

## When was Jesus born?

Scripture does not give Christ's birth date, but we may be able to deduce the season.

Luke 1:5-23 explains that Zacharius was serving as priest when the angel Gabriel informed him that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son who was to be called John. We are also told that Zacharius was a priest, of the division of Abijah (v. 5). The priesthood consisted of 24 divisions, each serving 15 days – totaling a 360 day year (1 Chronicles 24). 1 Chronicles 24:10 states that the division of Abijah was the 8<sup>th</sup> division.

The first month of the Jewish religious calendar is Abib (Exodus 12:2; 13:4), later called Nisan (Esther 3:7), which corresponds with March-April on our calendar. Therefore, if Zacharius was serving as priest in the 8<sup>th</sup> division, this would mean he was serving in the temple from the 106<sup>th</sup> day ((7x15)+1) of the Jewish religious year, until the 120<sup>th</sup> day (8x15) of their year. This would place his service during the summer months (July-August).

Luke 1:23-24 notes “And so it was, as soon as the days of (Zacharius) service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived...” Assuming Elizabeth conceived shortly after Zacharius returned home, and assuming a normal nine month pregnancy, John the Baptist would have been born in the spring (April-May).

We are also told that Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel in the “sixth month” of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:26, 36). Therefore, because it appears that Mary conceived immediately after the angel's pronouncement (v. 38-44), Jesus would have been born approximately six months after John the Baptist was born.

This would place Christ's birth in the fall.

Another clue is found in Luke chapter 2. An angel of the Lord appeared before shepherds living out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night. The angel announced “I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11).

Many have noted that shepherds were much more likely to be out in the fields with their flocks during the fall rather than winter.

Interestingly, if Jesus was born in the fall, then he was conceived the previous winter – perhaps on or near the very night that we now call Christmas! In fact, the miraculous creation of Jesus' body in the womb of Mary was the actual moment when God became Man (1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 10:5). (Yes, life begins at conception!)

How appropriate it would be if “the light of the world” had indeed come into the world on or near the longest night of the year (the winter solstice), “To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79)!

“And the Word became 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).

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).