

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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PART 2: THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST

NO BIRTHDAY

Every year Christians claim Jesus is the reason for the season of Christmas when they commemorate His birth in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago. This is not true, and frankly it is impossible, because Jesus has always existed. The Son of God does not have a birthday. He is God. He has no beginning nor end.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

Jesus was incarnated into the physical body that Mary gave birth to in Bethlehem. She furnished the egg, which produced a body of flesh and bones and the Holy Spirit supplied the sinless blood when He impregnated her.

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel 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; 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. 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?

And 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.

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.” (Luke 1:26-37)



BIRTH OF JESUS

Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever celebrated the incarnation. Observing the birthday of Jesus continues a false teaching that began in ancient Babylon thousands of years ago with Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz.

The Son of God is divine and has always existed. The Holy Spirit fertilized the ovum supplied by Mary. Then Jesus incarnated the egg cell in the virgin's ovary, and once that event took place, the God-man could only be in one place at a time. He was confined to a physical body; it was necessary to wait as it grew and matured until He could manifest Himself through the body.

Jesus indirectly referred to this when He told the disciples that it was expedient for Him to depart so that the Holy Spirit could come. In contrast, the third person of the Godhead was omnipresent – the ability to be everywhere at all times.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John 16:7-8)

The first time Jesus used His physical body for ministry was at the age of twelve years old when He visited the temple with Mary and Joseph. When it was time to return to Nazareth, Jesus stayed behind and discussed various theological subjects with the priests and scribes.

“And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” (Luke 2:42-47)

NOT BORN ON DECEMBER 25

The New Testament does not provide the date when Mary gave birth to the physical body of Jesus but we do know certain information about the Roman emperor and the governor of Syria.

“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.” (Luke 2:1-7)

Historical records reveal the following about these two men:

- ❖ Gaius Octavius, more commonly known as Caesar Augustus, was the Roman Emperor from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14.
- ❖ Publius Sulpicius Quirinius (Cyrenius in Greek) was appointed governor of Syria in A.D. 6. Given the timing of his selection as governor, Cyrenius may have had an earlier administrative role which Luke knew about.

The Gospel of Matthew states that Herod was the king of Judea.

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.” (Matthew 2:1)

Herod I, also known as Herod the Great, was a Roman-appointed vassal king in charge of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Idumea. He was referred to as the “King of the Jews” because of this geographic assignment; he reigned from 37 B.C. to A.D. 4.

IMPERFECT CALENDARS

The Julian calendar was introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. It was solar based to reform the older Roman calendar which had become misaligned with the seasons. The new calendar featured 365 days in a regular year with a leap year every four years. However, the true solar year is 365.2422 days, making the Julian calendar off by about eleven minutes per year. This small error caused the calendar to drift about one day every 128 years.

By the 1500s, the drift meant that the spring equinox – used by Roman Catholicism to set the date for Easter – had moved about 10 days earlier than it was in the time of the early church. Pope Gregory XIII sought to correct the drift in A.D. 1582 by skipping ten days to realign the seasons and mandating that leap years occur every four years except for years divisible by 100 and 400. This meant that 1600 and 2000 were leap years, but 1700, 1800, and 1900 were not. The Gregorian calendar is now the international standard.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

There isn’t a single verse in the New Testament that shows the apostles observed the incarnation or birthday of Jesus.

The celebration of the Messiah's birth did not begin until Emperor Constantine was selected by Christian bishops to become the leader of the new state church. Roman Catholicism became a state institution and people of all faiths – i.e. different pagan religions – were made members of the state church.

The bishops decided not to remove the pagan holidays, but to Christianize them and incorporate their practices. Since December 25th was the birthday celebration for the pagan god Tammuz, the church leadership decreed December 25th was also the official birthday of Jesus. In time, Tammuz worship faded into history, but all its original practices and paraphernalia remain.¹

TIME OF THE YEAR

No one knows the exact time Mary gave birth to the physical body of Jesus but there are some details which help us narrow it down considerably. The New Testament describes the season in which Mary gave birth.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” (Luke 2:8)

It is well known that December occurs in the midst of the rainy season in Judea, a time when sheep were kept safely in their folds. From October through April, shepherds routinely sheltered their flocks, bringing them down from the hills and open fields by about October 15 to shield them from the cold and rain that followed.

Caesar Augustus would not have mandated for tax collection during winter when travel was difficult. Even Jesus testified to the difficulties of traveling in winter, for He told the people to pray that their flight at the end of this age would not be in winter.

*“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.”
(Matthew 24:20)*

As you will see, the birth of Christ did not take place at the end of December.

GABRIEL'S VISITS

Zechariah was a priest of the course of Abijah. Priests served one week at a time, beginning their rotations in Nisan – the first month of the Jewish calendar. Zechariah's eighth course would have occurred in June.

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.” (Luke 1:5)

Zechariah and Elizabeth conceived a child following his meeting with Gabriel in the temple.

And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived...” (Luke 1:24a)

¹ See ***The Truth About Christmas*** for more information about the subject. It is available in print and online. www.eaec.org/bibleanswers/christmas.htm

Gabriel visited Mary six months later.

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel 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; and the virgin's name was Mary.” (Luke 1:26-27)

He informed Mary that Elizabeth was six months pregnant.

“And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.” (Luke 1:36)

Mary decided to visit her cousin soon afterwards. June to December is a period of six months. This social call took place in December, the same month Jesus was conceived.

“And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.” (Luke 1:39-40)

John the Baptist was born three months later in March around the Passover. This was especially fitting since John came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” and the Jews traditionally expected Elijah to appear at Passover, which commemorated their deliverance from Egypt when the pre-incarnate Jesus saved the Hebrews through the blood of the lamb on the doorposts.

“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.” (Luke 1:17)

Jesus identified John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Elijah's role:

“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.” (Matthew 11:13-14)

Jesus was conceived in December and that would put His birth around September during the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated God's dwelling among His people – a second powerful parallel to describe the incarnation.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Trying to figure out the date of Jesus' birth is interesting, but our focus should be on the fact that the Son of God died for our sins and rose again on the third day.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Christians do not worship an infant lying in a manger, but an exalted and omnipotent Messiah – Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God!

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matthew 28:18)

UPHOLDING THE UNIVERSE

In Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews, he repeats the fact that Jesus is the Creator, and adds that the Son of God is also sustaining the entire creation by the spoken word. It is His power that holds all the atomic matter together in the universe.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high...” (Hebrews 1:1-3)

This means that from the time of Jesus’ incarnation into a physical body until He ascended back into heaven, Jesus continued being God, upholding the creation.

None of the New Testament writers wrote about the fact that Jesus maintained a dual workload of living in a human body and holding the entire creation together while working toward the redemption of humanity.

Jesus was incarnated to pay for the sins of mankind. Why go through with the redemption plan? Love was the motivating factor.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

We should be in awe and thankful for what God has done!

KNOWLEDGE

It is important to realize that the New Testament was written some 2,000 years ago, when people did not know about electricity, molecular structure of all physical matter, and the difference between the oxidation process of a fire compared to nuclear fission (atomic bomb) or fusion of isotopes of hydrogen (hydrogen bomb).

Yet an uneducated fisherman named Peter was given revelation knowledge about how Jesus would end the existence of our universe. Examine the following Scriptures and compare them with what we know today about the atomic world:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” (2 Peter 3:10-13)

The apostle Peter used the word “dissolve,” and with our higher level of understanding today, we know the atoms will literally cease to exist and be converted to heat. Paul tells us that Jesus is upholding all things, which means that Jesus is continually releasing energy into the created system to hold it together, and the moment He cuts off that energy, all things will dissolve in form of heat.

Even more amazing is that 2,700 years ago Jesus revealed to the prophet Isaiah how everything would be dissolved at the end.

“Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.” (Isaiah 34:1-4)

JESUS IS RETURNING

Jesus initiated creation and He will also bring it to its completion. When He came to earth about 2,000 years ago, it was as the Redeemer and Savior of humanity; but when He returns, it will be as the King of kings and Lord of lords. His second coming will not be for salvation, but to establish the millennial kingdom and later to preside over the Great White Throne Judgment, where those whose names are not found in the Book of Life will be condemned and cast into the Lake of Fire. **Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-15**

MEETING FATHER GOD

It is not until we enter the New Creation that we will see God the Father for the first time in all His glory, when the Son and Holy Spirit merge into His fullness, power, and glory.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (Revelation 21:1-7)

SUMMARY

What is the purpose of Christ? Jesus came to rescue mankind from spiritual death caused by sin. Through His sacrifice on the cross, He took the penalty of sin upon Himself so that mankind can be forgiven and receive eternal life.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

Jesus came to reveal the true nature and heart of God in terms of love, mercy, holiness, and justice. He made the invisible God known in human form.

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (John 14:9)

All the prophecies, sacrificial systems, and promises of the Old Testament pointed to Christ. His life and death completed the terms of the Mosaic law.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” (Matthew 5:17)

Through His authority, resurrection, and triumph over death, Jesus broke the power of Satan, sin, and the grave.

“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

Jesus provides forgiveness for an abundant on earth and eternal life in heaven.

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Jesus bridged the gap between sinful humanity and a holy God through His death and resurrection, restoring the fellowship lost in the Garden of Eden.

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Jesus established the Kingdom of God in the hearts of Christians with a future physical reign when He returns the second time to rule the nations.

“And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?