

The Companion Bible
Appendix 179: Parallel Datings, Etc,
Pages 198,199,200

1. It thus appears without the shadow of a doubt that the day assigned the the Birth of the Lord, viz. December 25, was the day on which He was "begotten of the Holy Ghost", i.e. by pneuma hagion= divine power (Matt. 1:18, 20 marg.), and His birth took place on the 15th of Ethanim , September 29, in the year following, thus making beautifully clear the meaning of John 1:14, "The Word became flesh" (Matt. 1:18, 20) on the 1st Tebethor December 25 (5 B.C.), "and tabernacled (Gr. eskenosen) with us", on 15th of Ethanim or September 29 (4 B.C.). The 15th of Ethanim (or Tisri) was the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The circumcision therefore took place on the eighth day of the Feast = 22nd Ethanim = October 6-7 (Lev. 23:33-34). So that these two momentous events fall into their proper place and order, and the real reason is made clear why the 25th of December is associated with our Lord and was set apart by the Apostolic Church to commemorate the stupendous event of the "Word becoming flesh" - and not, as we have for so long been led to suppose, the commemoration of a pagan festival.

2. An overwhelmingly strong argument in favor of the correctness of this view lies in the fact that the date of "the Festival of Michael and All Angels" has been from very early times the 29th day of September, on Gentile (Western) reckoning. But "the Church" even then had lost sight of the reason why this date rather than any other in the Calendar should be so indissolubly associated with the great Angelic Festival. The following expresses the almost universal knowledge or rather want of knowledge of "Christendom" on the subject: "We pass on now to consider, in the third place, the commemoration of September 29, the festival of Michaelmas, par excellence. It does not appear at all certain what was the original special idea of the commemoration of this day" (Smith's Dict. Of Chr. Antiqq. (1893), vol. ii, p. 1177 (3). A reference, however, to the Table and statements above, makes the "original special idea " why the Festival of "Michael and All Angels" is held on September 29 abundantly clear. Our Lord was born on that day, the first day of the "Feast of Tabernacles" (Lev. 23:39). This was on the fifteenth day of the seventh Jewish month called Tisri, or Ethanim(Ap. 51. 5), corresponding to our September 29 (of the year 4 B.C.) The "Begetting" (gennesis) Day of the Lord was announced by the Angel Gabriel. See notes on Dan. 8:16 and Luke 1:19. The "Birth" Day, by "(the) Angel of the Lord", unnamed in either Matthew and Luke. That this Angelic Being was "Michael the Archangel (of Jude 9), and Mika'el hassar haggadol - "Michael the Great Prince"- of Dan. 12:1, seems clear for the following reason: If, "when again (yet future) He bringeth the First-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the Angels of God worship Him" (Heb 1:6; quoting Ps. 97:6) - then this must include the great Archangel Michael himself. By parity of reasoning, on the First"bringing" into the world of the only begotten Son, the Archangel must have been present. And the tremendous announcement to the shepherds, that the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) was on earth in the person of the Babe of Bethlehem, must therefore have been made by the same head of the heavenly host (Luke 2:9-14).

In mundane affairs, announcements of supremest importance (of kings, &c.) are invariably conveyed through the most exalted personage in the realm.

The point need not be labored.

3. The fact of the Birth of our Lord having been revealed to the shepherds by the Archangel Michael on the 15th of Tisri (or Ethanim), corresponding to September 29, 4 B.C. - the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles - must have been known to believers in the Apostolic Age. But "the mystery of iniquity" which was "already working" in Paul's day (2Thess. 2:7) quickly enshrouded this and the other great fact of the

day of the Lord's "begetting" on the first day of the Jewish month Tebeth (corresponding to December 25, 5 B.C.) - as well as other events connected with His sojourn on earth, (*1) - in a rising mist of obscurity in which they have ever since been lost. The earliest allusion to December 25 (modern reckoning) as the date for the Nativity is found in the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria, about the beginning of the third century A.D. (See note 3 p. 197). (*2)

That "Christmas" was a pagan festival long before the time of our Lord is beyond doubt. In Egypt Horus (or Harpocrates (*3), the son of Isis (Queen of Heaven), was born about the time of winter solstice. (*4) By the time of the early part of the fourth century A.D., the real reason for observing Christmas as the date for the miraculous "begetting" of Matt. 1:18 and "the Word becoming flesh" of John 1:14 had been lost sight of. The policy of Constantine, and his Edict of Milan, by establishing universal freedom of religion furthered this. When many of the followers of the old pagan systems - the vast majority of the empire, it must be remembered - adopted the Christian religion as a cult, which Constantine had made fashionable, and the "Church" became the Church of the Roman Empire, they brought in with them, among a number of other things emanating from Egypt and Babylon, the various Festival Days of the old "religions". Thus "Christmas Day," the birthday of the Egyptian Horus (Osiris), became gradually substituted for the real Natalis Domini of our blessed Savior, viz. September 29, or Michaelmas Day.

4. If however, we realize that the center of gravity, so to speak, of what we call the Incarnation if the Incarnation itself- the wondrous fact of the Divine "begetting", when "the Word Became flesh" (see notes on Matt. 1:18 and John 1:14) - and that this is to be associated with December 25, instead of March - as for 1,600 years Christendom has been led to believe - then, "Christmas" will be seen in quite another light, and many who have hitherto been troubled with scruples concerning the day being, as they have been taught, the anniversary of a Pagan festival, will be enabled to worship on that Day without alloy of doubt, as the time when the stupendous miracle which is the foundation stone of the Christian faith, came to pass. The "Annunciation" by the Angel Gabriel marked the genesis of Matt. 1:18, and the first words of John 1:14. The announcement to the shepherds by the Archangel Michael marked the Birth of our Lord. John 1:14 is read as though "the Word became flesh (R.V.) and dwelt among us", were one and the same thing, whereas they are two clauses. The paragraph should read thus: "And the Word became flesh; (Gr. ho logos sarz egeneto.) And tabernacled with (or among) us." (Gr. kai eskenosen en hemin). The word tabernacle here (preserved in R.V. marg.) receives beautiful significance from the knowledge that "the Lord of glory" was "found in fashion as a man", and thus tabernacling in human flesh. And in turn it shows in equally beautiful significance that our Lord was born on the first day of the great Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, viz. the 15th of Tisri, corresponding to September 29, 4 B.C. (modern reckoning). The Circumcision of our Lord took place therefore on the eighth day, the last day of the Feast, the "Great Day of the Feast" of John 7.37 ("Tabernacles" had eight days. The Feast of Unleavened Bread had seven days and Pentecost one. See Lev. 23)

5. The main arguments against the Nativity having taken place in December may be set forth very simply:

- (i) The extreme improbability, amounting almost to impossibility, that Mary, under such circumstances, could have undertaken a journey of about 70 miles (as the crow flies), through a hill district averaging some 3,000 feet above sea-level, in the depth of winter:
- (ii) Shepherds and their flocks would not be found "abiding" (Gr. agraleo) in the open fields at night in December (Tebeth), for the paramount reason that there would be no pasturage at that time.

It was the custom then (as now) to withdraw the flocks during the month Marchesvan (Oct.-Nov.) (**1) from the open districts and house them for the winter.

(iii) The Roman authorities in imposing such a "census taking" for the hated and unpopular "foreign" tax would not have enforced the imperial decree (Luke 2:1) at the most inconvenient and inclement season of the year, by compelling the people to enroll themselves at their respective "cities" in December. In such a case they would naturally choose the "line" of least resistance" and select a time of year that would cause least friction, and interference with the habits and pursuits of the Jewish people. This would be in the autumn, when the agricultural round of the year was complete, and the people generally more or less at liberty to take advantage, as we know many did, of the opportunity of "going up" to Jerusalem for the "Feast of Tabernacles" (cp. John 7:8-10, &c), the crowning Feast of the Jewish year. To take advantage of such a time would be to the Romans the simplest and most natural policy, whereas to attempt to enforce the Edict of Registration for the purpose of Imperial taxation in the depth of winter, - when traveling for such a purpose would have been deeply resented, and perhaps have brought about a revolt, - would never have been attempted by such an astute ruler as Augustus.

6. With regard to the other two "Quarter Days", June 24, March 25, these are both associated with the miraculous (Luke 1:7) "conception" and birth of the Forerunner, as December 25 and September 29 are with our Lord's miraculous "Begetting" and Birth; and are therefore connected with "the Course of Abiah."