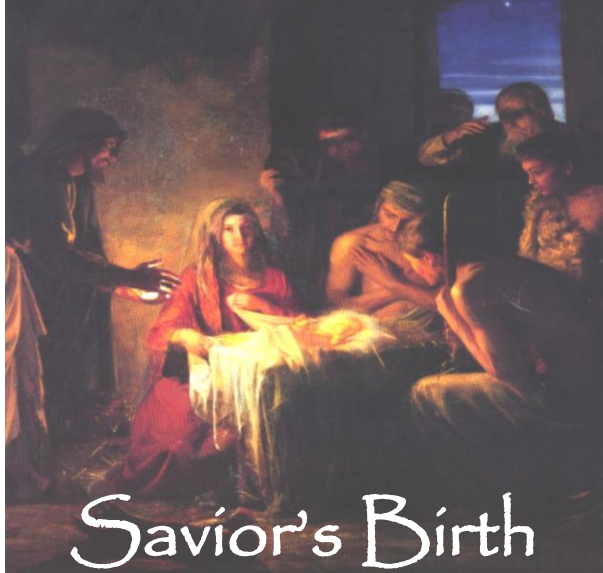


# The Events leading to the



Martin Allen Church 2010



## Savior's Birth

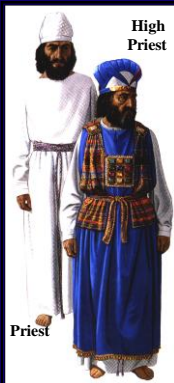
**“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias,”**

(Zacharias is the Greek form of Zachariah meaning ‘remembered by Jehovah’) **“of the course of Abia.”** Now “Zacharias belonged to the course of priests named Abijah” (Abijah means ‘my Father is Jehovah’), “and known in later time as the course of Abia. This was the eighth order of the twenty four courses established by David the King, each course being appointed to serve in turn a week at the sanctuary. It will be remembered that on the return of the people from Babylon only four courses were represented; but of these four each averaged over fourteen hundred men (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 45).” With fifty-two hundred men waiting their turn to serve a week in the sanctuary it would have been a life-time opportunity. Zacharias’ **“wife was of the daughters of Aaron,**



Herod the Great

**and her name was Elisabeth.”** (Elisabeth means ‘the oath of God’) **“And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren,** and they both were now well stricken”, or as the Greek says ‘advanced’, “in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest’s office before God in the order of his course,” or priesthood **“According to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto**



High Priest

Priest



Herod's Temple

him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife

Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an bold man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.



Altar of Incense



And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass,

**that, as soon as the days of his ministrations were accomplished, he departed to his own house.”** (Tradition says they lived in Hebron) **“And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived,”** (between December and January) **“and hid herself five months,”** (until June) **“saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. And in the sixth month”** (July) **“the angel Gabriel”,** (Gabriel means ‘man of God’) which is the Celestial name for the prophet Noah, **“was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David;”** The name Joseph means ‘increase’. He was a direct descendant of King David, which meant he was royalty. Unfortunately, Rome had governing power, not Israel. His father was Heli, while his Uncle was Jacob. Jacob was the father of Mary, making them cousins. **“and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his**



**name JESUS.”** (Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means ‘God is help’ or ‘Savior’) **“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the**

angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Jesus was the son of an “immortal personage...he inherited the power of immortality, which is the power to live forever; or, having chosen to die, it is the power



to rise again in mortality, therefore to live forever without again seeing corruption...Mary was his mother, from which mortal woman...he inherited the power of mortality, which is to die...It was because of this...intimixture of the divine and the mortal in one person, that our Lord was able to work out the infinite and eternal atonement (The Promised Messiah, by Bruce R. McConkie, page 470-471).” Then the angel said, **“And, behold, thy cousin”** (the Greek translation for cousin should probably have been relative, meaning Elisabeth might have been an aunt) **“Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her bold age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”** Matthew records, **“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:”** or in this way, **“When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”** “Espousal among the Hebrews was something more than a mere engagement is with us. It was considered the beginning of marriage, was as legally binding as marriage itself, and could not be broken off save by a bill of divorce. Hence we find that Joseph is called the husband of Mary. The betrothal was usually determined by the parents, or brothers of the parties, and the engagement was made between a friend or legal representative of the bridegroom and the father of the bride. The espousals were made very early in life, though marriage did not take place before the bride was twelve years old. Even when the age was suitable, the marriage was not consummated for some time after the betrothal. At least a year, or sometimes more, elapsed between the betrothal and the marriage of a maiden, to give time for preparing her outfit. In case of a widow marriage might take place thirty days after espousal. The betrothal was usually accompanied by a feast in the house of the bride. The engagement, to be binding, must be either by written contract, or by the reception of presents by the bride from the bridegroom...The reception of these made the contract binding. The bride remained at her father’s house until the time of marriage, when the bridegroom came after her. Meanwhile communication between her and the bridegroom was kept by means of the ‘friend of the bridegroom’ (Manners and Customs of the Bible. James M. Freeman, page 330).” **“Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.”** In other words, he wanted to release her from her obligation of marriage and divorce her secretly. **“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save this people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child,**

and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS (Matthew 1:18-25).” “And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;”

(probably Hebron) “And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.” Near east salutes were greetings that consisted of bowing, kneeling, and nodding while saying something to the effect, ‘Peace be unto you’. “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence,” or how, “is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath



regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He

hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen”, or helped, “his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.” The time period would have been from July to September. “Now Elisabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.” Her son was born in October. “And her neighbours and her cousins”, better translated as relatives, “heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.”

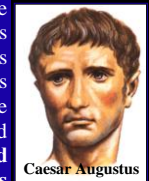
Under the Law of Moses, every male child must be circumcised within eight days of birth or die. Circumcision was part of a covenant instituted between Abraham and the Lord. It became a symbol of Israel’s covenant with the Lord, which among other things promised them a Messiah. “And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.” Naming a child, especially the firstborn, after the Father or relative was somewhat customary in their society. “And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John.” The name John or it’s Hebrew equivalent, ‘Johanán’, means ‘Jehovah’s gift’.

“And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened



immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised”, or discussed, “abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised”, the Greek says ‘dawn’ instead of promised, “to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.”

According to Matthew and Luke, John’s father was later killed before the altar at in the Temple (Matthew 23:24, Luke 11:51). It is said that when Herod began killing children in his search for the Messiah, he sent men to find Zacharias’s son and kill him. He had heard of the events surrounding John’s birth. As the Soldiers came, Elisabeth took John, (John being approximately eighteen months old) and fled into the Judean wilderness. Tradition says, when she saw the soldiers following, she cried to the mountain: ‘O mountain of God, receive a mother with her child!’, and it opened and hid them up. Herod, furious that John had not been killed, ordered that Zacharias be cut down before the altar. Zacharias’s blood spilled over the marble and became as hard as stone, as a witness to Herod’s wickedness. Tradition also says, that forty days after Zacharias’s death, Elisabeth died. The child John was allegedly raised by the Essenes. “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.” Augustus ruled Rome from 27 BC to 14 AD. He was born to Caius Octavius and Atia his mother in 63 BC. Atia was the daughter of Julia, the sister to C. Julius Caesar. Augustus was born with the name Octavius, but after he became Caesar he changed it to ‘Augustus’ meaning ‘revered one’. “(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)” Cyrenius is the Greek form of the name Quirinius. The governor’s full name was Publius Sulpicius Quirinius. He became consul to Rome in 12 BC. Shortly thereafter he was given the task of bringing order to the rebelling Homanadensians of Asia. Later, he became proconsul of Asia in 3 BC. By 4 to 3 BC he was advisor to Caligula (then a General of Rome). From 6 to 9 AD, he was the imperial Legate of Syria-Cicilia. It is during that time that he was considered governor of Syria. Since he was not governor until 6 AD, this poses some problems in relation to the date of Jesus’ birth. Herod died in 4 BC and the



Caesar Augustus

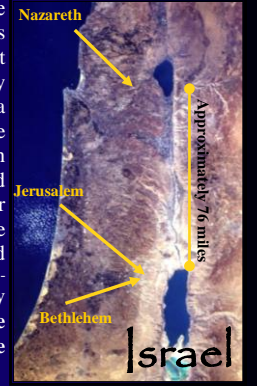
Bible says Jesus was born prior to Herod’s death. Additionally, James E. Talmage places the birth of Jesus at 1 BC. None of these dates coincide. It is mentioned that the taxation was the ‘first’, which might give the idea that the event took place at a concise time; however, Dio Cassius, a Roman writer, mentions that the taxes were levied during an entire decade. This made sense since the taxation involved traveling back to one’s hometown to work out what had been left to you by way of inheritance. Such a task would take years. Furthermore, at the completion of such a taxation the serving governor would be required to certify them prior to sending the taxes to Rome. Thus, Cyrenius might not have been governor during the entire taxation, but rather governor at certification. This could help some of the confusion with the date of the Savior’s birth. At any rate, “all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city.” The word ‘taxed’ is a Greek word meaning enrolled or registered. This helps us understand that the form of taxation was a capitation or poll tax. “The Jewish Nation had paid tribute to Rome, through their rulers, since the days of Pompey; and the methodical Augustus, who now reigned, and had to restore order and soundness to the finances of the Empire, after the confusion and exhaustion of civil wars, took good care that this obligation should neither be forgotten nor evaded. He was accustomed to require a census to be taken periodically in every province of his vast dominions, that he might know the number of soldiers he could levy in each, and the amount of taxes due to the treasury... In an Empire embracing the then known world, such a census could hardly have been made simultaneously, or in any short or fixed time; more probably it was the work of years, in successive provinces or kingdoms (Jesus the Christ, by James E. Talmage, page 105).” “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:)” Bethlehem means ‘house of bread’, which is fitting since



Bethlehem as seen from Shepherd’s Field

Jesus was the ‘bread of life’. It is located 2,549 feet on a saddle on the highland of Judah south of Jerusalem. It is only 5 miles from Jerusalem, which is about a half days journey. The city was surrounded by fields of olive trees grown on terraces due to the

extremely rocky terrain. Bethlehem was the home of King David. It lies on the trade route from Jerusalem to Egypt. It has long since been a resting place for trade caravans and travelers. Joseph came to Bethlehem “To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.” It is uncertain whether Mary was obligated to accompany Joseph. “Women were liable to a capitation tax, if this enrollment involved taxation. But apart from legal necessity, it may easily be imagined that at such a moment Mary would desire not to be left alone. The cruel suspicion of which she had been subjected, and which had almost led to breaking off of her betrothal would make her cling all the more to the protection of her husband (Jesus the Christ, by James E. Talmage, page 104-105).” “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.”



Approximately 76 miles