

The Greatest Story Told: Part 1
Zechariah, Elizabeth, and God's Appointed Time
Pastors Josh & Kelly Word

To understand fully the story of Jesus, we must go back to the beginning. Over the next couple of weeks, Josh and I want us all to dig in and study out the year before Jesus's birth and the first two years of His life. As we dig in, our hope for you is that you come to realize just how planned out God's timing is. His attention to detail is amazing! He planned the end even before he started "in the beginning." By studying the year before Jesus' birth, we will see how intricate God's plan is. We will see how detailed God is down to when the crops were ready for harvest that year.

God's time is always better than our time. The story of John the Baptizer is a great story of what can happen if we have patience and wait in faith on our Father. Zachariah and Elizabeth are both very old in the story of Luke. Elizabeth was called barren before she passed the age to bare children, but they kept faith in God. They weren't believing for children, but they had faith in seeking FIRST the Kingdom of Heaven, and they were blameless before God because of their faith.

The story of Luke begins with Zachariah going to burn incense in the Holy Place. All of the Levites were dedicated to Temple Service, but only the sons of Aaron served as priests in presenting offerings. They were the only ones allowed to go into the Holy Place. Because of the sheer number of priests this was an once in a lifetime opportunity. It just so happened that ACCORDING TO GOD'S TIMING, the lot would fall on Zachariah for this time (meaning it was his turn to burn the incense in the Holy Place).

Luke 1:1-25 AMP

"It seemed good and desirable to me, [and so I have determined] also after having searched out diligently and followed all things closely and traced accurately the course from the highest to the minutest detail from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, [Acts 1:1.] [My purpose is] that you may know the full truth and understand with certainty and security against error the accounts (histories) and doctrines of the faith of which you have been informed and in which you have been orally instructed. In the days when Herod was king of Judea there was a certain priest whose name was Zachariah, of the daily service (the division) of Abia; and his wife was also a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they both were righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. But they had no child, for Elizabeth was barren; and both were far advanced in years. Now while on duty, serving as priest before God in the order of his division, As was the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter [the sanctuary of] the temple of the Lord and burn incense. [Exod. 30:7.] And all the throng of people were praying outside [in the court] at the hour of incense [burning]. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zachariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear took possession of him. But the angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zachariah, because your petition was heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you must call

his name John [God is favorable]. And you shall have joy and exultant delight, and many will rejoice over his birth, For he will be great and distinguished in the sight of the Lord. And he must drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit even in and from his mother's womb. [Num. 6:3.] And he will turn back and cause to return many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, And he will [himself] go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn back the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient and incredulous and unpersuadable to the wisdom of the upright [which is the knowledge and holy love of the will of God]—in order to make ready for the Lord a people [perfectly] prepared [in spirit, adjusted and disposed and placed in the right moral state]. [Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5, 6.] And Zachariah said to the angel, By what shall I know and be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years. And the angel replied to him, I am Gabriel. I stand in the [very] presence of God, and I have been sent to talk to you and to bring you this good news. [Dan. 8:16; 9:21.] Now behold, you will be and will continue to be silent and not able to speak till the day when these things take place, because you have not believed what I told you; but my words are of a kind which will be fulfilled in the appointed and proper time. Now the people kept waiting for Zachariah, and they wondered at his delaying [so long] in the sanctuary. But when he did come out, he was unable to speak to them; and they [clearly] perceived that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary; and he kept making signs to them, still he remained dumb. And when his time of performing priestly functions was ended, he returned to his [own] house. Now after this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and for five months she secluded herself entirely, saying, [I have hid myself] Because thus the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He deigned to look on me to take away my reproach among men. [Gen. 30:23; Isa. 4:1.]”

Before we can even see the miracle of John the Baptizer, we should look to the miracle of the timing of God. It is a miracle the Zechariah was even allowed to burn the incense during the Feast of Pentecost. And to realize what a miracle this is, we just look at God's Calendar.

God's Calendar:

God's calendar doesn't work like we think calendar's work today. We know January, February, March, etc, but God's calendar doesn't function in that way. God wanted us to rely on Him for the times and seasons, and so that's how He set up His calendar. He wanted man to look to Him for everything.

To see an overview of how His calendar works, let's look at some scripture in Exodus. It will be important for us to see the miracle of Zechariah being in the temple during the time of Pentecost.

Exodus 12:1-2 AMP

“THE Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, This month shall be to you the beginning of months, the first month of the year to you.”

This was when the children of Israel left Egypt. God went on to give the instructions for the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. The months in God's calendar don't have specific

amounts of days. For example December has 31 days. In God's calendar, a month will begin on a new moon, and the following month will start on the next new moon. Again, God is trying to point man back to looking to Him for everything.

The first month of the year is called the Abiyb (aw-beeb). In essence it means, "the barley is ripe."

At the end of the 12th month of the year, priests would go out and check the barley to see if it was ripe. If the barley had ripened, THE NEXT NEW MOON would begin the New Year. If the barley wasn't ripe at the end of the 12th month, they would add a 13th month to the year. This seems so odd to us, but again, God is calling man to fully rely on Him, even for the time and year. It's SO important for the barley to be ripe at the beginning of the new year because the priest had to take the ripened barley and present it as a wave offering on the Day of Firstfruits which is in the first month of the year. The Day of Firstfruits is a commanded Appointed Time by our Father.

Exodus 34:18 AMP

"The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt."

Leviticus 23:10-11 AMP

"Tell the Israelites, When you have come into the land I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, that you may be accepted; on the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it [before the Lord]."

What's this have to do with Zechariah?

There were SO many priests in the days of Zechariah, and there were SO FEW jobs to be done in the temple. So, God commanded that the priests be divided up into groups, or courses as the Bible calls them.

Luke 1:5 AMP

"In the days when Herod was king of Judea there was a certain priest whose name was **Zechariah, of the daily service (the division or course) of Abia (abi-ha)**; and his wife was also a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth."

If we look in 1 Chronicles, we can see all the divisions or courses that God set in motion.

1 Chronicles 24:5 & 10 AMP

"Thus were they divided by lot, one group with the other, for there were chiefs of the sanctuary and chiefs of God [high priests] drawn both from the sons of Eleazar and from the sons of Ithamar. Verse 10 The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,"

So, Zechariah was in the 8th course or division. The Priests were divided into 24 courses and each course served 1 week in the temple twice a year. The Priests were also on hand for the 3 major Feast days on God's calendar. The courses would begin the beginning of the Sabbath (what we know as Saturday) and concluded at the end of the following Sabbath. The first course would begin on the first Sabbath of the year which is the month of the Abib to commemorate the Exodus.

We know from verse 10 of Luke 1 that the 8th course would have began around Pentecost during the year before Jesus' birth because all of the people were assembled as commanded by God. So, the Day of Firstfruits was the first day of the second course or group of the priests.

If you count 7 Sabbaths (Saturday) from the Day of Firstfruits, then it's Pentecost.

Leviticus 23:15-16; 21 AMP

“And you shall count from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, seven Sabbaths; [seven full weeks] shall they be. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a cereal offering of new grain to the Lord. 21 You shall make proclamation the same day, summoning a holy assembly; you shall do no servile work that day. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”

Why is this important to the story of Jesus' Birth?

Well, we will see later that Elizabeth being pregnant is a sign to Mary that what God told her about Jesus was true. If you study out the whole Bible and Jesus' life, everything revolves around God's calendar and His Feast Days. If the barley wouldn't have been ripe on the day it was ripe that year, Zechariah's course or division wouldn't have been the one's serving that exact week at the temple during Pentecost. God cares about us SO much that he made the barley ripe on a specific day, so that the Day of Firstfruits would be observed exactly when it was observed that year, so that Zechariah could be in the temple, so that John, his son, could be the forerunner of Christ, so that John's birth could be a sign to Mary that she was in the exact will of God!

So, here is Zechariah, finally after all of these years, he has the privilege of getting to enter the Holy Place to offer incense to the Lord. As soon as he fulfills this priestly duty, an angel appears to him and prophecies about John. At first, Zechariah doesn't believe the angel, so the angel gives him a sign. “You will be unable to speak for 9 months, until John is born.” Many people around them were probably thinking that there was some kind of sin in their lives because the Bible says that Elizabeth is called barren, but God's Word promises us that if we walk in His ways that He will bless us with children. They weren't following God because of what He could do for them, they followed Him because they had faith that His ways were right.

Deuteronomy 7:14 AMP - “You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.”

After the days of his priestly course was over, he went home to Elizabeth and they conceived John. Elizabeth hides for 5 months, and then her miracle becomes Mary's sign. Imagine the confidence boost that gave to Mary. As soon as the angel told her that she would conceive a child, she asked, "How will I know this is true?" The angel tells her that her barren cousin who is beyond childbearing years has conceived and is in her 6th month. Soon after that encounter, Mary gets up and goes to see her cousin. As soon as Elizabeth hears her voice, she begins to prophecy and Mary's faith is confirmed.

Luke 1:26-56 AMP

"Now in the sixth month [after that], the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, To a girl never having been married and a virgin engaged to be married to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, Hail, O favored one [endued with grace]! The Lord is with you! Blessed (favored of God) are you before all other women! But when she saw him, she was greatly troubled and disturbed and confused at what he said and kept revolving in her mind what such a greeting might mean. And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace (free, spontaneous, absolute favor and loving-kindness) with God. And listen! You will become pregnant and will give birth to a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great (eminent) and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His forefather David, And He will reign over the house of Jacob throughout the ages; and of His reign there will be no end. [Isa. 9:6, 7; Dan. 2:44.] And Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I have no [intimacy with any man as a] husband? Then the angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you [like a shining cloud]; and so the holy (pure, sinless) Thing (Offspring) which shall be born of you will be called the Son of God. [Exod. 40:34; Isa. 7:14.] And listen! Your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is now the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment. Then Mary said, Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be done to me according to what you have said. And the angel left her. And at that time Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country to a town of Judah, And she went to the house of Zachariah and, entering it, saluted Elizabeth. And it occurred that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud cry, and then exclaimed, Blessed (favored of God) above all other women are you! And blessed (favored of God) is the Fruit of your womb! And how [have I deserved that this honor should] be granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, the instant the sound of your salutation reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed (happy, to be envied) is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of the things that were spoken to her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul magnifies and extols the Lord, And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, For He has looked upon the low station and humiliation of His handmaiden. For behold, from now on all generations [of all ages] will call me blessed and declare me happy and to be envied! For He Who is almighty has done great things for me—and holy is His name [to be venerated in His purity, majesty and glory]! And His mercy (His compassion and kindness toward the miserable and afflicted) is on those who

fear Him with godly reverence, from generation to generation and age to age. [Ps. 103:17.] He has shown strength and made might with His arm; He has scattered the proud and haughty in and by the imagination and purpose and designs of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree. He has filled and satisfied the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty-handed [without a gift]. He has laid hold on His servant Israel [to help him, to espouse his cause], in remembrance of His mercy, Even as He promised to our forefathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever. [Gen. 17:7; 18:18; 22:17; I Sam. 2:1-10; Mic. 7:20.] And Mary remained with her [Elizabeth] for about three months and [then] returned to her [own] home.”

God’s timing is perfect, and these events were put into place before He ever said, “let there be.” Israel was looking for this day. They didn’t even know when it came. They were so consumed in everyday life, that they missed the sign of the Messiah. Malachi prophesied that Elijah would come before the “Day of the Lord.” Since that time, Israel has been setting a place at the Passover dinner for Elijah. (John would come in the spirit of Elijah, and John was born at Passover.)

Malachi 4:5 AMP - “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. [Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13.]”

Luke 1:17 AMP - “And he will [himself] go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn back the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient and incredulous and unpersuadable to the wisdom of the upright [which is the knowledge and holy love of the will of God]—in order to make ready for the Lord a people [perfectly] prepared [in spirit, adjusted and disposed and placed in the right moral state]. [Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5, 6.]”

Every year during the Passover Seder (Sa-der or dinner), a child goes to open the door for Elijah, while the child is gone an elder takes and sprinkles wine on the plate set for Elijah. When the child returns to tell everyone that he didn’t come the elder says he came, but we were asleep. HOW PERFECT IS GOD’S TIMING? John was conceived shortly after the 8th course of the year which would have been a little over 2 months after the New Year according to God’s Calendar. A full term of pregnancy is 40 weeks or around 10 months. Studies have been done on primitive cultures that suggest ovulation occurs around the time of the full moon in societies with no artificial light or electromagnetic interference (electricity). This would have put the birth of John on the High Sabbath (which is always a full moon) of Passover.

Zechariah and Elizabeth had been called barren, but because they kept their faith in God and continued to live for Him with or without reward, God rewarded their patience with a miracle. That miracle not only confirmed Mary’s faith, but also straightened the paths of the Lord and prepared the hearts of the children of Israel to receive Him.

The Greatest Story Told: PART 2
Mary, Joseph, and the Lamb of God
Pastors Josh & Kelly Word

To understand fully the story of Jesus, we must go back to the beginning. Over the next couple of weeks, Josh and I want us all to dig in and study out the year before Jesus's birth and the first two years of His life. As we dig in, our hope for you is that you come to realize just how planned out God's timing is. His attention to detail is amazing! He planned the end even before he started "in the beginning." By studying the year before Jesus' birth and the first two years of his life, we will see how intricate God's plan is.

Luke 2:1-7 AMP

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

In the 25th year of the reign of Caesar Augustus (3-2 BC) by the command of Rome, all subjects of the empire were required to register their support in naming the "Divine Emperor" Octavius Augustus the "Father of the Roman Empire." After the census had been taken and the people taxed this was approved by the Roman Senate on February 5, 2 BC. A statue was later sculpted in Rome naming him "Patri Patriae" in 2 BC. It seems that while Caesar was busy declaring himself the "Divine Emperor" our God had other plans of who would be the Divine Emperor. Cyrenius served two terms as governor in Syria, his first term oversaw this registration.

Luke 2:3-5 AMP

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

The decree would cause Joseph to return to his home in Bethlehem to pay the tax. Not only would that tax have been for himself, but also because he is now espoused to Mary with a child on the way, he will pay more tax. This again is showing Joseph's faith.

Revelation 12:1-2 AMP

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

What does this have to do with the birth of Jesus? This sign has been observed by Israel since the appointed time was given in the wilderness. This is the sign of the **Feast of Trumpets**.

These Appointed Times are also called “Holy Convocations” and “Appointed Times” over and over again in scripture. The word convocation tells us that it’s His Holy Assembly. It’s also a holy rehearsal.

H4744 miqra’ (mik-raw’)

1. Something called out, a public meeting (the act, the persons, or the place)
2. also a rehearsal

So, in these “Appointed Times” God’s children are rehearsing for things to come. His “Appointed Times” are pointing us back to Him. They remind us of our need to rely on Him, and they foreshadow of things to come.

It was on Mount Sinai that God gave Moses the dates and observances of the seven feasts. Here are their names:

Passover (Pesach)
Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzi)
First Fruits (Yom habikkurim)
Pentecost (Shavu'ot)
Trumpets (Yom Teru'ah)
Atonement (Yom Kippur)
Tabernacles (Sukkot)

The Feast of Trumpets

Every year on the Feast of Trumpets, which is the first day of the 7th month, we see the sign mentioned in Revelation 12. The woman clothed with the sun is the sign Betulah (bet-oo-lah), which is Hebrew for Virgo (the Virgin). The crown of 12 stars is the twelve constellations pictured for each son of Israel in Genesis 49 when Jacob prophesied over his sons.

2,000 years ago the sun was actually in the belly of Virgo on the Feast of Trumpets, but through the progression of the equinoxes, the sun is now on her shoulder clothing her with the Sun. We know that the Sun is a reference to Christ as the Son of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2) born on the 4th day of creation with a day as 1,000 years. The virgin is a picture of Israel, the bride of the covenant. How awesome is God that during the Appointed Time Jesus would arrive on the scene, even the stars and constellations were crying out that the Savior was coming!

Malachi 4:2 AMP - “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

The Feast of Trumpets begins with the sighting of the new moon which is just a tiny little sliver of light that appears after 3 nights of total darkness. In Revelation this sign heralds the two witnesses, and in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), this sign announces the birth of our Saviour with the blowing of trumpets.

Numbers 29:1 KJV - "And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you."

In the year that Jesus was born, we can look back at the progression of the constellations and know that His Star is seen on this day, September 12, 3 BC. There has been quite a bit of controversy over what His Star actually was, but it's being more widely accepted, due to living in a time of increasing knowledge, that His Star was the conjunction of Jupiter (Tzedek the Righteous Star) with Regulus (Melek the King Star). Regulus is the King Star between the feet of Ariel or Leo (the Lion) in the prophecy of Jacob from Genesis 49 to Judah.

Genesis 49:10 AMP - "The scepter or leadership shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes to Whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. [Num. 24:17; Ps. 60:7.]"

This conjunction (passing over each other) didn't happen just one time, but it happened 8 times over a 16 month period starting August 1st, 3BC with the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus, then again on the Feast of Trumpets, September 12th, 3 BC.

We are told in John 1:14 that the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (September 26th 3 BC). Elizabeth being 6 months pregnant when Mary came to visit her would put the birth of Jesus at the next High Sabbath of Tabernacles.

Why Was There No Room At The Inn?

We know that He was born in a manger because there was no room at the inn. Knowing that there was no room at the inn tells us that this was one of the 3 Feasts of God that every man of Israel must attend. Three times a year (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), hundreds of thousands of people would come to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire. Jerusalem and the surrounding area was full of hotels and inns because of this command by God. We see during Christ's last Passover that He and His disciples stayed in one of the upper rooms. Bethlehem is a suburb only 5 miles away from Jerusalem.

The Shepherds Arrive

Luke 2:8-20 AMP

"And in that vicinity there were shepherds living [out under the open sky] in the field, watching [in shifts] over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord flashed and shone all about them, and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come

to all the people. For to you is born this day in the town of David a Savior, Who is Christ (the Messiah) the Lord! [Mic. 5:2.] And this will be a sign for you [by which you will recognize Him]: you will find [after searching] a Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. [I Sam. 2:34; II Kings 19:29; Isa. 7:14.] Then suddenly there appeared with the angel an army of the troops of heaven (a heavenly knighthood), praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest [heaven], and on earth peace among men with whom He is well pleased [men of goodwill, of His favor]. When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing (saying) that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. So they went with haste and [by searching] found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known what had been told them concerning this Child, And all who heard it were astounded and marveled at what the shepherds told them. But Mary was keeping within herself all these things (sayings), weighing and pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.”

Wrapped in swaddling, lying in a manger?

Swaddling was made from worn out priests clothing. It was kept to be used for candle wicks in the Temple and for swaddling the sons of kings. A manger is just another word for sukkah or tabernacle. Every man 13 years old and older was required to build a sukkah and live in the temporary shelters for 7 days commemorating the 40 years in the wilderness.

Leviticus 23:34-44 AMP

“It shall be to you a sabbath of rest, and you shall afflict yourselves [by fasting in penitence and humility]. On the ninth day of the month from evening to evening you shall keep your sabbath. And the Lord said to Moses, Say to the Israelites, The fifteenth day of this seventh month, and for seven days, is the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths to the Lord. On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no servile work on that day. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord; on the eighth day shall be a holy convocation and you shall present an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work on that day. These are the set feasts or appointed seasons of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to present an offering made by fire to the Lord, a burnt offering and a cereal offering, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its own day. This is in addition to the Sabbaths of the Lord and besides your gifts and all your vowed offerings and all your freewill offerings which you give to the Lord. Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month [nearly October], when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord for seven days, the first day and the eighth day each a Sabbath. And on the first day you shall take the fruit of pleasing trees [and make booths of them], branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick (leafy) trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year, a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths (shelters) for seven days: All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, That your generations may know that I made the Israelites dwell in booths when I brought them out of the

land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Thus Moses declared to the Israelites the set or appointed feasts of the Lord.”

Jesus is Officially Named - October 3, 3 BC

Luke 2:21 AMP - “And at the end of eight days, when [the Baby] was to be circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”

Why did they do this?

Leviticus 12:3 AMP - “And on the eighth day the child shall be circumcised.

Mary then goes through the purification according to the Law for a total of 40 days (7 days then circumcision then 33 more days).

Luke 2:22 AMP - “And when the time for their purification [the mother's purification and the Baby's dedication] came according to the Law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord—[Lev. 12:1-4.]”

Leviticus 12:4 AMP - Then she shall remain [separated] thirty-three days to be purified [from her loss] of blood; she shall touch no hallowed thing nor come into the [court of the] sanctuary until the days of her purifying are over.”

We will notice in the next scripture that Mary pays the redemption price for Jesus, but she pays the price for the poor (2 turtle doves). If she would have had money, then she would be required to bring a lamb of the first year as well. This is one of the things that tell us the wise men haven't arrived as of yet. If Mary would have had gold, frankincense, and myrrh, she would have to bring a lamb for redemption as well.

Luke 2:23-24 AMP - “As it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every [firstborn] male that opens the womb shall be set apart and dedicated and called holy to the Lord—[Exod. 13:1, 2, 12; Num. 8:17.] And [they came also] to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. [Lev. 12:6-8.]”

Leviticus 12:6-8 AMP - “When the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb a year old for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering to the door of the Tent of Meeting to the priest; And he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who has borne a male or a female child. If she is unable to bring a lamb [for lack of means] then she shall bring two turtledoves or young pigeons, one for a burnt offering, the other for a sin offering; the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean. [Luke 2:22, 24.]”

There are several more conjunctions of the star after the Feast of Tabernacles.

3. February 17, 2 BC

4. May 8, 2 BC
5. June 17, 2 BC
6. August 27, 2 BC
7. October 13, 2 BC

The 8th Conjunction & The Wise Men Arrive: December 20, 2 BC

Matthew 2:1-2 AMP - "NOW WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men [astrologers] from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east at its rising and have come to worship Him. [Num. 24:17; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 9:9.]"

The wise men leave for Jerusalem around 5 weeks prior to the final conjunction. They arrive at Herod's palace enquiring of the king. Now there is some controversy over who the wise men were. There isn't a 100% clear answer for exactly who sent them. After researching, the most logical answer is that the gifts had come from Daniel in the Old Testament. Daniel was over all of the wise men of Babylon for over 60 years. He was made extremely wealthy three different times as satrap under three different kings. Being made a eunuch, Daniel had no children or direct descendants to inherit his wealth. If we study out the book of Daniel, we see he was given divine revelation of the timing of the coming of the Messiah. He wrote some of it down, and God instructed him to hide some of it.

When the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem, most of them stayed behind. So, what happened to Daniel's Treasure? Who left instructions and financial provision for the journey of the wise men? How did they know what signs (constellations, conjunctions etc.) to look for in the heavens? Who directed the movement of the stars and planets so that the treasure would arrive on the very day that it would be needed for Mary & Joseph's flight into Egypt?

Obviously, someone with great wealth and power who had received divine revelation and supernatural motivation. We have been passed down the story of 3 wise men because there were 3 gifts that the scriptures list. In reality, there were many more men traveling in caravan from Babylon to Jerusalem over the 5 week period through very dangerous country loaded with extreme wealth.

Matthew 2:3-8 AMP

"When Herod the king heard this, he was disturbed and troubled, and the whole of Jerusalem with him. So he called together all the chief priests and learned men (scribes) of the people and anxiously asked them where the Christ was to be born. They replied to him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are not in any way least or insignificant among the chief cities of Judah; for from you shall come a Ruler (Leader) Who will govern and shepherd My people Israel. [Mic. 5:2.] Then Herod sent for the wise men [astrologers] secretly, and accurately to the last point ascertained from them the time of the appearing of the star [that is, how long the star had made itself visible since its rising in the east]. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search for the Child carefully and diligently, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him."

Herod then asks them what time the star first appeared. This will become a very important part of the story shortly.

December 21st

Matthew 2:9-12 AMP

“When they had listened to the king, they went their way, and behold, the star which had been seen in the east in its rising went before them until it came and stood over the place where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they were thrilled with ecstatic joy. And on going into the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then opening their treasure bags, they presented to Him gifts—gold and frankincense and myrrh. And receiving an answer to their asking, they were divinely instructed and warned in a dream not to go back to Herod; so they departed to their own country by a different way.”

So, they leave Jerusalem and see the star directly over the house in Bethlehem. It would have taken them about an hour's journey on foot, but it led them straight to the house. This is where we also see that the wise men weren't at the actual birth in the manger, because by the time the wise men find them, they are living in a home in Bethlehem. Perhaps it was even Zechariah and Elizabeth's home. The wise men worship the Messiah and then leave because they know Herod will be coming soon.

Matthew 2:11-12 AMP - “And on going into the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then opening their treasure bags, they presented to Him gifts—gold and frankincense and myrrh. And receiving an answer to their asking, they were divinely instructed and warned in a dream not to go back to Herod; so they departed to their own country by a different way.”

December 22nd - Joseph, Mary, & Jesus Flee

Matthew 2:13-15 AMP - “Now after they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Get up! [Tenderly] take unto you the young Child and His mother and flee to Egypt; and remain there till I tell you [otherwise], for Herod intends to search for the Child in order to destroy Him. And having risen, he took the Child and His mother by night and withdrew to Egypt And remained there until Herod's death. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, **Out of Egypt have I called My Son.** [Hos. 11:1.]”

As soon as the wise men leave an angel appears to Joseph, and he packs up and moves everyone to Egypt in the middle of the night.

December 23rd

Matthew 2:16 AMP - “Then Herod, when he realized that he had been misled by the wise men, was furiously enraged, and he sent and put to death all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that territory who were two years old and under, reckoning according to the date which he had investigated diligently and had learned exactly from the wise men.”

Herod is thinking about the star. Remember, it's first appearance was 16 months ago, so what is Herod thinking? He's thinking the child can be anywhere from 2 years old and under. He decided to kill all of the innocents around Bethlehem. This is what leads many to believe that this slaughter is the main reason for John the Baptizer being alone in the wilderness for most of his life. Remember, Zechariah laid out a prophecy after the miracle sign and conception of John. Even into his older years, people are still asking John if he's the Messiah. He's the #1 candidate in the eyes of the public. There are a few records that allude to the idea of Herod having Zechariah murdered in the Temple and Elizabeth fleeing into the wilderness with her 2 year old son because they lived in Bethlehem as well. There is an extra biblical volume called the Protoevangelion of James which holds the story in detail. (There are many scrolls of record from Biblical days, but not all the scrolls were included in the Bible as we know it today.)

Josephus also helps us pinpoint the time of the massacre of innocents by telling us that Herod had killed 2 priests, burning one of them alive on the night of an eclipse. The eclipse can only be the one on January 10th BC only a few weeks from the December 23rd massacre. Soon after he murdered the rabbis, Herod became ill and traveled to the hot baths at the Dead Sea and retired to Jericho. Caesar sent him a letter giving him a choice to exile or kill his son Antipater. Herod changes his will leaving his rule to his other son Archelaus, and he had Antipater executed. Herod died 5 days later.

Archelaus held a lavish funeral for Herod and mourned for 7 days. Fearing a revolt, Archelaus slaughtered 3,000 priests on the Temple Mount and canceled Passover that Spring. Archelaus was called to Rome to answer for his actions, and while he was gone a rebellion broke out in Judaea. General Varus had to come from Syria to squash the rebellion. General Varus marched into the city and robbed Archelaus' treasure. He then sent his army around the countryside seeking the troublemakers. He punished some and pardoned some, but he crucified 2,000 people because of the revolt.

Matthew 2:19-23 AMP

"But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt And said, Rise, [tenderly] take unto you the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child's life are dead. Then he awoke and arose and [tenderly] took the Child and His mother and came into the land of Israel. But because he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being divinely warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled: He shall be called a Nazarene [Branch, Separated One]. [Isa. 11:1.]"