

THE BIRTH AND  
DEATH OF JESUS  
CHRIST

*DON T. PHILLIPS*

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## OBITUARY

On Nisan 14, April 5 in 30 AD; Jesus Christ of Nazareth died in Jerusalem at Golgotha, which is called the *Place of the Skull*. He had just turned 34 years old. Jesus Christ was tried and convicted of treason by Pontius Pilate. After a short hearing, He was sentenced to die a most cruel death by being nailed to a cross where He hung until he breathed His last breath. He was born in the town of Bethlehem during the reign of Herod the Great, and He was survived by his Mother Mary and several other brothers and sisters. He was never married but He is survived by *many sons and daughters*. Jesus Christ was said by many to be the long awaited Jewish Messiah; by others to be the Son of God; and by still others simply a good man. He taught and ministered throughout all Judea for a period of 3.5 years, during which He healed the sick; made the lame to walk; and cured all manner of illnesses; including leprosy. It is written that He even raised the dead. It was generally agreed that He was a kind and loving man, who preached of love, repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Those who followed after Christ following His death believe that He was raised from the dead after 3 days and 3 nights, and ascended into heaven where He now sits upon the right hand of God the Father. He preached of a new covenant made between God and all people by which eternal life and salvation would be offered by grace to all who might believe upon His holy name. Some say that the world has been changed forever by this man who was self-proclaimed to be the Son of God. He spoke of an eternal kingdom which would be established by Him when He comes again; one which will be built upon righteousness and the glory of His appearing... Let it be so.



*When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.*

Matthew 27: 57-60

# DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to:*

*Dr. Bruce M. Wood..... A Pastor's Pastor*

*And First Lady*

*Connie Wood... An inspiration to all*

*Dr. Bruce M. Wood and Connie Wood*

Aldersgate United Methodist Church

College Station, Texas





*“ .... Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said.*

*Come and see the place where He lay....”*

Matthew 16: 5-6

## PREFACE

Almost 6000 years have elapsed since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden and entered into a world that had been stained with sin. Thousands of important events have taken place since that day, but two in particular are more important than all the rest. In the fullness of time, God send the archangel Gabriel to a young virgin named Mary with the news that by divine appointment she would supernaturally conceive and bear a son. His name would be Jesus, and He would be the Son of God. His birth was predicted by the prophet Isaiah more than 500 years before He was born.

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:1*

The birth of Jesus Christ was a miraculous event which changed the world, but an even more miraculous and glorious event was yet to come. Conceived of God, born of a virgin, raised in poverty and clothed in the body of an ordinary man; Jesus Christ grew in wisdom and grace until in due time He came to the River Jordan to be baptized into a ministry of reconciliation and salvation for all who would believe upon His name.

After an earthly ministry of 3.5 years, the birth of Christ was overshadowed by the single most important event that would ever occur.... the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. How strange it might seem to a sinful and wicked world that the death of someone would be the most important thing that ever occurred.

The death of Jesus Christ was no ordinary death. Christ willingly went to the cross of Calvary to die for the sins of the world. He was the perfect Passover Lamb who suffered and died for everyone who would ever live, either before or after. The price was great but the promise was greater. All who would believe that He was the only Son of God and accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior would receive the gift of eternal life; not by works lest anyone should boast, but by grace.

I became curious some years ago about when (year and month) my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was born and died. To my surprise, there were no verified secular, archeological or biblical records of when these two landmark events took place. As I began to search the scriptures for clues, and to research ancient documents for recorded dates; I soon found myself engulfed in a plethora of conflicting opinions and scholarly investigations. After several years of analyzing both biblical and archeological documents, I finally arrived at the conclusions which are contained in this manuscript. I have no doubt that the results I now present will be rejected by many and accepted by many. Until we can set down underneath the shade of an olive tree with Jesus Christ and ask Him, we will likely never have definitive proof concerning when He was born and died.

In a sense it is extremely important that we find the truth...for the truth is what we seek. However, in a broader sense it is not important at all. What is important is that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, who willingly left His heavenly home and dwelt among mankind in a tabernacle of flesh. He died for our sins on the cross of Calvary so that all who would believe upon His glorious name might find forgiveness of their sins and gain eternal life. Oh what love and grace He bestows upon all who would follow after Him.

The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ changed the relationship between God and man forever. The Law which was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai was called the Old Covenant, and it was replaced by a New Covenant on the Hill of Golgotha. Salvation would now be offered to Jews and gentiles alike, and forgiveness of sins would no longer be based upon a Levitical sacrificial system but upon Grace: Whosoever will believe that Jesus Christ is the one and only Son of God, and accept Him as their Lord and Savior, will be forgiven of all their sins and receive eternal life.

This promise was guaranteed and sealed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So is it really important that we try to find out when this greatest of all events happened? To me it is.... and perhaps it may also be important to all who would read this book. So, we will seek the truth and in doing so discover many important signs and wonders. Come join me in this search!

May God richly bless you and keep you until that day when He returns again to gather us to His side. And so we will forever be with Him in His majesty and glory. Amen.

Don T. Phillips  
June 1, 2014

*“Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”*

**I Corinthians 15: 51-52**

# CHAPTER 1

## THE HEBREW CALENDAR



In the time of Christ, the nation of Israel was an agricultural society. The people also kept sheep, goats and a few cattle; but every year they planted, sowed and reaped. The primary crops were wheat, barley, grapes, olives and nuts. Just as today, the success of growing food for one's family heavily depended upon when to plant and when to harvest crops. In fact, the Seven Feasts of Israel were established around the agricultural cycles, although each has prophetic implications. We discuss both the historical and spiritual aspects of each of the Seven Feasts of Israel in Chapter 2.

In order to understand and determine when the Christ child was born, it is necessary to understand both the Hebrew Calendar and the way that time was measured by the ancient Hebrews.



The Jewish calendar was constructed to keep accurate track of the summer and winter solstices and the different planting seasons. We will show later that as far back as the reign of King David, the Jewish Levitical priesthood possessed a detailed understanding of how the moon and sun interacted to divide time into months, years and the four seasons. There are two primary ways that all societies measure time. The first is to use a calendar based upon the amount of time that it takes the moon to cycle from one new moon to the next and back again. This *lunar cycle* takes approximately 29.5 days (29 days, 12 hours 3.33 seconds.). The mean tropical



solar year is about 365.2422 days long. The calendar in use today is called the Gregorian calendar and almost exactly equals 365.2422 days. The Gregorian calendar did not come into use until 1582 when it was introduced by Pope Gregory XII. In 45 BC, a calendar called the *Julian calendar* was introduced by Julius Caesar in 45 BC. Prior to that a calendar called the old Roman calendar was in use. The new Julian calendar had a regular (common) year of 365 days divided into 12 months, with a leap day added to the month of February every four years (leap year). This made the Julian year 365.25 days long. The slight error between 365.2422 days and 365.25 seems to be negligible, but every 128 years this inaccuracy will cause the Julian calendar to drop behind the solar year by one day. By 1582 the Julian calendar had a 10 day error! In October of 1582 BC Pope Gregory XIII decided it was time to correct this error and reform the Julian calendar by adding back the 10 days. Hence, the Julian calendar day of Thursday, October 4, 1582 was changed to Friday, October 15. The cycle of weekdays was not affected. New rules were introduced which determined leap years, and when Easter would be celebrated. This correction and refinement of the original Roman calendar was called the *Gregorian calendar*. The Gregorian calendar is very accurate, losing only 1 day every 3,236 years against the length of a solar year as compared to the Julian calendar which lost 1 day every 128 years.

Name of calendar	When introduced	Average year	Approximate error introduced
Gregorian calendar	AD 1582	365.2425 days	27 seconds (1 day every 3,236 years)
Julian calendar	45 BC	365.25 days	11 minutes (1 day every 128 years)

The ancient Jewish calendar was a *lunar* calendar that was accurate and used rules similar to the modern Jewish calendar. It is built around 12 months alternating between 29 and 30 days. Since the average length of the lunar month is 29.530589 days, it is convenient to have months alternate between 29 and 30 days. This results in a Jewish 12 month year of 354 days. However, the *seasons* are determined by the rotation of the earth around the sun, and this cycle is 365.2422 days. It can be easily recognized that a Jewish lunar year of 354 days will fall short of a solar year

by about 11.25 days every year. If left to continue, in 3 years the lunar calendar would fall short of a solar calendar by about 34 days. It is clear that if not adjusted, after about 18 years January 1 on a lunar calendar would actually be midsummer.

### The Ancient Hebrew Calendar

Calendar Months	Nisan	Iyar	Sivan	Tammuz	Av	Elul	Tishri	Heshvan	Kislev	Tevet	Shevat	Adar	Adar II
Religious Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Civil Year	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Length	30	29	30	29	30	29	30	29	30	29	30	29	29
Gregorian Months	March/April	April/May	May/June	June/July	July/Aug	Aug/Sept	Sept/Oct	Oct/Nov	Nov/Dec	Dec/Jan	Jan/Feb	Feb/Mar	
Feasts of Israel	Passover Nisan 14		Pentecost 50th day after Firstfruits Starts				Trumpets Tishri 1						
	Unleavened Bread Nisan 15-21						Tishri 10 Yom Kippur (Atonement)						
	First Fruits Starts 1st Sunday in Unleavened Bread (50 days)						Tishri 15-21 Tabernacles						
							Tishri 22 Last Great Day of Tabernacles						
Crops	Barley	Wheat	Figs	Grapes	Fruits	Dates	Ploughing	Olives	Flocks to Winter quarters	Wild and Domestic Crops grow	Almonds	Citrus	
Rains						Grapes	Planting						
Sheep	Latter Rains					Figs	Early Rains						
	Flocks moved to field												

To keep the lunar and solar calendars synchronized, an extra 13<sup>th</sup> month was periodically added to make a 13 month year. This extra month is always added just before the month of Nisan and just after the month of Adar. It is called *Adar II* and usually consisted of 29 days. Before the Nation of Israel fell to the Babylonian empire in 605 BC, the Levitical priesthood decided when to insert an extra month by observing when wheat and barley would not come to maturity soon enough to support the Feast of Firstfruits which begins on Nisan 15. The wheat and barley was observed just prior to Nisan 1, and if the corn and wheat had not begun to mature in the stalk an extra month was added. It was a simple system, based upon observation of the moon and crop maturity. However, this system was probably not used after the return from the Babylonian exile of 70 years around 538 BC. The Babylonians had long determined the cycles

of the sun and moon very accurately. The original Hebrew calendar started a new year on *Tishri 1* (September/October), but when the exodus from Egypt occurred in 1457 BC, God declared that the yearly Hebrew calendar would start with the first day of the old 7th month called *Nisan*. The old Hebrew calendar was a lunar-based calendar of length 354 days, while a solar year was 365.2422 days. It is clear that the old Roman calendar would lose about 11.25 days a year against the solar year. It had to be adjusted by adding 7 extra months of 29 days every 19 years, which we will discuss later.

## ANATOMY OF THE JEWISH CALENDAR

### THE JEWISH DAY

A Jewish day is 24 hours long, but each day starts at 6:00pm and ends at 6:00pm; contrasted to the modern Gregorian calendar and the ancient Julian calendar days which start at midnight and end at midnight. Hence, one Jewish calendar day spans two Gregorian calendar days.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
יום ראשון	יום שני	יום שלישי	יום רביעי	יום חמישי	יום שישי	יום שבת
Yom Rishon	Yom Sheini	Yom Shlishi	Yom Revi	Yom Chamishi	Yom Shishi	Yom Shabbat

### A JEWISH WEEK

A Jewish week is composed of 7 days. Each week starts on Sunday at 6:00 PM and ends at 6:00 PM (Gregorian calendar Sunday). The seventh day of the week is a day of no work and rest called a *shavu'a*, and it is the Jewish Sabbath day. This was because God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. This day was set apart by God to remember His creative work.

Hebrew Day...	<i>First Day of The Week</i>
Gregorian Day...	Sunday: 6:00PM - Monday: 6:00PM
Hebrew Day...	<i>Second Day of The Week</i>
Gregorian Day...	Monday: 6:00PM - Tuesday: 6:00PM
Hebrew Day...	<i>Third Day of The Week</i>
Gregorian Day...	Sunday: 6:00PM - Monday: 6:00PM
Hebrew Day...	<i>Fourth Day of The Week</i>
Gregorian Day...	Sunday: 6:00PM - Monday: 6:00PM
Hebrew Day...	<i>Fifth Day of The Week</i>
Gregorian Day...	Sunday: 6:00PM - Monday: 6:00PM
Hebrew Day...	<i>Sixth Day of The Week</i>
Gregorian Day...	Sunday: 6:00PM - Monday: 6:00PM
Hebrew Day...	<i>Seventh Day of The Week</i>
Gregorian Day...	Sunday: 6:00PM - Monday: 6:00PM

## A JEWISH MONTH

The Jewish month is composed of either 29 or 30 days, with an occasional day added to the months of Kislev and Heshvan; and the addition of 7 extra months called Adar II (following the 12<sup>th</sup> month of Adar). Adar II is added during the 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14 and 17 year in each 19 year Metonic cycle. Using a set of complicated rules of when to insert additional days, the lunar based Jewish calendar almost exactly balances a solar based year every 19 years.

Hebrew	English	Number	Length	Civil Equivalent
ניסן	Nissan	1	30 days	March-April
אייר	Iyar	2	29 days	April-May
סיון	Sivan	3	30 days	May-June
תמוז	Tammuz	4	29 days	June-July
אב	Av	5	30 days	July-August
אלול	Ehl	6	29 days	August-September
תשרי	Tishri	7	30 days	September-October
חשוון	Cheshvan	8	29 or 30 days	October-November
כסלו	Kislev	9	30 or 29 days	November-December
טבת	Tevet	10	29 days	December-January
שבט	Shevat	11	30 days	January-February
אדר א'	Adar I (leap years only)	12	30 days	February-March
אדר ב'	Adar (called Adar Bet in leap years)	12 (13 in leap years)	29 days	February-March

A Jewish month always consists of alternating 29 or 30 days, except Kislev and Cheshvan, which are periodically adjusted by one day. Months 7-12 (Nisan - Elul) never change.

### *THE JEWISH YEAR*

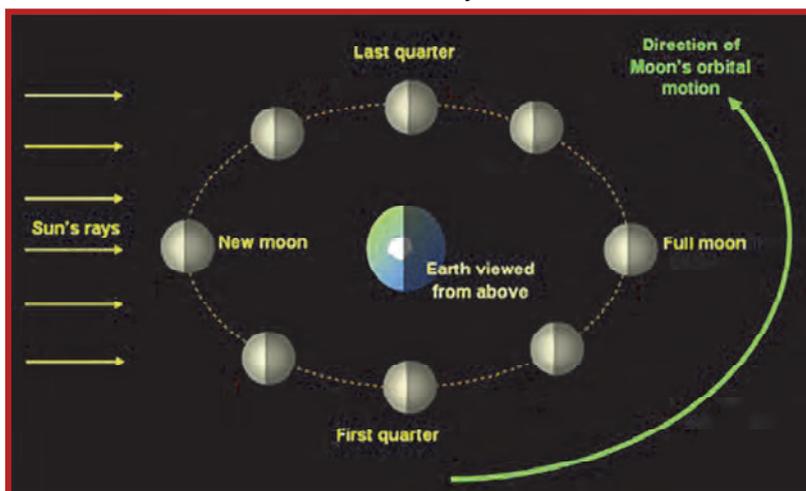
A Jewish Civil year will consist of 12 months, starting with the month of Nisan and ending with the new moon of Tishri; except when an extra month (Adar II) is added after the 12<sup>th</sup> month of Adar. Adar II is added in 7 times in a 19 year Metonic cycle; in years 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14 and 17. A Jewish calendar which shows crop harvests in parallel with the 12 Jewish months is shown on the previous page. Note that the 13<sup>th</sup> month is shown as Vedar, which was later called Adar II. Understanding how the Jewish calendar operated is crucial to understanding when events occurred in ancient Israel and in the time of Christ.

## **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH LUNAR CALENDAR**

A *new moon* starts to form after the moon is completely dark, and a *full moon* occurs when it is fully visible. For discussion purposes, we will call the point at which the moon as viewed from earth is in perfect alignment with the sun a *molad*. In a perfect world, the subsequent time at which a small sliver of the moon could be observed as it passes through the *Waxing Crescent* would be a constant, but due to the orbit of the earth around the sun and the tilting of the earth's axis; it can take anywhere between 13 to 20 hours for a sliver of light to be seen from any one molad. Each Hebrew calendar month started with a new moon and it took about 15 days for a full moon to occur. Although not quite correct, a full molad to molad cycle was 29.5 days. The approximate time that the moon takes to start from one molad and move to the next was known from ancient times. However, the high priest would declare any one month to begin by a report from two reliable witnesses that the new crescent had been seen. Although this could never happen within 13 to 20 hours from when the actual molad occurred, this

was a fairly good system. It is obvious to me, that after some point in time the varying time between any one monthly molad and when the first crescent of a new moon was seen could be fairly accurately predicted during any one month of the year. At some point in time, the priesthood was able to start each month by calculation and not observation. When this occurred is unknown, but we do know that the Babylonian empire was using accurate calculations to start each month by the time that Israel was released from exile around 539 BC. It is almost certain that when most of the Babylonian calendar was adopted after the exile ended that the rules were adopted also. The modern Jewish calendar is based entirely upon a rule based system to balance the solar year against the lunar year.

A new moon occurs when the moon is completely dark, and a full moon is when it is fully visible. This is called a *New Moon* and a *Full Moon*, respectively. For discussion purposes, we will call the point at which the moon as viewed from earth is in *perfect alignment* with the sun a *molad*. In a perfect world, the subsequent time at which a small sliver of the moon could be observed as it starts to pass through the *Waxing Crescent* would be a constant, but due to the orbit of the earth around the sun; it can take anywhere between 13 to 20 hours for this to be seen from any one molad. Each Hebrew calendar month started with a new moon and it took about 15 days for a full moon to occur.



Although not quite correct, a full molad to molad cycle was about 29.5 days. The approximate time that the moon takes to start from one molad and move to the next was known from ancient times. However, the high priest would declare any one month to begin by a report from two reliable witnesses that the new crescent had been seen. Although off by 13 to 20 hours from when the actual molad occurred, this was a fairly good system. It is obvious to me, that after some point in time, the maximum and minimum amount of time between any one monthly *molad* and when the *first crescent* of a new moon was seen could be fairly accurately predicted.

At some point in time, the priesthood was able to start each month by calculation and not observation. When this occurred is unknown, but we do know that the Babylonian empire was using accurate calculations to start each month by the time that Israel was released from exile around 539 BC. It is almost certain that when most of the Babylonian calendar was adopted after the exile ended that the rules were adopted also. The modern Jewish calendar is based entirely upon a rule based system to balance the solar year against the lunar year. An ancient Greek astronomer named Meton of Athens, Greece discovered around 432 BC that 19 solar years was almost exactly equal to 6,940 days. He proposed that this relationship could be achieved by using 125 months of 30 days and 110 months of 29 days over a 19 year period of time. The 19 year base period of time became known as the *Metonic cycle*. The difference between these 235 months and a 19 solar years was only a few hours. By 380 BC, this cycle was adopted and used in the ancient Babylonian calendar. After the 70 year Babylonian exile of Israel ended in 539 BC, a Jewish calendar was created based almost entirely upon the Babylonian calendar. By 400 BC, the Levitical priesthood and the High priest had stabilized the calendar so that a basic calendar year consisted of 6 -30 day months and 6-29 day months. Over a period of 19 years it was found that if 7 extra months of 29 days were added then the Metonic cycle could be almost achieved. Notice that using this scheme; over a 19 year period of time there would be 114 months of 30 days and 121 months of 29 days.

This period of time is 6,929 days. Since a Metonic cycle was 125 months of 30 days and 110 months of 29 days this is a total of 6,940 days: Hence, the Jewish calendar would be 11 days short of a Metonic cycle. In order to match the Metonic cycle they then added 11 days over a 19 year period by periodically adding one day to either the month of Kislev or Cheshvan as shown by the Hebrew calendar which was shown previously in our discussion of a calendar month. . The sum of things is that every 19 years every date/day on the Hebrew calendar will reoccur on exactly the same day. It is not known (at least by me) how long they did this, but it turns out that in using this scheme, two Sabbath days (holy high days or regular Sabbath days) periodically occurred back to back. Since this placed a great burden on the Jewish people, some complicated rules called *postponements* were added to prevent this from happening. These rules were known only by known only by the high priest. The modern Jewish calendar uses these rules today.

The point of all this is to establish using known historical records the Jews had a sophisticated and very accurate calendar in place at least 300 years before the Reign of King Herod the great and the birth of Jesus Christ. We will prove that this is true when we establish the regnal years of King Herod in Chapter 5. For now, notice what Jonathan told David in I Samuel 20:18: *Tomorrow is the New Moon, and you will be missed because your seat is empty.* If the new moon was strictly determined by the observation of two reliable witnesses, how could Jonathan (and King David) know that the New moon was to arrive tomorrow? The answer is, of course, they could not! ... unless it had already been predicted to be tomorrow. It should be clear that the ancients knew about the movements of the moon and sun, and the almost exact length of a lunar month and a solar year. This is well attested to by the design of the Egyptian pyramids, the Mayan Temples and Stonehenge. Since the lunar and solar cycles have not changed since the Jewish calendar was accurately implemented, any Jewish date in antiquity can be determined for thousands of years back in time. There are several calendar conversion programs which can be used free on the internet. One we

particularly recommended for its accuracy and completeness is *Abdicate* at the *Shepherd's Website* (<http://www.abdicate.net/cal.aspx>).

## SUMMARY

Sometime after the Jews returned from a 70 year deportation to Babylon, they formally adopted the Babylonian calendar, and it is my belief that they very accurately knew the duration of both a solar and lunar year (it was certainly known by the Egyptians and Babylonians). A new moon determines the first day of every Jewish month. As previously stated, in ancient times the beginning of each month was by observation and each month began on a command from the High Priest based upon when two reliable witnesses saw the first sliver of a new moon. Every year when the month of Adar ended, a decision was made on whether or not to insert an extra month (Adar II) between Adar and Nisan. This decision was based upon whether or not the corn and wheat had matured enough to support the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which started on Nisan 15. Well before 300-400 BC, it appears that observation gave way to a complicated set of rules known only to the Levitical priesthood and the High Priest. The basic rule is based upon the following observation. Every 19 years there are  $(365.2422)(19)=6939.6$  days. Over that same period of time, the basic Jewish calendar would result in  $(354)(19)=6726$  days. Left unadjusted, the Jewish lunar calendar would fall back against the solar calendar 213.6 days over this same period of time. This is almost exactly 7 lunar months of 30 days. Hence, it should be obvious that if 7 extra months of 30 days were inserted as Adar II months every 19 years, the Lunar Jewish calendar would return to the solar calendar every 19 years. In other words, if a 19 year cycle started on Nisan 1 and 7 extra months were added over the next 19 years, Nisan 1 exactly 19 Jewish years later would be on the same day on the Julian solar calendar. It was decided to add Adar II months in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th and 19th years of the cycle. The mathematically inclined can verify that even when this is done, the Jewish calendar will lose only about 3 days every 19 years.

This scheme is still used today, with minor adjustments periodically to make the cycle exact.

It was necessary to discuss the Jewish calendar used during the lifetime of Christ, since it must be used when we show the month and year that Christ was born. In summary, during the 33.5 years that Christ lived there were two calendars in common use: The Jewish Lunar based calendar and the Julian solar based calendar. We will shortly prove with certainty that both had become synchronized as early as 63 BC.

Finally, many biblical researchers project the modern Gregorian calendar back through time, and then cross-reference it to the Jewish calendar. Since the modern Gregorian calendar was not implemented until 1582 BC, all projections further back in time simply relate what the Gregorian date would have been if the calendar existed. These artificial dates are called *Proleptic* dates. Between 45 BC and 1582 BC the calendar used in the Roman Empire, which included Israel, was the 365.25 day Julian solar calendar. Since our entire scope of interest is between 7 BC and 70 BC, we will use the Julian calendar when quoting monthly (January-December) and day dates (1-31). These will always be given with the Jewish calendar monthly designation for the same date (Nisan-Adar II) and the day of the week (Sunday-Saturday).