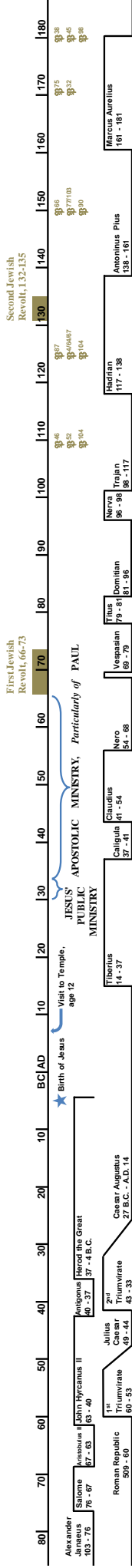
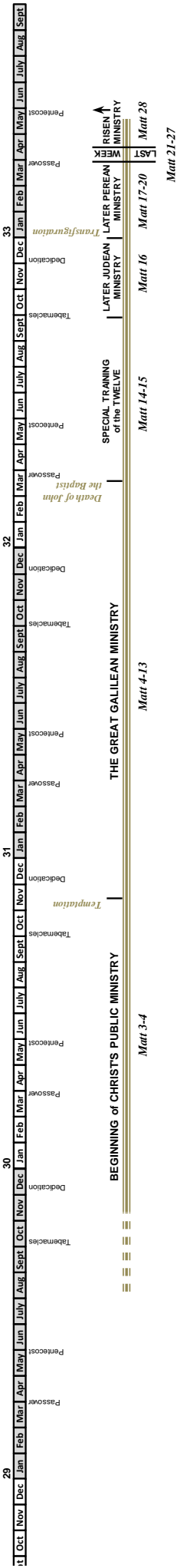


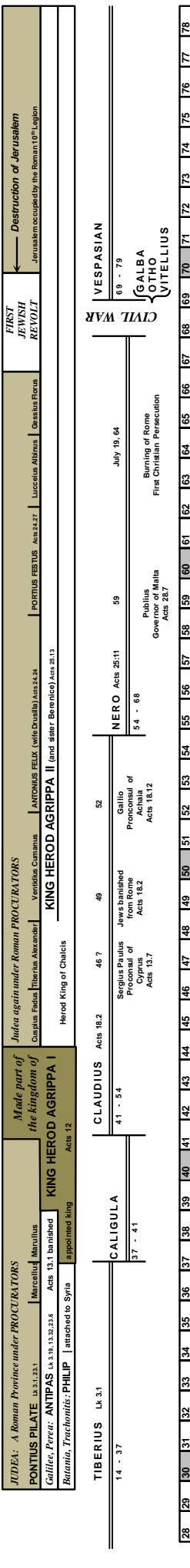
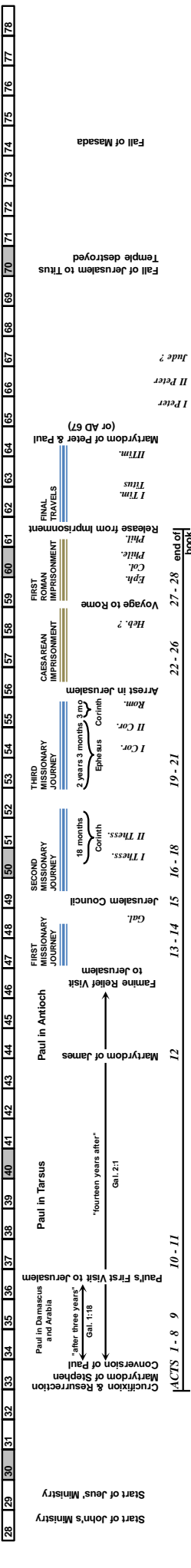
THE SETTING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY



APOSTOLIC MINISTRY, PARTICULARLY OF PAUL



Chronology and the Birth of Christ - When was He Born?

The Julian Calendar was introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 BC. This was 708 A.U.C. (*anno urbis conditae* = from the foundation of the city [of Rome]). It was 365 days in length, with a leap year every 4th year.

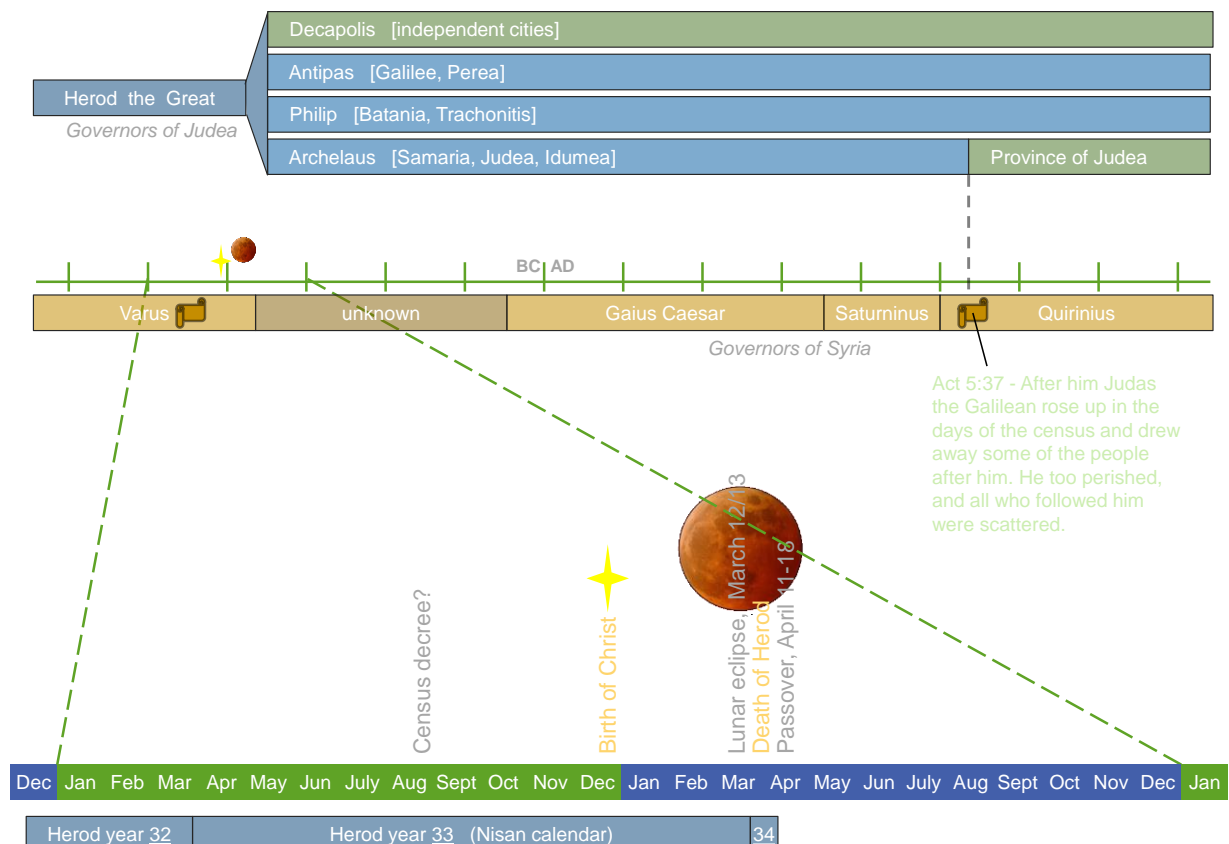
In AD 525 Pope John I commissioned the monk Dionysius to construct a Christian calendar.

Dionysius determined that Christ was born Dec 25, 754 A.U.C, so that became AD 1.

In the days of Pope Gregory XIII (c. 1580) the Julian calendar was reformed. The reform corrected two errors:

- 1) Since the solar year is actually 365.2425 days long rather than 365.25, the calendar had been gaining about 11 minutes per year, or about 3 days in 400 years. Thus in the new calendar, every year that is exactly divisible by four is a leap year, except for years that are exactly divisible by 100; the centurial years that are exactly divisible by 400 are still leap years. For example, the year 1900 is not a leap year; the year 2000 is a leap year.
- 2) The Gregorian calendar also corrected for this loss by skipping 10 days in order to restore March 21 as the date of the vernal equinox. Eventually it was determined that Dionysius miscalculated his dates. Herod the Great died in 4 BC, thus Jesus was born earlier, not in 1 BC or AD 1.

Josephus records that there was an eclipse of the moon shortly before Herod's death. It can be calculated that this eclipse happened on March 12/13, 4 BC. Herod died before the Passover that year, the first day of which was April 11. Since the 34th year of his reign did not begin until Nisan 1 (March 29), his death would have occurred between March 29 and April 11, 4 BC. Thus Jesus could not have been born later than Spring of 4 BC.



Other Chronological Issues Related to the Infancy Narratives

Eight days after his birth, the infant was named Jesus. After the time had lapsed for Mary and Jesus' purification, a length of 33 days (see Lev 12:24), they went to the temple to present Jesus to the Lord (Luke 2:21-24).

When did the wisemen visit Jesus?

- 1) The wisemen visited after the birth of Jesus but before Herod's death. This likely places their visit between the end of 5 BC and Herod's death in April, 4 BC.
- 2) Herod's paranoia was aroused by the wisemen. After their visit, God sent them home by a different route and sent the holy family south to Egypt to avoid Herod's sword. There seems to be little room for delay between their visit and the exodus from Bethlehem.
- 3) The holy family visited the Temple for purification about a month after the birth (Luke 2:22), something that would be very unlikely if the wisemen had already visited them and raised Herod's awareness. Thus the visit of the wisemen was probably in January or February of 4 BC.

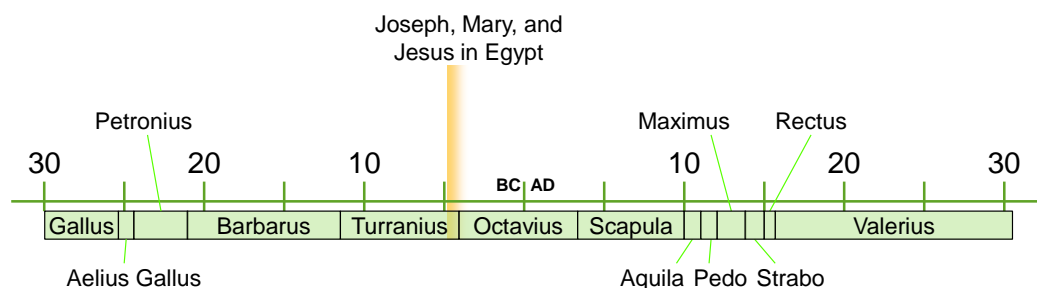
Why did Herod kill all the Bethlehem infants aged 2 and younger (Matt 2:16)?

Does this indicate that Jesus was a toddler when the wisemen visited?

- 1) Knowing the paranoia of Herod, it is likely that he left plenty of leeway on the age, preferring to kill more children and include the infant than lessen the range and miss the child.
- 2) There were no state records of birth dates or ages that could be consulted, so the soldiers would have had to rely on a visual estimation of age. It would have been necessary to provide the soldiers with an age range broad enough to ensure that Herod's goal was met, even with only unprofessional visual age estimation.
- 3) If Herod had determined from the wisemen that Jesus was about 2 years old already, his command would have included a range on either side, e.g. aged 1-4, rather than everything below the child's age. Thus, based on his command, it is very likely that Herod thought Jesus was less than a year old.

Who ruled Egypt when the Holy Family was exiled there?

Egypt had lost its last pharaoh, Cleopatra VII, when she committed suicide in 30 BC. After this Egypt was ruled directly by Rome, who used prefects to administrate the area. The holy family would have been in Egypt at the end of the rule of Gaius Turranius and perhaps at the start of the rule of Publius Octavius, depending on how quickly they returned.



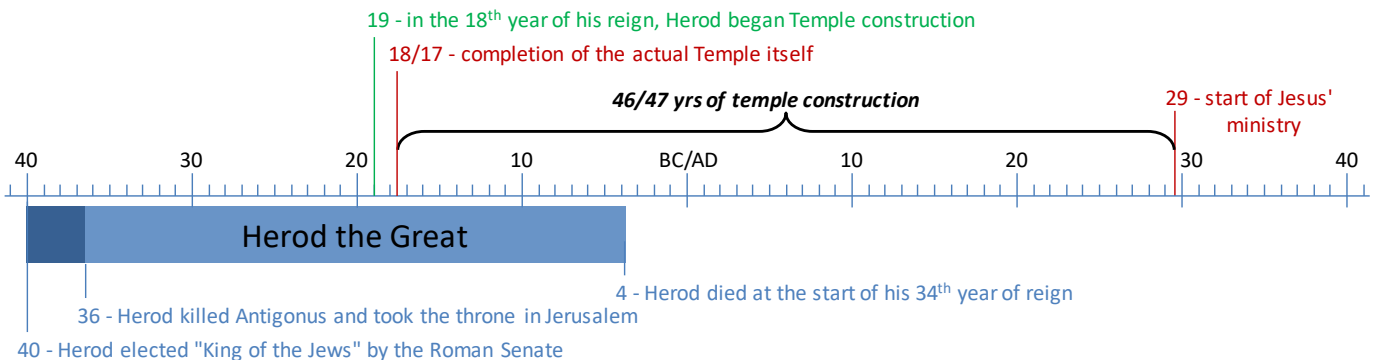
In what year was Jesus crucified?

Luke 3:1-2 indicates that John the Baptist began his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius, which was AD 28. Pilate was governor of Judaea from AD 26 to AD 36, so Jesus death must have fallen between AD 28 and AD 36. The Jewish month was 29 or 30 days, lunar based, and began on the new moon. Therefore the first of the month occurred on different days of the week each year. Passover dates calculated by Colin Humphreys and others are as follows:

AD 26	April 21	Sunday	AD 32	April 13	Sunday
AD 27	April 10	Thursday	AD 33	April 3	Friday
AD 28	March 30	Tuesday	AD 34	March 24	Wednesday
AD 29	April 18	Monday	AD 35	April 12	Tuesday
AD 30	April 7	Friday	AD 36	March 31	Saturday
AD 31	March 27	Tuesday			

Thus it can be demonstrated that Nisan 14 was a Friday in the years AD 30 and 33.

Another indicator that these dates are in the right range comes from the statement of the Jews in John 2:20. In response to Jesus' claim to be able to raise up the temple in 3 days, they state that "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple." Josephus placed the completion of the Temple edifice itself in AD 18/17, which would situate the Jew's statement in c. 29 BC, depending on how partial years are handled.



Luke 3:23 indicates that Jesus was "about 30 years of age" when he began his ministry. If he was born at the end of 5 BC, he would have been about 33 or 34 in AD 29. The gospels imply that his ministry was about 3½ years in length, therefore he must have been crucified in the Spring of AD 33.

