

CHAPTER 3

The Annunciations of John and Jesus and the childhood of John

Having now introduced Himself by revealing the startling truth that He has always been very God, and proves His human family by genealogical records, Jesus next tells of the annunciations about Himself and His kinfolk John (the Baptist), son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, who had the awesome but unthankworthy task of introducing the Christ to the Jewish populace. John's active ministry when he reached the age of thirty was a short one, lasting only about one year, and ending in a horrible martyrdom. It is said by Jesus that "among men, there is none born greater than John." A very interesting and tragic life about this man can be re-told by the Christian!

Jesus begins His story by informing us about John's lineage through his father, a priest of the Aaronic Priesthood, who served in the Temple as one of the members of the Course of Abijah (I Chronicles 24 -- the eighth course of twenty-four, serving twice for one week beginning on a Sabbath).

From Bullinger's *Companion Bible*, Appendix 179-III, concerning this "Course of Abia," we read of two ministrations for this course. The second, the one that fits our time frame, occurred on Sivan 12-18, which Bullinger says corresponded to June 13-19, 5 BC. But this study shows that Zacharias was serving in June of 6 BC! In addition, consider these facts: For Sivan 12-18 to be a Sabbath to Friday period, the Passover must be on a Friday (16 more days in Nisan after the Passover, 29 days in all of Iyar, and 12 days in Sivan equals 57 days or one day over the number of full weeks of 56 days = the Abia course beginning on a Sabbath). In 6 BC the Passover did occur on a Friday April 2 and Sivan 12-18 occurred from May 29 to June 4! There must be more study into this Abijah course. If the course always served from Sabbath to Friday, what did they do when the Passover was not on a Friday? In any case we are placing the beginning of John's conception sometime in early June.

We will discuss the all-important dating scheme I have chosen for this Harmony later. Suffice it to say at this point, that most of my studies into this period more correctly places the birth of Jesus in the autumn of 5 B.C., not what has been believed by most in the Church of God movement since the late fifties as having been in the autumn of 4 B.C. Obviously, there are a number of proofs for this new dating. But isn't it possible to grow in knowledge and understanding through the years? Have we got some more understanding to gain about the early Hebrew Calendar?

Section 4. Zacharias is told of the birth of John (the Baptist)

In the Temple at Jerusalem. Ca. May 29 - June 4¹, 6 B.C.

Luke 1:5-25

- 5 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.
- 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.
- 7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.
- 8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,
- 9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.
- 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.
- 11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.
- 12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.
- 13 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.
- 14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.
- 15 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.
- 16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.
- 17 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.
- 18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.
- 19 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 show thee these glad tidings.
- 20 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.
- 21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.
- 22 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.
- 23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.
- 24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,
- 25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

The course of Abia (or Abijah) was always in the late Spring or early summer. Reconstruction of the Hebrew Calendar for 6 B.C. yields May 29 through June 4 for this course. See footnote 1.

Then, Jesus tells us of His own miraculous birth, to be born of a virgin! Nowhere in true history has ever one been born truly immaculately! His mother was indeed Mary, a virgin betrothed to Joseph, but His Father was very God Himself!

This enunciation occurred when Elisabeth, mother of John, was in the sixth month of her pregnancy. This identifies Jesus as being born six months after John.

Section 5. The Virgin Mary is told of the birth of Jesus

Nazareth. Ca. December 25², 6 B.C.

Luke 1:26-38

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 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.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 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:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35 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.

36 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.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Section 6. The song of Elisabeth and the praise of Mary

The Hill Country of Judea. Ca. Later December 6 B.C. or early January 5 B.C.

Luke 1:39-56

- 39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;
40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.
41 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:
42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.
45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.
46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
51 He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

Like a good kinswoman, Mary probably assisted Elisabeth with the birth of John, then returned home to ready herself for her own child's birth. Mary is now three months pregnant and was probably beginning to show the child's early growth. Joseph, when he discovered his wife's condition, being a good, righteous man was alarmed by what he discovered and perplexed as to what he should do!

Section 7. Joseph is told of the birth of Jesus

Nazareth, ca. March or April 5 B.C..

Matt 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 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.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 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.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Section 8. The birth of John and his desert life

The Hill Country of Judea. Ca. March or April³ 5 B.C.

Luke 1:57-80

57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

59 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.

60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.

66 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.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,
69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;
70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:
71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;
73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,
74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might
serve him without fear,
75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.
76 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;
77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,
78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into
the way of peace.
80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his
showing unto Israel.

Footnotes

This chapter has been updated December 13, 2004.

1 This is the eighth week after the Passover in 6 B.C. See www.biblestudy.org, Hebrew calendar calculations by Alan Ruth for year 6 BC.

2 The actual date of conception of our LORD is unknown. December 25 is only speculative based on some importance the pagan world places on this date. The timing of events seems to indicate this approximate time of the year.

3 If Elisabeth had conceived shortly after Zacharias return home after his course of duty ca. June 4, 6 B.C., then John would have been born approximately 280 days later, near the end of March or first of April 5 B.C.