroy your high places and cut down your images, and throw your carcasses on the carcasses of your idols, and My soul shall despise you.

Lev 26:31 And I will make your cities waste and cause your sanctuaries to be deserted. And I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors.

Lev 26:32 And I will turn the land into wasteland. And your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it.

**Lev 26:33** And I will scatter you among the nations, and will draw out a sword after you. And your land shall be waste, and your cities waste.

Back to Ezekiel

**Eze 20:35** And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

**Eze 20:36** Just as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord Jehovah.

**Eze 20:37** And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

**Eze 20:38** And I will purge out from among you the rebels and those who sin against Me. I will bring them out from the land where they reside, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I *am* Jehovah.

**Eze 20:39** And you, O house of Israel, so says the Lord Jehovah: *Every* man go and serve his idols, and do so from now on if you will not listen to Me. But never again defile My holy name with your gifts and with your idols.

**Eze 20:40** For in My holy mountain, in the mountain height *of* Israel, says the Lord Jehovah, there all the house of Israel, all of those in the land, shall serve Me. There will I receive them, and there will I ask for your offerings and the firstfruits of your offerings, with all your holy things.

**Eze 20:41** I will receive you with your sweet aroma when I bring you out from the people and gather you out of the lands into which you have been scattered among them. And I will be sanctified in you in the eyes of the nations.

**Eze 20:42** And you shall know that I *am* Jehovah, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the land *for* which I lifted up My hand, to give it to your fathers.

**Eze 20:43** And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings in which you have been defiled. And you shall despise yourselves in your own sight for all your evils which you have committed.

**Eze 20:44** And you shall know that I *am* Jehovah when I have worked with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah.

Now having shown you all of this, we can now read the rest of Revelation

**Satan Thrown Down to Earth**

**Rev 12:7** And there was war in Heaven. Michael and his angels warring against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels warred,

**Rev 12:8** but did not prevail. Nor was place found for them in Heaven any more.

**Rev 12:9** And the great dragon was cast out, the old serpent called Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

**Rev 12:10** And I heard a great voice saying in Heaven, Now has come the salvation and power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night.

**Rev 12:11** And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony. And they did not love their soul until death.

**Rev 12:12** Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and those tabernacling in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and in the sea! For the Devil came down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a little time.

**Rev 12:13** And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who bore the man *child* .

**Rev 12:14** And two wings of a great eagle were given to the woman, so that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the serpent's face.

**Rev 12:15** And the serpent cast out of his mouth water like a flood after the woman, so that he might cause her to be carried away by the river.

**Rev 12:16** And the earth helped the woman. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

**Rev 12:17** And the dragon was enraged over the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

From all we have just read, Israel is born at Passover 2030 and then goes to dwell for 3 ½ years in the wilderness of Moab.

**Isa 16:2** For it shall be as a fleeing bird cast out of the nest, the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon.

**Isa 16:3** Take counsel, do judgment; make your shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; do not betray the fugitive.

**Isa 16:4** Let my outcasts dwell with you, Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the destroyer; for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.

And here they are instructed by Yehovah Himself face to face during this time.

So when you look at the events on this Feast of Yom Teruah, the Feast of Shouting, there is much more to learn than you even thought of.

At this time I would like to just go over the main event that is represented by this Feast of Shouting.

### **The Birth of Jesus Christ**

**Mat 1:18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ was this way (for His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph) before they came together, she was found to be with child by *the* Holy Spirit.

**Mat 1:19** But Joseph, her husband *to be*, being just, and not willing to make her a public example, he purposed to put her away secretly.

**Mat 1:20** And as he thought upon these things, behold, the angel of *the* Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take to you Mary *asyour* wife. For that in her is fathered of *the* Holy Spirit.

**Mat 1:21** And she shall bear a son, and you shall call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.

**Mat 1:22** Now all this happened so that might be fulfilled that *which was* spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying,

**Mat 1:23** "Behold, the virgin shall conceive in *her* womb, and will bear a son. And they will call His name Emmanuel," which being interpreted is, God with us.

**Mat 1:24** And Joseph, being roused from sleep, did as the angel of *the* Lord commanded him and took his wife,

**Mat 1:25** and did not know her until she bore her son, the First-born. And he called His name JESUS.

## G2424 (Strong)

Ἰησοῦς

Iēsous

*ee-ay-sooce'*

Of Hebrew origin [[H3091](#)]; *Jesus* (that is, *Jehoshua*), the name of our Lord and two (three) other Israelites: - Jesus.

## H3091 (Strong)

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ

y<sup>e</sup>hōshûa' y<sup>e</sup>hōshûa'

*yeh-ho-shoo'-ah, yeh-ho-shoo'-ah*

From [H3068](#) and [H3467](#); *Jehovah-saved; Jehoshua* (that is, Joshua), the Jewish leader: - Jehoshua, Jehoshuah, Joshua. Compare [H1954](#), [H3442](#).

Lets just take a moment and look at the name Jesus and understand how it came to be.

### **The Greek name Ihsous**

When the Greeks wanted to turn a Hebrew name into a Greek name there were two ways to bring it across the language barrier. One way was by **translation**, which tries to capture the meaning of a word ... but in the process, loses it's sound. The other way was by **transliteration**, which tries to capture the sound of the Hebrew word ... but in the process, loses it's meaning.

Let's look at the most probable scenario of how the four Hebrew letters in the name Y'-Sh-U-A (Yod-Shin-Vav-Ayin) were transliterated to Koine Greek.

- The first Hebrew letter **YOD** has a “YE” sound. Unfortunately, the Greek language does not have a letter nor a diphthong that has the "Y" sound as in YES! The Greek solution was to pair the two letters IOTA-ETA to produce the sound “EE-AY” which was deemed to be close enough to the Hebrew sound "YE."
- The second Hebrew letter **SHIN** has the "SH" sound. This was an even bigger problem because the "SH" sound does not exist in Greek. The Greek solution was to employ the "S" sound made by the letter SIGMA.
- The third Hebrew letter **Vav** has a "U" sound. The Greek diphthong "ou" OMICRON-UPSILON is an exact match because it has the same "OO" sound.
- The fourth Hebrew letter **AYIN** has the "AH" sound. According to the Greek rules of grammar, masculine names never end in a vowel sound, and when they do, the name should always be closed with the letter "S" whenever possible. The Greek solution was to drop the final "AH" sound and close out the name with an "S."
- These four steps produce the name "Iesous" which is pronounced "EE-AY-SOOS." The name Jesus now has an isopsehia value of "888" units which conjured up the ["888" power structure of the whole Greek alphabet.](#)

Is it wrong to say the name Jesus? Or Iesous, Heysus. Is it really saying the name of Zeus as some poor educated people claim?

No

I say Yehshua so I never forget that Yeh is for Yehovah and Shua is for Saves .

**Isa 43:3** For I *am* Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt *for* your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.

**Isaiah 41:14 (MKJV)**

**14** Do not fear, worm of Jacob *and* men of Israel; I will help you, says Jehovah, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

**Isaiah 45:21 (MKJV)**

**21** Declare and bring near; yea, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this of old? *Who* has told it from then? Is it not I, Jehovah? And *there is* no other God besides Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me.

**Isaiah 49:26 (MKJV)**

**26** And I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that I Jehovah *am* your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

**Isaiah 60:16 (MKJV)**

**16** You will also suck the milk of nations, and suck the breast of kings; and you will know that I Jehovah *am* your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

**Hosea 13:4 (MKJV)**

**4** Yet I *am* Jehovah your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me. For there is no Savior besides Me.

**Isa 12:1** And in that day you shall say, O Jehovah, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, turn away Your anger, and You shall comfort me.

**Isa 12:2** Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation.

**Isa 12:3** And with joy you shall draw water out of the wells of salvation.

The word Salvation is Strongs 3444

**H3444 (Strong)**

ישועה

y<sup>e</sup>shû'âh

yesh-oo'-aw

Feminine passive participle of [H3467](#); something *saved*, that is, (abstractly) *deliverance*; hence *aid, victory, prosperity*: - deliverance, health, help (-ing), salvation, save, saving (health), welfare.

Yehovah has become my Yehshua.

Again in reference to Isaiah 12:3 And with joy you shall draw water out of the wells of salvation.

## Rivers of Living Water

**Joh 7:37** And in the last day of the great feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

**Joh 7:38** He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

**Joh 7:39** (But He spoke this about the Spirit, which they who believed on Him should receive; for *the* Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)

## The Word Became Flesh

**Joh 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**Joh 1:2** He was in *the* beginning with God.

**Joh 1:3** All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one *thing* came into being that has come into being.

**Joh 1:4** In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

**Joh 1:5** And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

**Joh 1:6** There was a man sent from God; his name *was* John.

**Joh 1:7** This one came as a witness, to bear witness concerning the Light, so that all might believe through him.

**Joh 1:8** He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

**Joh 1:9** He was the true Light; *He* enlightens every man coming into the world.

**Joh 1:10** He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and the world did not know Him.

**Joh 1:11** He came to *His* own, and *His* own received Him not.

**Joh 1:12** But as many as received Him, He gave to them authority to become the children of God, to those who believe on His name,

**Joh 1:13** who were born, not of bloods, nor of *the* will of *the* flesh, nor of *the* will of man, but *were born* of God.

**Joh 1:14** And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of *the* Father, full of grace and of truth.

**Joh 1:15** John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, This was *He* of whom I spoke: He who comes after me has been before me, for He was preceding me.

**Joh 1:16** And out of His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace.

**Joh 1:17** For the Law came through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

**Joh 1:18** No one has seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

The word became flesh??? What does this mean?

The Word of the Lord Yehovah, (Dabar Adonai YHWH),

**Eze 6:3** And say, Mountains of Israel, hear the Word of the Lord. So says the Lord Jehovah to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places.

**Eze 25:3** And say to the Ammonites, Hear the Word of the Lord Jehovah. So says the Lord Jehovah: Because you said, Aha, against My sanctuary when it was defiled, and against the land of Israel when it was ruined, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity;

**Eze 36:4** so, mountains of Israel, hear the Word of the Lord Jehovah. So says the Lord Jehovah to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the deserted wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and a mockery to the rest of the nations all around.

The Mouth of Yehovah His Peh

**Exo 17:1** And all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the command of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim. And *there was* no water for the people to drink.

The word command is mouth Peh.

**Lev 24:12** And they put him under guard, so that the mind of Jehovah might be declared to them.

The word mind of Yehovah is the Peh of Yehovah.

### H6310 (Strong)

פֶּה

peh

*peh*

From [H6284](#); the *mouth* (as the means of *blowing*), whether literally or figuratively (particularly *speech*); specifically *edge, portion* or *side*; adverbially (with preposition) *according to*: - accord (-ing as, -ing to), after, appointment, assent, collar, command (-ment), X eat, edge, end, entry, + file, hole, X in, mind, mouth, part, portion, X (should) say (-ing), sentence, skirt, sound, speech, X spoken, talk, tenor, X to, + two-edged, wish, word.

Notice the meaning of Peh for mouth. A means of blowing. Today is the Feast of Shouting or Blowing.

It is similar to the word that breathed life into Adam.

[Gen 2:7](#) And Jehovah God formed man *of the* dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

### H5301 (Strong)

נָפַח

nâphach

*naw-fakh'*

A primitive root; to *puff*, in various applications (literally, to *inflate, blow hard, scatter, kindle, expire*; figuratively, to *disesteem*): - blow, breath, give up, cause to lose [life], seething, snuff.

There are many more examples I could quote. The point is the word became flesh, The Word Yehovah became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

Now let us read what Luke has to say.

### Dedication to Theophilus

**Luk 1:1** Since many took in hand to draw up an account concerning the matters which have been borne out among us,

**Luk 1:2** even as those who from *the* beginning delivered to us, becoming eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word,

**Luk 1:3** it seemed good to me also, following all things accurately from the very first, to write to you in order, most excellent Theophilus,

**Luk 1:4** so that you might know the certainty of those things in which you have been instructed.

### Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

**Luk 1:5** In the days of Herod, the king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of *the* course of Abijah. And his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elizabeth.

**Luk 1:6** And they were both righteous before God, walking blameless in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.

**Luk 1:7** And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren. And both were advanced in their days.

**Luk 1:8** And it happened in his serving in the order of his course, before God,

**Luk 1:9** according to the custom of the priests, it was his lot to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

**Luk 1:10** And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense.

**Luk 1:11** And an angel *of the* Lord appeared to him as he was standing on *the* right of the altar of incense.

**Luk 1:12** And seeing *this*, Zacharias was troubled, and fear fell on him.

**Luk 1:13** But the angel said to him, Do not fear, Zacharias. For your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

**Luk 1:14** And you shall have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth.

**Luk 1:15** For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall neither drink wine nor strong drink. And he shall be filled with *the* Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

**Luk 1:16** And he shall turn many of the sons of Israel to *the* Lord their God.

**Luk 1:17** And he shall go before Him in *the* spirit and power of Elijah, to turn *the* hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to *the* wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for *the* Lord.

**Luk 1:18** And Zacharias said to the angel, By what shall I know this? For I am old, and my wife is advanced in her days.

**Luk 1:19** And answering, the angel said to him, I am Gabriel, who stands before God. And I am sent to speak to you and to show you these glad tidings.

**Luk 1:20** And behold, you shall be silent and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because you did not believe my words which shall be fulfilled in their time.

**Luk 1:21** And the people waited for Zacharias and marveled that he stayed so long in the temple.

**Luk 1:22** And when he came out, he could not speak to them. And they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he was making signs to them, and remained speechless.

**Luk 1:23** And as soon as the days of his service were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

**Luk 1:24** And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived and hid herself five months, saying,

**Luk 1:25** So the Lord has dealt with me in the days in which He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among men.

### **Birth of Jesus Foretold**

**Luk 1:26** And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

**Luk 1:27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of *the* house of David. And the virgin's name *was* Mary.

**Luk 1:28** And the angel came in to her and said, Hail, *onereceiving* grace, the Lord *is* with you. Blessed *are* you among women.

**Luk 1:29** And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what kind of greeting this might be.

**Luk 1:30** And the angel said to her, Do not fear, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

**Luk 1:31** And behold! You shall conceive in *your* womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name JESUS.

**Luk 1:32** He shall be great and shall be called the Son of *the* Highest. And the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David.

**Luk 1:33** And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

**Luk 1:34** Then Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I do not know a man?

**Luk 1:35** And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come on you, and *the* power of *the* Highest shall overshadow you. Therefore also that Holy *One* which will be born of you shall be called Son of God.

**Luk 1:36** And behold, your cousin Elizabeth also conceived a son in her old age. And this *is* the sixth month with her who *was* called barren.

**Luk 1:37** For with God nothing shall be impossible.

**Luk 1:38** And Mary said, Behold the servant of *the* Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

### Mary Visits Elizabeth

**Luk 1:39** And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah.

**Luk 1:40** And *she* entered into the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

**Luk 1:41** And it happened as Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,

**Luk 1:42** and cried out with a loud voice and said, Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb.

**Luk 1:43** And from where *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

**Luk 1:44** For lo, as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

**Luk 1:45** And blessed *is* she who believes, for there shall be a perfecting of those things which were told her from *the*Lord.

### **Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat**

**Luk 1:46** And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord,

**Luk 1:47** and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

**Luk 1:48** For He looked on the humiliation of His slave woman. For, behold, from now on all generations shall count me blessed.

**Luk 1:49** For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy *is* His name.

**Luk 1:50** And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him from generation to generation.

**Luk 1:51** He has worked power with His arm, He has scattered the proud in *the* imagination of their heart.

**Luk 1:52** He has put down rulers from *their* seats and exalted the lowly,

**Luk 1:53** He has filled *the* hungry with good things, and He has sent away *the* rich empty.

**Luk 1:54** He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of *His* mercy,

**Luk 1:55** as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

**Luk 1:56** And Mary stayed with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

### **The Birth of John the Baptist**

**Luk 1:57** And the time was fulfilled to Elizabeth *for* her to bear. And she bore a son.

**Luk 1:58** And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard how *the*Lord had magnified His mercy with her, and they rejoiced with her.

**Luk 1:59** And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and were calling it Zacharias, after his father's name.

**Luk 1:60** And his mother answered and said, No, but he shall be called John.

**Luk 1:61** And they said to her, There is none of your kindred that is called by this name.

**Luk 1:62** And they made signs to his father as to how he would have him called.

**Luk 1:63** And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they all marveled.

**Luk 1:64** And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue *loosened*. And he spoke and praised God.

**Luk 1:65** And fear came on all who lived all around them. And all these things were talked about throughout all the hill country of Judea.

**Luk 1:66** And all those who heard laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What kind of child shall this be! And the hand of *the* Lord was with him.

### **Zechariah's Prophecy**

**Luk 1:67** And his father Zacharias was filled with *the* Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,

**Luk 1:68** Blessed *is the* Lord, the God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people

**Luk 1:69** and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,

**Luk 1:70** as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from eternity;

**Luk 1:71** that we should be saved from our enemies and from *the* hand of all who hate us,

**Luk 1:72** to perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant,

**Luk 1:73** *the* oath which He swore to our father Abraham,

**Luk 1:74** that He would grant to us, *that we*, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear

**Luk 1:75** in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

**Luk 1:76** And you, child, will be called the prophet of *the* Highest, for you shall go before *the* face of *the* Lord to prepare His ways,

**Luk 1:77** to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins,

**Luk 1:78** through *the* tender mercy of our God; by which *the* Dayspring from on high has visited us,

**Luk 1:79** to give light to those who sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into *the* way of peace.

**Luk 1:80** And the child grew and became strong in spirit and was in the deserts until *the* day of his showing to Israel.

### **The Birth of Jesus Christ**

**Luk 2:1** And it happened in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

**Luk 2:2** (This taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

**Luk 2:3** And all went to be registered, each to *his* own city.

**Luk 2:4** And Joseph also went up from Galilee to be taxed (out of *the* city of Nazareth, into Judea, to *the* city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of *the* house and family line of David).

**Luk 2:5** And he took Mary his betrothed wife, being with child.

**Luk 2:6** And while they were there, the days *for* her deliverance were fulfilled.

**Luk 2:7** And she brought forth her son, the First-born, and wrapped Him, and laid Him in a manger— because there was no room for them in the inn.

### **The Shepherds and the Angels**

**Luk 2:8** And in the same country there were shepherds living in the field, keeping watch over their flock *by* night.

**Luk 2:9** And lo, the angel of *the* Lord came on them, and *the* glory of *the* Lord shone around them. And they were grievously afraid.

**Luk 2:10** And the angel said to them, Do not fear. For behold, I give to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

**Luk 2:11** For to you is born today, in *the* city of David, a Savior, who is Christ *the* Lord.

**Luk 2:12** And this *is* a sign to you. You will find the babe wrapped, lying in a manger.

**Luk 2:13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of *the* heavenly host, praising God and saying,

**Luk 2:14** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

**Luk 2:15** And it happened as the angels departed from them into Heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Indeed, let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, which the Lord made known to us.

**Luk 2:16** And hurrying they came and sought out both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

**Luk 2:17** And seeing, they publicly told about the word spoken to them concerning this Child.

**Luk 2:18** And all those who heard marveled about the things spoken to them by the shepherds.

**Luk 2:19** But Mary kept all these sayings, meditating in her heart.

**Luk 2:20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as was spoken to them.

**Luk 2:21** And when eight days were fulfilled to circumcise the child, His name was called JESUS, *the name* called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

### The Visit of the Wise Men

**Mat 2:1** Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in *the* days of Herod the king, behold, wise men came from *the* east to Jerusalem,

**Mat 2:2** saying, Where is He *who is* born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.

**Mat 2:3** But when Herod the king heard these *things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Why was Herod troubled.

Each of these Magi had an escort of about 10,000 men to protect them and their treasures they brought with them for the future King.

This event was so troubling that Herod called the Romans and they had a *détente* in the middle of the Jordan River with the leaders of the Parthian army who had escorted and protected the Magi. They wanted to make sure there was not war starting up by this incursion.

EXCERPT from the book, PARTHIA, by Steven M. Collins, Chapter 3, Pages 123-151

### HIS CHILDHOOD YEARS (BIRTH TO AGE 12)

Much has been written about the life of Jesus Christ, the historical person whose name is attached to the many different denominations of Christianity that exist today. In fact, so much has been written that one might wonder whether anything

truly new could be written about this one life. As the reader will see, new facts about the life of Jesus Christ can be ascertained by combining the accounts of the Bible with secular historical accounts and traditions about the time in which He lived. This chapter is not intended to be a complete history of the life of Jesus Christ. It will cover those aspects of His life and times which have not been generally known.

The prior chapter dealing with the Parthian Empire discussed historical events shaping the world into which Jesus Christ was born. When some surprising information about His life is added to the history contained in the previous chapter, it can be seen that Jesus Christ actually played a role in the great power politics which occurred between the empires of Parthia and Rome. The Bible hints that He could have played a much larger role in the political affairs of that era if He had chosen to do so.

### **Did Jesus Really Live?**

There is no doubt that the person, Jesus Christ, actually lived in Palestine at the beginning of the first century A. D. While some skeptics doubt this fact, this chapter will begin by offering firm evidence that Jesus Christ was a real, historical person.

Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century A. D., regarded the life of Jesus Christ as an established fact. In *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus wrote: “there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works, — a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ; and when Pilate [Pontius Pilate, Roman Procurator of Judea], at the suggestion of the principle men among us, had condemned him to the cross...He appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”<sup>1</sup>

In this account, written shortly after Christ died, Josephus not only gave us a powerful witness that Jesus Christ truly lived, but also provided an independent corroboration of many of the biblically-discussed events of His life. Josephus refers to him as “a wise man,” and wonders whether He was more than a mere man because of the “wonderful works” He did. That a non-Christian, Jewish historian of the apostolic era writes of the miracles of Jesus as actual facts offers contemporary support to the Bible’s accounts about them. Josephus agrees with the testamental writings that Jesus was sentenced to be crucified by Pontius Pilate at

the behest of the Jewish Sanhedrin, “the principle men among us.” Josephus also acknowledged that Jesus Christ fulfilled many prophecies of the Hebrew prophets about the Messiah, and even refers to His resurrection as an historical fact! Josephus’ reference to Jesus as “the Christ” acknowledges that Jesus was the Messiah, “the anointed.” Since a non-Christian source so close to the actual time of Christ has confirmed these facts of His life, the musings of modern skeptics questioning Christ’s existence are without merit. Josephus could speak with eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life; modern skeptics are almost two millennia removed from the events, and their writings are merely speculative. Jesus Christ did live, and the writings of Josephus substantiate the Bible’s claims of His performance of supernatural deeds as well as His being raised from the dead.

Roman secular sources agree with Josephus. Celsus, an anti-Christian writer of the Roman Empire in the second century A.D., wrote: “It was by magic that He [Jesus] was able to do the miracles which He appeared to have done.”<sup>2</sup> Here a Roman opponent of Christianity grudgingly acknowledges the reality of Christ’s “miracles,” which he labels as “magic.” However, Quadratus, writing in approximately 117-134 A.D., “urged people to believe in Jesus because the effect of His miracles continued up to the present — people had been cured and raised from the dead, and ‘some of them...have survived even to our own day.’”<sup>3</sup> Tacitus, the famous Roman historian, writing about the Christians just decades after the death of Christ, stated:

“Nero fabricated scapegoats — and punished...the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius’ reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate.”<sup>4</sup>

Tacitus’ comment about Christ appears as a mere aside in an overall account of events in the reign of Nero. It is particularly compelling evidence that Jesus Christ really did live! Tacitus was no fan of Christ or Christianity, and he had no “axe to grind.” His account that “Christ” was a real person crucified by Pontius Pilate is highly credible as Tacitus refers to it as an official act of Pontius Pilate within His overall accounting of Rome’s activities.

Clearly, Roman accounts confirm that Jesus Christ lived, and that He was executed in Judea during the administration of Pontius Pilate. Even His detractors acknowledged that He performed supernatural deeds. Whatever your views about Jesus Christ, we begin with the fact that He, indeed, lived and died when the Bible states that He lived and died, that He performed marvelous deeds, and that He made a major impression on the civilization of His day.

Let us now review the historical setting into which Jesus Christ was born. The Roman and Parthian Empires were both powerful, well-established “superpower” rivals at the time Jesus was born. Rome ruled the Mediterranean region, and Parthia ruled Asian lands from modern Syria to the Indus River. Palestine was located within the Roman Empire, but was close to the Euphrates River constituting the Parthian border.

Five decades before the birth of Jesus, Rome and Parthia fought several battles with one being fought near Antioch of Syria (very close to Palestine).<sup>5</sup> In about 40 B.C., the Parthians launched a major assault which drove the Romans out of Asia! For three years, 40-37 B.C., Palestine was within the Parthian Empire and was ruled by a Jewish vassal king of the Parthians named Antigonus. At that time King Herod, the Roman king of Judea, fled from the Parthians in fear of his life. While the Parthian-sponsored rule of Antigonus was brief, it was apparently popular with the Jews. When the Parthians withdrew across the Euphrates, Antigonus, with Jewish support, attempted to maintain himself as king of the Jews, but was defeated by Herod. Mark Antony, the Roman leader famous for his dalliance with Cleopatra, ordered Antigonus beheaded, and Josephus records that this was done to compel the Jews to accept the hated Herod as their king.<sup>6</sup> Mark Antony afterward led a massive invasion of Parthia in 37-36 B.C., but his army was utterly defeated by the Parthians.<sup>7</sup>

To help modern readers gain a frame of reference for these ancient events, these Roman-Parthian wars were more recent events for the people at the time Jesus was born than World War II and the Korean War are to modern readers. Parthian rule over Palestine was, therefore, vividly remembered by many in Jewish society as being preferable to Roman rule.

Parthia’s victory over Mark Antony led to a long period of peace between Rome and Parthia, with the Euphrates River serving as the border between their two vast empires. This prolonged period of peaceful relations lasted from 36 B.C. until 58 A.D.,<sup>8</sup> including not only all of Jesus Christ’s life, but also the early period of the Apostolic Church as well. Rawlinson records that it was an established Roman policy not to provoke a Parthian war during that period of time so long as both empires agreed to coexist on separate banks of the Euphrates River. Rawlinson comments on this peaceful interlude as follows:

“It is a well-known fact that Augustus left it as a principle of policy to his successors that the Roman Empire had reached its proper limits, and could not with

advantage be extended further. This principle, followed with the utmost strictness by Tiberius, was accepted as a rule by all the earlier Caesars...”<sup>9</sup>

As long as the Caesars wanted peace with Parthia, Roman officials along Parthia’s border, such as King Herod and Pontius Pilate, knew they risked their positions and lives if they entangled Rome in an unwanted war with Parthia.

Without this period of Parthian-Roman detente, it would have been impossible for some of the events of Jesus Christ’s life to have occurred, as we shall see. The first such event was the coming of the Magi, or “Wise Men” to pay homage to Jesus. We read of this event in Matthew 2:1-12, which becomes more important when considered in the overall context of Roman-Parthian relations.

### **Parthia’s Magi Visit Jesus (and Frighten Jerusalem)**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Magi were powerful members of the Parthian bicameral body that elected Parthian monarchs and wielded great influence within the empire. One assembly was composed of members of the royal family (the Arsacids), and the other consisted of the priests (the “Magi”) and influential Parthians of non-royal blood (the “Wise Men”). The Magi and Wise Men were jointly known as the Megistanes.<sup>10</sup>

Matthew 2:1 states that “wise men from the east” came to worship Jesus. The term “Wise Men,” which appears in Matthew 2:1, is not a generic description of these visitors, but was the proper title of Parthian Megistanes. The Greek word translated “wise men” is “magian,” literally meaning “Persian astronomer or priest,”<sup>11</sup> from which we derive the word “Magi.” Parthia governed Persia at the time of Christ, so the “Wise Men” cited in the Bible were Parthian nobles and/or priests. While traditional Christian accounts of this episode celebrate the coming of “the three wise men,” the Bible does not limit the number of visiting Magi-Wise Men to three men. Indeed, biblical events and the realities of that time argue for a much larger contingent of Parthian Magi.

Since we saw in previous chapters that the Parthians were descended from the ten tribes of Israel and that their priests were likely descended from the tribe of Levi, it is likely that this delegation of Magi consisted of leading members of the ten tribes of Israel. Because there were numerous Jews of the tribe of Judah in Parthia’s empire, they may have been represented as well. Consequently, the delegation of Magi could easily have consisted of at least ten or twelve men representing the various tribes of Israel.

Also, the Bible confirms that the Magi did not visit the young Jesus in the manger at Bethlehem, as most nativity scenes depict, but rather visited Jesus in a house somewhat after His birth. Matthew 2:11 states that this visit of the Magi took place in a house (not at the manger) when Jesus was old enough to be called “a young child.” Luke’s version of Christ’s birth (Luke 2:8-40) mentions the shepherds’ arrival at the manger, but makes no mention of any Magi visiting Christ while He was “in the manger.”

Matthew 2:8 adds that Herod sent the Magi “to Bethlehem” after conferring with the Jewish hierarchy about the prophesied location of the Messiah’s birth. They cited Micah 5:2 that the Messiah would originate in Bethlehem, and they were likely familiar with Daniel 9:25-26 which predicted that the arrival of the Messiah was due at that time. Herod privately met with the Parthian delegation, and enquired when “the star” which they followed had first appeared. He apparently learned that this period of time was almost two years because he killed all male children in Bethlehem under two years of age in an attempt to kill the Messiah, whom he regarded as a competitor for his position as king of the Jews.

Although the Bible tells us that “the star” appeared to the Wise Men almost two years prior to His birth, this offers inexact information in determining how old Jesus was when the Wise Men came to him. The Wise Men were prominent people in Parthia when “the star” appeared, and they had to make a very time-consuming journey to reach Judea. It took time to prepare the costly gifts to present to the Messiah, set their affairs in order for a long absence, organize and equip a caravan, obtain an armed escort for protection and make the slow, lengthy journey to Judea in a caravan of pack animals. Since the “star’s” appearance was not necessarily timed to coincide exactly with the time Jesus was born, He may have been a few months (or up to two years) old at the time of the Magi’s arrival.

Consider also that Matthew 2:1-3 states:

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. Saying, where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” (KJV)

The arrival of the Magi’s caravan in Jerusalem was a very public affair because “all Jerusalem” was “troubled” by their arrival. What was it about the Magi’s caravan that scared the Roman leaders and the whole city of Jerusalem? The Magi, a delegation of high Parthian officials, came to Jerusalem in a caravan loaded with costly treasures and escorted by a strong force of armed Parthian soldiers! Since

the Magi were high officials of the Parthian government, they would routinely travel with a substantial escort of Parthian soldiers to guarantee their protection. Since they were traveling with many costly treasures to present to the newborn Messiah, their escort may have been unusually large.

The Magi's caravan would have included large numbers of servants, animal-handlers, cooks, etc. for such a long journey. These people alone would have constituted many hundreds of people! Given the fact that many high Parthian officials and very expensive treasures were in the caravan, there may have been many thousands of Parthian soldiers escorting the caravan! This is not an overstatement.

Josephus records that treasure caravans bringing expensive offerings to Jerusalem from Jews living in Parthian territory did so with "many ten thousand men" as escorts.<sup>12</sup> In ancient times, traveling with expensive items was dangerous. There was danger not only from brigands, but also from local satraps who might use their armies to conquer a treasure train passing through their territories. If Jewish commoners from Parthia were allowed to travel to Jerusalem with the equivalent of several infantry divisions as escorts, would an important delegation of Parthia's ruling class and a treasure train of gifts have been accompanied by any fewer armed escorts? If the Parthian column had included "many ten thousands" of soldiers, it would have justified the widespread fear in Jerusalem caused by their arrival. In the previous chapter, we learned that ancient Chinese historical accounts recorded that the Parthians sent 20,000 cavalry just to escort a Chinese ambassador into Parthian territory.

Plutarch records that Surenas — a Parthian military commander and, no doubt, a member of the Megistanes — traveled on routine business in a caravan of cavalry, servants, and attendants the size of "a baggage train of 1,000 camels...at least ten thousand men."<sup>13</sup> If one Parthian leader traveled with so large a caravan on routine business within Parthia, how large was the caravan of the Magi — a whole delegation of Parthian nobles carrying great treasures to worship a "new-born king?" It was large enough to frighten the whole city of Jerusalem!

The Wise Men coming to Jesus were not bringing just a few samples of gold and other precious things that they carried in their personal saddlebags. They were coming to worship a royal-born child, so they likely had a whole train of pack animals loaded with "gold, frankincense and myrrh!"

Their caravan was so huge that it was a "cause celebre" in Jerusalem. The whole city was in an uproar over their arrival, and that argues for a very visible and

impressive Parthian caravan arriving in Jerusalem. The sheer size of the caravan, its treasures and its escorts awed King Herod and the whole city to the point they were all “troubled.” This indicates that the Parthian caravan had so many armed escorts that many feared it was an invasion force coming to besiege Jerusalem and start a new Roman-Parthian war. However, their reason — coming to visit a royal-born Messiah — could have electrified a city of Jews who intensely wanted the Messiah to come and free them from Roman rule! The Jewish hierarchy understood the Parthians were looking for the Messiah as they quickly looked for Messianic prophecies to locate the city of His birth.

After their consultations with Herod and high Jewish officials, the Parthian delegation traveled to Bethlehem to worship Jesus and present their gifts to him. By this time, Matthew 2:11 states Jesus and Mary were living in “a house,” so they were no longer staying at the manger. The Magi’s journey to Bethlehem would have been closely followed by Herod’s spies.

Joseph was then warned by an angel to flee quickly into Egypt (Matthew 2:13) to avoid Herod’s impending slaughter of Bethlehem’s young male children. Since Herod’s edict applied only to Bethlehem, there would have been no need for Joseph, Mary and Jesus to flee unless they were still in Bethlehem. Since Joseph and Mary actually lived in Galilee (Luke 2:4), the fact that they were in a house in Bethlehem indicates that this must have been weeks after Jesus’ birth while Mary was regaining the strength to make an overland trip back to Nazareth. Their flight to Egypt took them completely out of Herod’s area of jurisdiction.

Herod made the mistake of assuming the Messiah would be born to a family native to the Bethlehem area. Since Luke 2:39 states that Joseph, Mary and Jesus returned to Galilee not long after Jesus was born, it seems apparent that the stay of Joseph, Mary and Jesus in Egypt was very brief. Historical sources disagree on the year of King Herod’s death, but there is persuasive evidence that Herod died soon after giving his cruel order to murder the boy babies of Bethlehem. Matthew 2:14-19 states that Jesus and His parents returned from Egypt as soon as Herod was dead, and the account implies their stay in Egypt was brief.

This author acknowledges that there are differing scholarly and historical viewpoints concerning the year of Jesus Christ’s birth. While many people assume that Jesus Christ was born in a theoretical “year zero,” scholarly options for the year of Jesus’ birth focus on the time frame of 5 B.C. to 2 B.C.

It is significant that Jesus' parents were faithful to God's law requiring circumcision on the eighth day (Leviticus 12:2-3), and to Jewish custom by making an offering to God at the Temple in Jerusalem to consecrate their firstborn male child. (Luke 2:21-24) This is an important observation as it shows Jesus was raised by a Jewish family that devoutly obeyed God's laws.

When the Parthian column arrived at Jerusalem, the Parthian Magi came directly to King Herod, quite open about their reasons for being in Roman-occupied Palestine. They informed Herod that they had come to worship "He that is born king of the Jews."

It is a tribute to the power of Caesar's policy that the Roman-Parthian peace be maintained that war did not result from this statement, for Herod could easily have taken it as an insult. He could have flown into a rage, and yelled "How dare you ask to see another 'king of the Jews' besides me; I am king of the Jews!" That Herod swallowed his gargantuan pride, and meekly answered the Parthians is quite noteworthy. This is a tribute not only to Caesar's policy to maintain the peace, but also to recognition that a sizeable Parthian army had come to Jerusalem as escorts of the Magi. Herod's meek response to the highly provocative question of the Parthian officials does imply that he was intimidated by the many Parthian soldiers who accompanied the Magi.

Because the whole city was "troubled" by the Parthians' arrival, the presence of so many Parthian soldiers surely sparked rumors in Jerusalem that a new Parthian-Roman war was imminent. Herod may even have suspected that the Parthians' question was designed to provoke an incident, which would lead to an outbreak of hostilities and his removal from the throne. Herod and all Jerusalem was surprised, but relieved to learn that the Parthian Magi and soldiers had arrived with peaceful intent. Herod may have been expecting to hear an ultimatum for the surrender of Jerusalem to Parthia when the Magi were ushered into his presence.

Some observations must be made about the "star" which led the Magi to Jesus. Some have proposed that this star was a comet or a celestial phenomenon although the biblical accounts indicate that this was not the case. The biblically-described "star" moved, leading the Magi over a long east-to-west route from Parthia to Judea, and Matthew 2:9 states that it finally "stood over where the young child was." Simple logic confirms that no comet or celestial phenomenon in the sky could possibly pinpoint a single city, much less "stand over" an individual child on the earth's surface! Nevertheless, that is what the biblical "star" did.

The Bible periodically uses the word “star” to represent angels (Job 38:7, Revelation 1:20), and there is good reason to believe that the “star” which led the Parthian nobles to a specific child in a specific house in Judea was an angel of God. Nothing else makes sense. Only an angel, a spirit being, could literally “stand over” the baby Jesus to designate one specific child to the Parthian nobles.

Also, nothing in the biblical account indicates that this “star” was visible to anyone other than the Magi-Wise Men! Matthew 2:2 states that the Magi saw “the star,” but the context argues no one else ever saw it. Verse 7 relates that Herod asked the Magi when “the star” appeared to them, indicating no one in Judea was aware of any such “star.” If a striking celestial object had appeared in the sky, Herod and his astrologers would already have known the exact date and hour on which it had appeared.

After leading the Parthians to Judea, the “star” disappeared, forcing the Parthians to ask Herod for directions. After the Magi left Herod, the “star” again appeared to them, led them directly to Bethlehem (Luke 2:9), and finally “stood over” one specific child, Jesus. Verse 10 states the Magi rejoiced that the “star” had again appeared to show them where to go! Obviously, a “star” which appeared, disappeared and reappeared for the Magi (but which was apparently not seen by any other humans) had to be an angel. Supporting this fact is that Luke 2:8-15 records that the birth of Jesus was announced to shepherds by angels speaking to them out of a heavenly light which accompanied their appearance. God also used an angel to warn Joseph to flee to Egypt. Since God used angels to direct the movements of persons in the events surrounding Christ’s birth, it would have been completely consistent for God to also send an angel to guide the Magi’s movements.

Having found Jesus, the Magi worshipped him, offering costly gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense. They were then warned by God in a dream (Matthew 2:12) not to return to Herod, resulting in the prompt exit of the Magi and their many escorts from Judea. When Herod realized that he had been fooled, he wrathfully killed all the young male children of Bethlehem in a vain effort to kill the Messiah.

However, there is no indication that Herod made any attempt to overtake or punish the Magi. As high Parthian nobles, they had “diplomatic immunity,” and Herod dared not anger Caesar by provoking the Parthians. Also, Herod’s garrison troops could have been vastly outnumbered by the size of the Magi’s military escorts. There is another important aspect of this remarkable episode. While it is not surprising that Jewish leaders during Herod’s reign were sufficiently familiar with

the prophetic writings to pinpoint for Herod exactly where the Messiah would be born, it is surprising that God was working so closely with members of the Parthian ruling class! This makes no biblical sense unless: (A) the Parthians were descended from the ten tribes of Israel and (B) the Magi (Parthian priests) included some Levites. During His ministry Jesus Christ asserted that He had not been sent to the gentiles, but only to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Matthew 15:24-28 shows the reluctance of Jesus to assist a gentile.

Throughout the Old Testament God worked almost exclusively with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. It was not until after the death of Christ that gentiles were given equal access to the God of Israel. The fact that God was working intimately with the Parthian nobility — sending them angelic messages, giving them divine messages in dreams — confirms that the Parthians had to be descended from the ten tribes of Israel which had migrated into Asia. The fact that some of the Parthian ruling classes were apparently worshippers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is most revealing. God obviously considered these Parthians to be “righteous” men under the terms of His laws or He would not have been dealing with them so personally. That educated Parthians were ready to visit and worship the Messiah at the time of Christ’s birth indicates they were also familiar with the prophecies of the Old Testament. Who but transplanted Israelites would have been looking for the Messiah at that time?

Although we are jumping ahead in the narrative, consider the events of Acts 2:9 which states Parthians were among those who made pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks, known to Christians as Pentecost Sunday. Verse 9 also mentions “Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia” as being present at this feast, and all these regions were provinces of the Parthian Empire. We know that portions of the ten tribes had been relocated to “the cities of the Medes,” so the presence of devout visitors from Media most likely designates people from the ten tribes of Israel who still lived in Media. Interestingly, verse 9 also mentions “dwellers...in Asia” were present. The word “Asia” has clouded origins, but the Encyclopaedia Britannica states, “It is probable that it [“Asia”] has an Assyrian or Hebrew root, and was used first...with a specific or restricted local application, a more extended signification having eventually been given it...”<sup>14</sup>

As briefly mentioned in chapter two, one of the Scythian tribes was called the “Asii” (or “Asiani”).<sup>15</sup> Since the “Asiani” were one of the Scythian tribes bearing the name of Isaac, the Sacae or Saka, the Bible’s reference to “Asians” attending the Feast of Weeks could indicate that Scythians were also present in Jerusalem at that time. This further indicates that the Parthians and Scythians were the displaced

members of the “lost ten tribes of Israel.” The non-Israelite populations of Asia had no cultural interest in the worship of the God of Israel; only the ten tribes of Israel would retain such a custom.

It was not unusual for large pilgrimages originating in Parthia to travel to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel. Josephus’ statement that caravans from Parthia arrived in Jerusalem under the protection of “many ten thousand men”<sup>16</sup> was noted earlier. These must have been magnificent treasure trains to have warranted the protection of a sizeable army. Such huge protection of a sizeable army. Such huge “offerings” going to Jerusalem from Parthia indicates that significant numbers of people within the Parthian Empire worshipped the God of Israel. This meant that, at the time of Jesus and Herod, there was a great deal of travel and trade between the Parthian Empire and the Roman province of Judea. It also shows that there was a strong sense of community between Judea and many regions of the Parthian Empire. If a caravan of Parthian commoners could be escorted by “many ten thousand men,” how many escorts would accompany a caravan of Parthia’s nobility?

The Parthian nobility did not “travel light.” Plutarch records that Surenas, a high Parthian noble, had an entourage of ten thousand men when he traveled “on his own affairs” on routine business. Just one Parthian noble was accompanied by such a huge and imposing caravan when he traveled on routine business! Think how much larger would have been the caravan of a group of perhaps ten or twelve Parthian nobles, the Magi, travelling, not on routine business within Parthia, but through dangerous terrain with rich treasures and into Roman territory! Parthians believed in large numbers of armed escorts for VIPs. When an ambassador came to Parthia from China, an escort of 20,000 armed Parthian cavalymen greeted him!<sup>18</sup> Now you can understand why the whole city of Jerusalem was frightened when the Parthian Magi arrived to look for the young child of royal birth. They were accompanied by a gigantic caravan from Parthia moving toward Jerusalem. This column was escorted by many thousands of Parthia’s military cavalry. Many in Jerusalem feared the Parthians had come to start a war and besiege the city.

### **The Royal Lineages of Jesus Christ**

In an earlier chapter it was shown that the Magi were loyal to one dynasty, the Arsacids, whose members continuously ruled Parthia. It was shown that many rulers of Parthian and Saka kingdoms had names incorporating the word “Phares” (PH-R-S). This indicates that the Arsacids were descended from the seed of David, who was the first king of the Phares family. (Matthew 1:2-6) The kings of Judah of

the Phares dynasty are listed in I Chronicles 3:9-17, but verses 18-24 reveals that the royal lineage continued to flourish after Judah's captivity. Indeed, David's dynasty was given high status in the Babylonian Empire. (II Kings 25:27-30) This post-exilic elevation of the Davidic dynasty in Asia likely led to their serving as vassal kings over captive Israelites under Babylonian and Persian masters. Their later elevation to the throne of Parthia fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah 33:17 that David's descendants would always rule over the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel. This may explain the unshakable loyalty of the Parthians to the Arsacids. With the Parthians being Israelites, and the Arsacids being descended from King David, the Arsacids were the only dynasty in Asia that was racially, historically and culturally related to the Parthian people.

Since Matthew 1:3-17 tells us that Jesus Christ was a descendant of Phares and King David, Jesus was a distant relative of the Parthian ruling dynasty, which also descended from Phares and David. The bloodline relationship of Jesus to the Parthian Arsacids serves as a further explanation for the homage paid to Jesus by the Parthian nobility. It was customary for the Parthian Magi and Wise Men to keep track of male Arsacids in foreign nations. In some cases they sent to foreign nations, Scythia and Rome, to summon male relatives of the Arsacids to come to Parthia to serve as king. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some Parthian rulers killed every male relative they could find in an effort to eliminate potential rivals to their throne. This compelled the Magi to look for distant individuals who had the same bloodline as the Arsacids, the lineage of Phares and King David. At the time of the birth of Jesus, the recent Parthian emperor, Phraates IV, who reigned 37-2 B.C., had killed many male relatives, including his own father and almost thirty brothers.<sup>19</sup> Male Arsacids at the time of Jesus' birth were in very short supply.

When the Magi were led by God to pay homage to the young Jesus, they doubtless learned that Joseph, Mary and Jesus were all related to the Parthian dynasty! Indeed, they may already have known that Jesus was an Arscid, related to Parthia's kings. When the Magi came to Herod, they said: "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2, KJV)

This statement confirms that the Magi arriving in Jerusalem already knew that Jesus was "royal-born," and it implies that they knew He was related to Parthia's kings. If they did not know that fact prior to their arrival, they learned it during their visit with Joseph, Mary and the young Jesus. Indeed, because Phraates IV, the emperor of Parthia, had killed so many of his male relatives, the Magi were surely to find surviving males of the Davidic bloodline.

Consider some important information. When the Babylonians conquered Judah, they brought King Jehoiachin of Judah and many of his royal family to Babylon. (II Kings 24:15) After languishing in prison for years, King Jehoiachin was exalted into the position of a favored vassal king in the Babylonian empire. I Chronicles 3:17 reveals that Jeconiah had many sons and grandsons, who very likely also became vassal kings in Asia after Jehoichin died. One of Jeconiah's sons was "Salathiel" (I Chronicles 3:17), who lived in Asia, not Judea. Salathiel, later spelled "Shealtiel,"<sup>20</sup> was the father of Zerubbabel. (Ezra 3:2) Matthew 1:12 and Luke 3:27 confirm this as well.

Zerubbabel's name includes the root word "babel," indicating he was born in Babylon. Zerubbabel was one of the leaders of the group of Jews who left Asia and returned to Jerusalem during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah under the auspices of Persian kings. Zerubbabel had a prominent role in the rebuilding of a Jewish presence in Jerusalem and Judea, and he is mentioned frequently in the books of Ezra and Haggai and once in the book of Nehemiah. Joseph, the human "father" of Jesus Christ was a descendant of Zerubbabel. (Matthew 1:12-16) So Jesus Christ was born into a very prominent and famous family in Judea, one known to be descended from the Kings of Judah. Since His royal progenitors formerly lived in Asia and had included vassal kings of the Babylonians, the Parthian Magi may have been very well aware that they were coming to visit a family of Arsacids! Babylon was then ruled by Parthia, so its records were available to the Magi. Because Phraates IV had killed so many males of the royal Parthian dynasty at that time, the Magi were compelled to look outside Parthia's borders for male Arsacids who were eligible for the throne of Parthia.

Now consider this: Because Jesus was eligible for the throne of Parthia, so was His human father "Joseph." Christian mythology tends to personify Joseph as an obscure, poor "carpenter" struggling "to make ends meet." But the possibility exists that he was, in fact, well-to-do. The account in Mark 6:3, for instance, indicates that Jesus himself was a "carpenter," but in that day someone in the building trades business was often more of a "building contractor," involving all aspects of construction. This could possibly have been a very responsible position. The concept of Joseph and Mary being "poor" partly comes from the "manger scene" of them staying in a lowly manger when Jesus was born. However, they did not stay there for lack of financial resources. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they tried to stay in a lodging house, but everything was "booked solid" in the city. (Luke 2:7) As soon as the crowds thinned out, they promptly relocated to a rented "house" in Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:11) Also, it takes financial resources to travel. When God warned Joseph to flee to Egypt quickly, he obviously had the financial

resources on hand to afford a hastily arranged, indefinite stay in a foreign nation. (Matthew 2:13-15) Either Joseph was not a “poor carpenter,” or these funds came from the gifts of the Magi at Jesus’ birth.

Jesus was descended from the kings of Judah through both His father and mother! While Matthew 1 gives Joseph’s descent from Judah’s dynastic line, Luke 3:23-33 gives Mary’s descent from king David. Both Joseph and Mary were direct descendants of King David, the kings of Judah, related to the Davidic kings in Asia and had Salathiel and Zerubbabel as common ancestors. However, Joseph and Mary’s immediate ancestors were descended from two different sons of Zerubbabel. (Matthew 1:13-16, Luke 3:23-27) Some confusion exists on this point, as it is easy to not grasp that Luke 3’s account gives Mary’s lineage. Henry Halley explains this point as follows:

“The commonly accepted view is that Matthew gives Joseph’s line, showing Jesus to be the Legal Heir to the Promises given Abraham and David; and that Luke gives Mary’s line, showing Jesus’ blood descent, ‘Son of David according to the flesh’ (Romans 1:3). Mary’s genealogy, in accord with Jewish usage, was in her husband’s name. Joseph was the ‘son of Heli’ (Luke 3:23), that is, ‘son-in-law’ of Heli. Jacob was Joseph’s father (Matthew 1:16).”<sup>21</sup>

Jesus was a “blue-blooded” son of parents descended from royalty. This remarkable relationship meant both Joseph and Jesus were distant relatives of Parthia’s kings. Because Parthia could offer the kingship to any relative of the Parthian king line, not just the oldest son or closest relative of the previous king, both Joseph and Jesus Christ were potential claimants to the throne of the Parthian Empire! While the Bible does record Jesus’ royal lineage of the seed of David, it does not specifically mention His relationship to Parthia’s dynasty. However, as we shall see later in this chapter, the Bible implies that this relationship existed. Since the Magi who worshipped Jesus were members of the body which selected the kings of Parthia and kept track of male Arsacids, they must have been ecstatic to find living descendants of King David. The Magi no doubt discussed the possibility that this child Jesus, born under such unusual circumstances, might one day take the throne of Parthia. While the Bible is silent on their future contacts, this delegation of Parthian Magi likely would have stayed in contact with Jesus in future years and monitored the events of His life. If the Parthians had a Messianic understanding, Jesus would have been seen as an acceptable ruler because He was a son of David.

## **Did the Magi Almost Cause a Roman-Parthian War?**

Let us consider that the visit of the Magi to Jesus may have been a factor in a political crisis that almost led to a new Roman-Parthian war. Recall that from 40-37 B.C., Parthia had ruled Palestine and Syria before the Romans drove them back across the Euphrates River. That war ushered in a long period of Parthian-Roman détente which included the entire lifetime of Jesus Christ. However, a great Parthian-Roman war was barely averted in 1 A.D. when a “summit conference” was held between the Parthian emperor, Phraataces, and Caius Caesar, the grandson of Augustus Caesar on an island in the Euphrates River (i.e. neutral territory). Roman sources recorded that:

“The armies of the two chiefs were drawn up on the opposite banks of the river [the Euphrates], facing one another; and the chiefs themselves, accompanied by an equal number of attendants, proceeded to deliberate in the sight of both hosts.”

### **This “summit conference” averted war, but how could the Magi’s visit have had a role in this crisis?**

The Bible’s account of the Magi visiting Jesus ceases when the Magi left Judea and returned to Parthia, leaving the impression that the issue was concluded. However, if we consider the geopolitical realities of that time, there is no way that the Magi’s exit from Judea ended the matter.

Matthew 2:3 records that Herod and “all Jerusalem” were troubled by the arrival of the Magi. Jerusalem was a commercial city at the nexus of major trade routes, and it commonly received caravans of thousands of people. Three tired Magi arriving from the east would not have made a ripple in the city’s calm. For that matter, caravans from Parthian territory could arrive in Jerusalem with many thousands of armed escorts, and such events did not trouble the city. However, the arrival of Parthian Magi — Parthia’s nobles and priests — in Jerusalem escorted by a large army of Parthian soldiers was unprecedented and unrepeated in the history of the city of Jerusalem. This occurred at a time when Parthia and Rome had a peace treaty, and no major Roman or Parthian military forces had crossed the Euphrates River in over three decades. The arrival of a large Parthian military force in Jerusalem escorting high Parthian officials was militarily provocative and could justifiably be seen by King Herod and the Romans as a treaty violation.

When Parthia had occupied Palestine, it had crowned its own vassal king, Antigonus, as ruler of Judea. When the Magi, Parthia’s official king-makers, came to Jerusalem looking for “a new king of the Jews,” it must have sounded to Herod and the Romans that the Parthians were trying to reassert their claim to Judea and

dethrone Herod. Their speaking directly to Herod, who was Rome's "king of the Jews," about wanting to find a "new king of the Jews" could be seen by the Romans as very close to a declaration of war, given the region's history. The fact that King Herod "bit his tongue" and made no rash statement to the Magi and treated them with deference argues that the Parthians must have had an intimidating number of troops at Jerusalem to compel Herod to be so uncharacteristically meek. Since a major Roman-Parthian treaty had been in effect for over three decades, Rome felt unthreatened in the region, and would, consequently, have had only a small garrison in Jerusalem.

Caesar's decree that no Parthian war be provoked also put Herod in an awkward position. While the Magi and Parthians were in Judea with no harmful intent, there is no way the Romans could be sure this "visit" was benign in nature. After the Parthians left, Herod "blew his stack" (Matthew 2:16) and vented his pent-up rage by murdering all male children in Bethlehem under age two. Official reports surely had to be filed with Augustus Caesar in Rome about this highly unusual event. Herod was justifiably fearful of Parthian intentions in the area. Hadn't they come to anoint a replacement for him as "king of the Jews?" Hadn't they also deceived him by leaving the area without his knowledge? Herod's murderous act in Bethlehem would also have inflamed Jewish residents, and rumors of revolt against the hated Romans would have intensified. Faced with a possible Parthian invasion and/or a Jewish revolt, Herod needed more Roman soldiers in the region. In his reports to Caesar, Herod surely cast himself in a favorable light, warning Caesar that the Parthians had crossed the Euphrates, made a military reconnaissance to Jerusalem to spy out the city's weakness and were openly talking about crowning a "new king of the Jews." Because the Parthians' arrival in Jerusalem had scared the whole city, news of this extraordinary event would have spread quickly along the trade routes. Roman honor had been slighted, and Rome usually responded to such an insult.

However, the Romans could not respond immediately. Rome had been sapped by the costly civil wars between Brutus and Octavian and also Octavian against Mark Antony and Cleopatra. These wars were fought in the eastern half of the Roman Empire, so Rome's military forces in the east had been depleted and disorganized. Augustus Caesar could not be entirely sure whom to trust with an army, lest another civil war break out in the east. Herod the Great was a firm ally of Augustus, but Herod was soon to die, leaving Augustus with no close ally in the East to whom he could entrust an army. Also, Rome and Parthia were facing a possible conflict in Armenia over succession to the throne of Armenia. In both Armenia and Judea, the issue was whether Rome or Parthia would choose the

kings of those nations. Also, Rome had to finance, train and equip an army to fight the Parthians. Rome's armies under Crassus and Mark Antony had been "clobbered" by the Parthians, so Rome would need extra time to assemble an army to challenge Parthia. Rome's leadership crisis is described by George Rawlinson as follows:

"Augustus [formerly "Octavian"], from the time that he heard of the Armenian troubles, and of the support given them by Parthia, seems never to have wavered in his determination to vindicate the claims of Rome...[but] hesitated as to the person whose services he should employ...He would have been glad to employ Tiberius; but that morose prince had deserted him and...was living in self-chosen retirement. Caius, the eldest of his grandsons, was, in B.C. 2, only 18 years of age...the extreme youth of the prince caused him to hesitate...and the consequence was that Caius did not start for the East until late in B.C. 1."<sup>23</sup>

In other words, Rome's political situation compelled a delay in responding to Parthia's real provocation in Judea and apparent provocation in Armenia. The situation was further muddled by the death of Phraates IV, Parthia's emperor when the Magi visited Jerusalem.<sup>24</sup> Since Phraates IV and Herod the Great had died by the time Rome's army was ready, all the major principals had a fresh viewpoint by the time Rome and Parthia had their "summit conference" at the Euphrates River in 1 A.D.

Although historical accounts mention only the Armenian dispute, it is significant that the Parthian and Roman armies did not confront each other in Armenia. Their confrontation was along the Euphrates River, which had been crossed by the Parthian armed column led by the Magi. Everyone in the region breathed a huge sigh of relief when war was averted. As we shall soon see, if a war had been fought ending the Parthian-Roman detente, much of Jesus Christ's ministry in Judea could not have occurred.

If the armed Parthian column led by the Magi provoked the Roman-Parthian confrontation in 1 A.D. during which war was averted, a date of 3 B.C. for Christ's birth is more logical. If He had been born in 4 B.C., there would be too great a gap between that year and the Roman response in 1 A.D. However, a gap from 3 B.C. to 1 A.D. would be understandable given the political realities of that time.

**Note: The following Post is taken from the book by Joseph Lenard entitled *Mysteries of Jesus' Life Revealed—His Birth, Death, Resurrection, and Ascensions*. For an overview and complete chapter listing of this fascinating study, [click here](#).**

### *THE DEATH OF HEROD – MATTHEW 2:14–23*

Aside from the accounts in Matthew which include the visit of the Magi to worship the Christ child and of the family's subsequent escape to Egypt, there is very little in the Bible regarding the death of Herod and the early years of Jesus' life.

Herod's death is mentioned in three verses in the Gospel of Matthew:

*“So he [Joseph] got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the **death of Herod**. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son’*

*When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. . .*

*After **Herod died**, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for **those who were trying to take the child's life are dead**.’ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: ‘He will be called a Nazarene.’” (Matthew 2:14–16, 19–23 NIV)*

From Matthew we can therefore see that Herod's death most certainly occurred *after* the birth of Jesus, *after* the Magi's visit, and *after* the family's sojourn to Egypt.

Why is it important to establish the date of Herod's death? Simply because the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Magi *must* occur prior to Herod's death. If the death of Herod occurred *after September 11, 3 BC* (my argued date for the birth of Jesus) and *after December 25, 2 BC* (My argued date for the visit of the Magi), then the validity of the argued dates would be greatly enhanced.

The death of Herod is our *puzzle piece 7*.

## SECULAR HISTORY OF HEROD'S DEATH

As I detailed in my previous Post ***Jesus' Birth – Roman History***, reliable secular records from the “Dark Decade” of history (6 BC to AD 4) are largely lacking. But even though secular records are scarce from the period around the death of Herod, *astronomy* once again (see my previous Post on ***Jesus' Birth – Astronomical/Zodiacal References in Scripture***) offers us an approximation of the date. This time, rather than the Star of Bethlehem, the planet Jupiter, or various constellations in the heavens, a specific ***lunar eclipse*** is key to the determination of the date.

Starting from a verifiable event in the Roman history of Judea – in this case the Roman census/oath of allegiance/registration discussed in the Post ***Jesus' Birth – Roman History*** – we can approximate the death of Herod within a few months. According to Ernest Martin:

“Josephus mentioned that an *oath of allegiance* was demanded by Augustus ***about twelve or fifteen months*** (12 to 15 months) before the death of Herod. This event would fit nicely with a decree going out from Augustus in 3 B.C. . . .”

I previously established that this is the same census mentioned by Luke (Luke 2:1-5a). Consequently, if we add 12 to 15 months to the date I have established for the birth of Jesus (September 11, 3 BC), we arrive at a period between September and December of 2 BC as the *approximate* date for the death of Herod.

### Specific Lunar Eclipse After the Death of Herod (Josephus)

It also turns out that a specific lunar eclipse can help us confirm the date of Herod's death.

### *Several Lunar Eclipses Occurred in 7 BC – 1 BC*

Despite historical and astronomical evidence to the contrary, a majority of theologians still cling to the belief that Jesus was born prior to the spring of 4 BC. The reason for their insistence on this date is due to a well-known statement by Josephus that *King Herod died soon after a lunar eclipse and before a Passover Feast in the spring*. The problem with this is that there were *several* lunar eclipses in the general period of Herod's death.

According to Ernest Martin, there were actually four total lunar eclipses visible in Judea during this period: On March 23, 5 BC; on September 15, 5 BC; on March 13, 4BC; and on January 10, 1 BC. Fortunately, only one of these lunar eclipse dates stands up to scrutiny in the validation of our argued dates for the birth of Jesus (*September 11, 3 BC*) and for the visit of the Magi 15 months later (*December 25, 2 BC*). The lunar eclipse of *January 10, 1 BC* is the best candidate, as discussed in the following sections.

### *Time Frame of Herod's Death and Funeral*

Part of the difficulty in determining which lunar eclipse to associate with Herod's death had to do with the fact that the amount of time from the lunar eclipse (prior to Herod's death) to his funeral had to be sufficient to support the planning and activities related to his funeral. On the other hand, the lunar eclipse and his death could not be too far removed from Passover, because Josephus specifically mentioned that Herod's death was "before a Passover."

Although Josephus does not provide the precise number of days from the lunar eclipse to the next Passover, this period can be estimated fairly easily; and it is fairly easy to estimate the amount of time required for each of the activities related to Herod's death and funeral. Ernest Martin estimates that a total of 10-12 weeks would be required for the events associated with the death and funeral. Consequently, almost *three-months* would be required from the time of the lunar eclipse until the following Passover in order to complete all of the funeral-related activities.

Accordingly, Ernest Martin determined that the best estimate for Herod's death is **January 28, 1 BC** (**Schebat 2** on the Jewish calendar). This fits all of the chronological parameters, including Josephus' statement about his death being soon after a lunar eclipse (*January 10, 1 BC*) and before a Passover. This date is one of the un-designated festival days of the Jews, as mentioned in the *Megillath Taanit* (a Jewish document referred to as the "*Scroll of Fasting*").

As further confirmation of the estimated date of Herod's death, one of the dates mentioned in the *Megillath Taan* – which dates back to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 – is *Schebat 2* (which we noted previously corresponds to *January 28, 1 BC*). On this date the Jews apparently celebrated the death of Herod, as Herod was hated by the Jews. In fact, Josephus stated that just before Herod died he said, "I know that the Jews will celebrate my death by a festival." Turns out he was right.

## *The Correct Lunar Eclipse*

Let's evaluate each of the four candidate lunar eclipses to confirm our earlier position that the lunar eclipse of *January 10, 1 BC* is most likely to be the one which occurred following Herod's death. The following analysis was provided by Ernest Martin:

What about the eclipse on **March 23, 5 BC**?

Although this is a spring eclipse and would align with an upcoming Passover, there are only 29 days between this eclipse and the next Passover. This is insufficient time for the elaborate funeral arrangements appropriate to a King of Judea. Remember, we estimated a period of three months would be needed. In addition, an early 5 BC eclipse date causes problems with the chronological markers in the records of both Josephus and the Romans regarding the period of Herod's death.

What about the eclipse of **September 15, 5 BC**?

The elapsed time between the eclipse and the Passover is seven months. Josephus would not have referenced a Passover that far removed from the death of Herod.

What about the eclipse of **March 13, 4 BC**?

This is the eclipse *incorrectly chosen* by most historians, as they do not properly consider all of the events which would then have had to be completed in a brief 29-day period. Besides, this was only a *partial eclipse*. And, as was the case with the March 23, 5 BC eclipse, the period of time between the eclipse and Passover would have been insufficient for all required funeral activities.

What about the eclipse of **January 10, 1 BC**?

**Bingo!** This lunar eclipse meets all historical and chronological requirements, including a period of just 12 weeks from the eclipse to the Passover.

According to Ernest Martin, there are a number of modern historians who agree with the selection of the *January 10, 1 BC* eclipse, including E. Filmer, Ormund Edwards, and, most notably, Dr. Paul Keresztes, who supported the date in his two-volume work *Imperial Rome and the Christians* (1989). In addition, several notable historians from that past supported the selection, including French scholar Joseph Justus Scaliger (in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and German historian Sethus Calvisius (who recorded nearly 300 eclipses as benchmarks for reckoning historical events of the past). In the last century, English scholars William Galloway, H. Bosanquet, and C. R. Conder affirmed the date, as did German professors Caspari and Reiss.

## The “Missing” War – The War of Varus

Who has heard of *The War of Varus*, a major conflict which occurred within the “Dark Decade” of 6 BC to AD 4? Most people have not. The war was long a mystery to historians because they could not find it in historical Roman records. They could not find this war – which was fought in Judea between the Jews and the Romans – because they tried to place it three years *before* it actually happened. They got it wrong because they got the death of Herod (and other events) wrong. They incorrectly assumed that the war was fought in 4 BC, rather than in early AD 1.

According to Ernest Martin, with a proper understanding of the actual dates of the birth of Jesus (*September 11, 3 BC*), the visit of the Magi (*December 25, 2 BC*), and the death of Herod (*January 28, 1 BC*), it is now possible to corroborate various Roman documents that mention not only this war but other historical events.

Jewish records clearly indicate that this war occurred; but Roman records (literature, coins, and inscriptions) show no such war in 4 BC. In fact, Rome fought no wars from 7 BC to 2 BC, which we know from Roman troop records, which show that troops were actually being *discharged* during that period – definitely not a sign that a major conflict was ongoing. Fortunately, in 1 BC we find a number of Roman references to the war.

As reported by Ernest Martin, *The War of Varus* was no small skirmish. Rome brought in an estimated 20,000 troops from Syria, in addition to support personnel. It has been described as one of the most serious military operations to occur in Palestine between the time of Pompey (63 BC) and the Roman/Jewish War of AD 66/73! According to Ernest Martin, the war took place in Galilee, Judea, and Idumaea and began a little over two months *after* the death of Herod in *January, 1 BC*. The war took place in the spring and summer of the year of Herod’s death.

Josephus stated that *The War of Varus* was directed against the Jews by *Quintilius Varus*, the Roman governor of Syria and the namesake of the conflict. The final mopping-up of the war occurred in Idumaea – the southern part of Herod’s kingdom – by *Gaius Caesar*, the grandson of Augustus, who was sent to the region to help Varus with the war effort. This was in the autumn of 1 BC.

The war was fought because of three specific events: Herod’s death, the killing of two influential rabbis by Herod immediately before his death, and a Jewish rebellion and subsequent Passover massacre by government troops.

According to Josephus, the conflict began when two influential rabbis falsely believed that Herod had died – on December 5, 2 BC (*Kislev 7*) – and encouraged a number of young men to destroy a golden eagle which Herod had placed over the eastern gate of the Temple. The placement of the eagle was contrary to the Law of Moses. The young

men and the two rabbis were tried and sentenced by Herod in Jericho. The young men were given lighter sentences; but the two rabbis were ordered to be burned alive on Friday, January 9, 1 BC, to correspond with the lunar eclipse which was predicted to occur the night of *January 10, 1 BC*. According to Ernest Martin, Herod had been advised to delay the executions a few nights to align with the pending lunar eclipse so that he could present the eclipse as astronomical evidence to the people that even God was frowning on the actions of the two rabbis.

At the Passover following the deaths of the esteemed rabbis, a riot erupted among the Jewish people. According to Josephus in this writing *Antiquities*, Archelaus (the successor to Herod) ordered 3,000 Jewish worshipers to be slaughtered in the temple precincts. The riot and subsequent massacre resulted in the highly unusual cancellation of Passover services (Numbers 9:6-14), something which *had never happened before* occurred in Jewish history.

The slaughter of the worshipers in the Temple led directly to the *War of Varus*, during the summer and autumn of 1 BC. Ernest Martin reported that in addition to those killed in the war, 2,000 Jews were subsequently crucified and 30,000 were sold into slavery following the war.

The eclipse of *January 10, 1 BC* was long remembered by the Jewish people not only because of Herod's death (which closely followed the eclipse) but also because of the execution of the two rabbis, the massacre of the 3,000 Jews, and the ensuing *War of Varus*. All these events occurred in 1 BC. The records on the eclipse, Roman historical records for the time, and the written accounts of Josephus are all in agreement as to these events and dates. We have now placed *puzzle piece 7*.

The angel would have reported Herod's death to Joseph in Egypt on or after *January 28, 1 BC*; and Joseph, Mary, and Jesus would have traveled back to Israel sometime after that date.

**Mat 2:4** And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

**Mat 2:5** And they said to him, In Bethlehem of Judea. For so it is written by the prophet,

**Mat 2:6** "And you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, are not the least among the governors of Judah. For out of you shall come a Governor who shall rule My people Israel."

**Mat 2:7** Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, inquired of them exactly what time the star appeared.

**Mat 2:8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child. And when you have found *him*, bring me word again so that I may come and worship him also.

**Mat 2:9** When they had heard the king, they departed. And lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them until it came and stood over where the child was.

**Mat 2:10** And seeing the star, they rejoiced *with* exceedingly great joy.

**Mat 2:11** And coming into the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother. And they fell down and worshiped Him. And opening their treasures, they presented gifts to Him, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

**Mat 2:12** And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

### **The Flight to Egypt**

**Mat 2:13** And when they had departed, behold, the angel of *the* Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt. And be there until I bring you word, for Herod is about to seek the child to destroy Him.

**Mat 2:14** And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt.

**Mat 2:15** And he was there until the death of Herod; so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the LORD through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called My Son."

### **Herod Kills the Children**

**Mat 2:16** Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked by the wise men, was greatly enraged. And he sent and killed all the boys in Bethlehem, and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had carefully inquired of the wise men.

**Mat 2:17** Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

**Mat 2:18** "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are *not*."

## The Return to Nazareth

**Mat 2:19** But Herod having expired, behold, an angel of *the* Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

**Mat 2:20** saying, Arise, and take the child and His mother. And go into *the* land of Israel. For the ones who sought the child's life are dead.

**Mat 2:21** And he arose and took the child and His mother and came into *the* land of Israel.

**Mat 2:22** But when he heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea in his father Herod's place, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.

**Mat 2:23** And he came and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

## Jesus Presented at the Temple

**Luk 2:22** And when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present *Him* to the Lord

**Luk 2:23** (as it is written in *the* Law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord)

**Luk 2:24** and to offer a sacrifice according to that said in the Law of *the* Lord, A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

## Purification After Childbirth

**Lev 12:1** And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying,

**Lev 12:2** Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, If a woman has conceived seed and has borne a male, then she shall be unclean seven days; as on the days of her menstrual impurity she shall be unclean.

**Lev 12:3** And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

**Lev 12:4** And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying thirty-three days. She shall touch no holy thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are fulfilled.

**Lev 12:5** But if she bears a female, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying sixty-six days.

**Lev 12:6** And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove, for a sin offering to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to the priest.

**Lev 12:7** And he shall offer it before Jehovah, and make an atonement for her. And she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This *is* the law for her that has borne a male or a female.

**Lev 12:8** And if her hand cannot reach to a lamb, then she shall bring two turtle-doves or two young pigeons. The one shall be for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed.

**Luk 2:25** And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon. And this man *was* just and devout, waiting for *the* Consolation of Israel. And *the* Holy Spirit was on him.

**Luk 2:26** And it happened to him, being instructed by the Holy Spirit, he was not to see death before he would see *the* Christ of *the* Lord.

**Luk 2:27** And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And *as* the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do according to the custom of the Law concerning Him,

**Luk 2:28** even he received Him in his arms and blessed God, and said,

**Luk 2:29** Lord, now You will let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word.

**Luk 2:30** For my eyes have seen Your Salvation

**Luk 2:31** which You have prepared before *the* face of all the peoples,

**Luk 2:32** a light for revelation *to the* nations, and the glory of Your people Israel.

**Luk 2:33** And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken by him.

**Luk 2:34** And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, Behold, this One is set for *the* fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against

**Luk 2:35** (yea, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also), so that *the* thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

**Luk 2:36** And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of *the* tribe of Asher. She was advanced in many days, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity.

**Luk 2:37** And she *was* a widow *of* eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, serving God with fastings and prayers night and day.

**Luk 2:38** And she coming in at that instant gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those in Jerusalem eagerly expecting redemption.

### **The Return to Nazareth**

**Luk 2:39** And when they had finished all things according to *the* Law of *the* Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

**Luk 2:40** And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was on Him.