

JESUS WAS NOT BORN ON XMAS!

Here are four proofs that our Savior was not born on Xmas! Whose birthday is being celebrated?

By Gregory Dullum

Most people who keep Christmas think they are celebrating the birthday of Jesus Christ. But they are WRONG!

Here are four proofs that Jesus was NOT born on Christmas:

1. Shepherds in the Field

Luke's account of the birth of Jesus Christ tells us, "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8).

Shepherds did NOT watch over their flocks by night in the *middle of winter!* Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's *Commentary on the Whole Bible* makes this plain: "From about passover-time in April until autumn, the flocks pastured constantly in the open fields, shepherds lodging there all that time. (From this it seems plain that the period of the year usually assigned to our Lord's birth is too late)" (1964, pp. 991-992).

The New Unger's Bible Handbook corroborates this fact: "Apparently the nativity did not occur in winter, since the shepherds in Palestine customarily do not remain in the open with their flocks, except from spring to autumn" (*The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, revised by Gary N. Larson, 1984, p. 403).

While this proof does not tell us when Jesus was born, it proves he was NOT born Dec. 25!

2. Time of Taxation

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem prior to Jesus' birth because it was a time of TAXATION and CENSUS.

"It came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city" (Luke 2:1-3).



Drawing by Greg Dullum

Shepherds were abiding in the field at night when Christ was born. Shepherds didn't do that in late December!

The *King James Version* tells us this was *more than a census*. It also was a tax: "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" (Luke 2:1-3 KJV).

It doesn't make sense for the Romans to make this decree in the middle of winter when it's cold and rainy, making travel difficult. It is much more likely that this decree was made in the fall, when travel was better and those engaged in agriculture had just completed their harvest, and had money to pay a tax.

God established his Feast of Tabernacles in the fall, *after the harvest*: "You

shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress" (Deut. 16:13). God's people were commanded to set aside one-tenth of their income to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 14:22). They also were commanded to give offerings at this time (Deut. 16:16). The Israelites, who lived in an agricultural society, had the funds after a harvest to pay tithes and give offerings. It makes sense that the Roman government would set a census and taxation at Feast time, when money was abundant and travel was much easier. It makes no sense to set it in the dead of winter.

3. Jesus Had 3-1/2 Year Ministry

Jesus began his ministry about the time of his 30th birthday (Luke 3:23). We don't know the exact date of his birth, but we do know how long his ministry lasted and the date it ended.

Christ was crucified on Passover in the spring (Mat. 26:17-27:57). His ministry was three-and-a-half years. Daniel prophesied that He would "confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the *middle of the week* He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Dan. 9:27). Using the principle of a prophetic day being one year, Jesus was to preach seven years but his ministry was cut off after three-and-one-half years.

We know Passover comes in the spring. If we back up three-and-a-half years, Jesus' 30th birthday (and his birth) must have been in the fall!

4. Born Six Months After John

Jesus Christ was born six months after John the Baptist. John's birthday can

JESUS' BIRTH

Continued on Page 6

Who Are the German People?

God used the Assyrian people to take Israel captive in ancient times and will use them again in the end time!

By Gregory Dullum
Part 3

Last month we saw how the Assyrian people migrated from Mesopotamia to Europe, along with the “lost 10 tribes” of Israel. When the Roman Empire encountered the Assyrian migrants, they called them Germans:

“Ancient Assyria was the greatest war-making power in all history. Its soldiers were drilled to be hard-fighting *war-men*. When the Assyrians invaded Europe, the Romans called them ‘Germans’—a name meaning ‘men of war.’

“And that is how the Assyrians came to be known as Germans. But it is not the only reason the modern Assyrians are called Germans today” (“Germany in Prophecy!” by Herman L. Hoeh, *The Plain Truth*, January 1963, p. 15).

World Domination the Goal

The German people have a *DESIRE in their hearts* to RULE EUROPE and THE WORLD! We saw their desires manifested in two world wars in the 20th century and we see it today in their leadership role in the European Union.

Notice how Germany was described prior to World War I:

“The Germans aim at nothing less than the domination of Europe and the world by the German race. One of the fundamental errors, of which idealists and advocates of peace have been often guilty, is to treat this vast project as an unreality” (*Pan-Germanism* by Roland G. Usher, Ph.D., associate professor of history, Washington University, St. Louis, 1913, pp. 1-2).

What is the German attitude toward Britain? Could it be the same as the Assyrian attitude toward the ancient Israelites whom that empire conquered? Prior to World War I, it was revealed: “England, Germany hates, disdains, and despises” (Usher, p. 48).

Twice in the 20th century, Germany fought against Britain and the U.S. (and their allies) for WORLD DOMINATION. Twice Germany was BEATEN. Will Germany be SUCCESSFUL next time?

When Germany fought for world domination in World Wars I and II, it had to *conquer its neighbors in Europe* BEFORE it could *conquer the world!* When the next war comes, this will *not be a problem!* Germany will already have *Europe in its pocket!*



NAPS photo

Modern-day Assyria (Germany) was part of the sixth revival of the Holy Roman Empire under Adolph Hitler during World War III! A final seventh revival is yet to come!

Part of the Roman Empire

In World War II, Germany allied with Italy to form the Axis power. It also formed something else, which was declared by Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini: a *revival* of the HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE!

Mussolini admired Julius Caesar above all men. He perceived himself to be a modern-day Caesar, a figure of destiny. He dreamed of creating a modern Roman Empire. He even shaved his head to look more like a Caesar (*Europe and the Church* by Keith W. Stump, p. 44).

“He urged the Italian people to rebuild the *glories of ancient Rome*” (“Mussolini, Benito,” *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1956 ed., vol. 11, p. 5370, emphasis added).

“After Mussolini survives an assassination attempt, the secretary of the Fascist party announces to a cheering crowd, ‘God has put his finger on the Duce! He is Italy’s greatest son, *the rightful heir of Caesar!*’ Following the example of ancient Rome, some of Mussolini’s Fascist supporters even call him ‘divine Caesar’” (Stump, p. 44, emphasis added).

On Oct. 3, 1935, Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. Victory was won by May 1936 and Ethiopia was annexed to Italy.

“Mussolini now proclaims another res-

urrection of the Roman Empire. ‘At last Italy has her empire,’ Il Duce declares to an enormous crowd from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia” (Stump, p. 46).

Modern-day Assyria (Germany) was PART of the SIXTH revival of the HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE during World War II! A final SEVENTH REVIVAL is *yet to come!*

In a vision, the apostle John saw seven revivals of the Holy Roman Empire from the fall of Rome A.D. 476 until Christ’s return: “There are also seven kings. Five have fallen. One is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time” (Rev. 17:10).

The five revivals of the Roman Empire under five kings that had fallen were: Justinian (527-565), Charlemagne (800), Otto the Great (962), Charles the Great (1520), and Napoleon (1799). The king that was ruling when John saw the vision was the Axis power under Hitler and Mussolini (1936-1945). A final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire is coming! And Bible prophecy indicates that Germany will have a part in it again!

The final revival of the Roman Empire will be a union of 10 kings. “And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev. 17:12-13).

Germany will very likely be one of those 10 kings, and probably in the *leadership* position! As leader of the seventh

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revival of the Holy Roman Empire, Germany *won't have to conquer Europe!* Germany and *most of Europe* will be UNITED as they seek to *conquer the world!*

On its way to world conquest, the German-led union of 10 European kings will be used by God to conquer and capture the sinful people of modern-day Israel—the U.S. and British Commonwealth.

God said of Assyria: “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations” (Isa. 10:5-8).

This applied to ancient Assyria as God used it to punish ancient Israel. It has an end-time fulfillment as a German-led 10-king European Union is used by God to punish his sinful, unrepentant people in the U.S. and British Commonwealth.

German Army Described

The attacking army is described in terms that fit the warlike Assyrians of old and Germans of this past century and today.

“He [God] will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, and will whistle to them from the end of the earth; surely they shall come *with speed, SWIFTLY*” (Isa. 5:26, emphasis added). In World War II, the Germans coined the phrase *blitzkrieg* (which means, literally, lightning war) to describe their swift, sudden military offensives.

Notice the readiness of the Assyrian (German) soldier: “No one will be weary or stumble among them, no one will slumber or sleep; nor will the belts on their loins be loosed, nor the straps of their sandals be broken” (v. 27).

The German military machinery is described in terms that mankind throughout history could understand: arrows, horses

and chariots. If God had inspired Isaiah to write “tanks, helicopters, missiles, and aircraft,” people would have been confused by these terms until the 20th century. But even using these archaic terms, notice the repetition (hence the emphasis) of the word “roar”—the *roar* of MODERN WAR MACHINERY:

“Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses’ hooves will seem like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind. Their roaring will be like a lion, they will roar like young lions; yes they will roar and lay hold of the prey; they will carry it away safely [into captivity] and no one will deliver. In that day they will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened by the clouds” (vv. 28-30).

These clouds could very well be mushroom clouds from nuclear strikes on the major cities. Isaiah adds, “Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire” (Isa. 1:7).

Jeremiah asks: “Is Israel a servant? Is he a homeborn slave? Why is he plundered? The young lions roared at him, and growled; they made his land waste; his cities burned without inhabitant” (Jer. 2:15).

U.S. Military Defeated

The U.S. has the greatest military in the world! Won't it be able to stop this German-led army? Not when God is fighting on the side of the Germans to punish a sinful U.S. and British Commonwealth! “Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty men of war” (Isa. 3:25).

War, Famine and Pestilence

Only a small percentage will survive the war to be taken captive.

When the Ezekiel prophesied, ancient Israel had *already been taken captive* by the Assyrians (723 B.C.). Ezekiel's prophecy of punishment upon Israel could not be for his day! *His prophecy is for the END TIME:*

“Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, and say, “O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD God ... Indeed I, even I will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places. ... And I will lay the corpses of the children of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones all around your altars. In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste ... The slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I am the LORD. Yet I will leave a remnant so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are

scattered through the countries. ... Thus says the LORD God: ‘Pound your fists and stamp your feet, and say, “Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. He who is far off shall die by pestilence, he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged shall die by famine. Thus shall I spend My fury upon them” ’” (Ezek. 6:2-3, 5-6, 8, 11-12).

Cities shall be laid waste! ONE NUCLEAR warhead can lay waste an *entire city!* Many of those who survive the warfare will die in its aftermath from famine and disease as food supplies and sanitary services are cut off!

Survivors Taken Captive

How many Americans and people of the British Commonwealth will survive? “One third of you shall die by the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them” (Ezek. 5:12). Only about a third will survive to go into captivity!

Isaiah indicates that number may be reduced to one tenth: “Then I said, ‘LORD, how long?’ And He answered: ‘Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the LORD has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return’ ” (Isa. 6:11-13).

If a third of our people go into captivity, it seems only a tenth will survive to return to their land when Christ returns. What will happen to these captives while in captivity?

Life in Captivity

“Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of earth to the other ... And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your feet have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And in the evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. And the LORD

Know Your Bible

By Charles Nenninger

1. Who was righteous: Cain or Abel?
2. Why is the seventh day special to God?
3. Who was the disciple whom Jesus loved?
4. What is good character?
5. Which of Joseph's brothers tried to save him?

(Answers on page 5)

GERMAN PEOPLE

Continued on Page 4

German People

Continued from Page 3

will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way which I said to you, 'You shall never see it again.' And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you" (Deut. 28:64-68).

This captivity sounds a lot like the Jewish captivity in the German death camps of World War II! Do not be surprised if those death camps are reactivated when Germany tries again to control the world!

In captivity, some will turn to God, for He said through Isaiah: "I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me" (Isa. 65:1).

Ezekiel describes their repentance: "Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where where they are carried captive ... and they will loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in their abominations" (Ezek. 6:9-10).

The Germans tried, but were not successful in their attempt to kill all the Jews in their extermination camps in World War II. They may try again to exterminate all the U.S. and British Commonwealth captives at the end time, but once again, God will not allow them to be successful. God will preserve a remnant to be rescued from captivity by Christ after He returns.

Germany to Promote One Religion

With Europe under its belt (as part of its 10-king union), and the U.S. and British Commonwealth nations destroyed, Germany will seek to control the REST OF THE WORLD!

Two mighty leaders will arise from this 10-king European Union. One will be a great political leader. It is likely he will be German. In Bible prophecy, he is called "the beast" because he is the leader of a great power that is compared to wild beasts (Rev. 13:1-4, 17:11-13). The other will be a great false religious leader, called "another beast" (Rev. 13:11), "the false prophet" (Rev. 19:20), "man of sin" "son of perdition" and "lawless one" (2 Thes. 2:3,8-9). This false prophet will be empowered by Satan to work miracles to deceive the world (v. 9).

In ancient times, ASSYRIA took Israel captive and BABYLON took Judah captive. In the end time, Assyria and Babylon will UNITE! Germany will embrace the *Babylonian Mystery Religion* of the false prophet and *force* this FALSE worship upon the whole world! The false prophet, meanwhile, will cause people to worship

the union of 10 kings and SATAN THE DEVIL, who is the POWER *behind this union*.

John saw this end-time final revival of the Holy Roman Empire in a vision! It appeared as a beast with seven heads (seven revivals) and 10 horns wearing 10 crowns (10 kings ruling together at the end). "And all the world marveled and followed the beast," he concluded (Rev. 13:3).

If we take this LITERALLY, all people of the world must submit, at least *temporarily*, to this power. That means all the Muslims of the Arab world (and in other parts of the world) and all peoples of the East who are either atheistic Communists or worshippers of Oriental religions, must pay allegiance. This will be *temporary*, because REBELLIONS are coming!

Another verse leads us to believe that there is *complete submission* of ALL NATIONS to the European beast power: "And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names were not written in the Book of Life" (Rev. 13:7-8).

"So they worshiped the dragon [Satan] who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' " (Rev. 13:4). This question seems *especially* APPROPRIATE if made *after* the beast CONQUERS the U.S. and British Commonwealth nations! If the GREAT U.S. military *could not win*, how will *any nation's* military be able to succeed?

The false prophet will speak blasphemy against God (Rev. 13:6). He will make war against the remnant of God's church who are not in a place of safety (v. 7). There will be a GREAT martyrdom (Rev. 7:9-10, 13-14, 17:5-6).

This European union will rule the WORLD's *economy*. "And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:18).

Length of Rule

How long will this beast power rule in Europe? It will NOT be long! Hitler wanted a thousand-year reich. It won't be anywhere near that long!

In vision to John, Jesus Christ limits the rule to ONE prophetic HOUR: "And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they will receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast" (Rev. 17:12). Other prophecies say this union will last *three*

and half years (42 months):

Of the false prophet, we are told: "And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months" (Rev. 13:5).

What else will be happening during these three-and-a-half years? Two things:

1. Some of God's true church will be safely protected in a place of safety (Rev. 3:10, 12:13-14). The "time, times and half a time" in verse 14 is equal to a year, two years and half-a-year (3-1/2 years).

2. Two witnesses will preach in Jerusalem 42 months (Rev. 11:3-7). They will be killed by the beast three and a half days before Christ returns, only to be resurrected at the last trump (vv. 11-15; 1 Cor. 15:52). If the beast is based in EUROPE, *why is he in Jerusalem* at this time?

Europe Invades Holy Land

The German-led European Union at the end time will be in Europe, which is NORTH of Jerusalem. Another name for this union is the "king of the North."

Notice what will happen to the king of the North at the time of the end:

"At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom [Turkey], Moab, the prominent people of Ammon [Jordan]. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels" (Dan. 11:40-43).

The "king of the South" will attack the German-led "king of the North" in the end time. South of Jerusalem is Egypt and other Muslim countries. Since the king of the North is a 10-nation revival of the Holy Roman Empire with its false religion uniting them, it seems likely that the king of the South will be a union of Muslim nations who no longer wish to worship the beast! They want to worship Mohammed. They attack the North but are swiftly defeated. As a result of this war, Europe will occupy the Holy Land!

What does the false prophet do? He *moves* his HEADQUARTERS *to Jerusalem!* "And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain [Mount Zion—Jerusalem]; yet he shall come to his end and no one will help him" (Dan. 11:45).

How will HIS END come?

Attack from the East

Emboldened by the rebellion of the king of the South, kings from the East decide to rebel also. They muster an army of 200 million soldiers (Rev. 9:13-16).

This is likely a union of Oriental nations, perhaps Russia, China, Korea and other eastern Asiatic nations. It must be a large nation or group of nations to muster so large an army.

The kings of the East intend to once-and-for-all put an end to the German-led world-ruling beast power. They will stop at nothing! The goal of both of these world powers is WORLD DOMINATION. However, with weapons of mass destruction at their disposal, the end result of this world war, if allowed to happen, would be TOTAL ANNIHILATION of life from this planet (Mat. 24:22).

The armies of the German-led union will get news of an attack coming from the East. After its armies occupy Jerusalem, we read, "But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many" (Dan. 11:44). Once again, we read of the *warlike nature of the ASSYRIAN people!*

By MIRACLE, the great river Euphrates is *dried up* so the kings from the East can *march to Jerusalem* for the final battle for the control of this world! "Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14).

The FALSE PROPHET *performs miracles* inciting this great army to attack the armies of Europe at Jerusalem! The king of the North is ANXIOUS to do battle with these kings! He is *very confident* that he will *win the war and rule the world!* But God has other plans!

"Behold I am coming as a thief," Christ says in the next verse (Rev. 16:15). He is going to STEAL their victory!

The Final Battle

Outside of Jerusalem is a great flat plains, the perfect place to gather this modern-day Assyrian army for its final battle. It is called Har Megiddo or Armageddon: "And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16).

From Armageddon, the beast's army will

march toward Jerusalem to eliminate the army of the kings of the east. They fight a bloody battle in the narrow Valley of Jehoshaphat outside the city walls:

"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.' Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for his people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (Joel 3:12-16).

Comparing the bloodletting to pressing of juice from grapes, we are told, "And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs" (Rev. 14:20).

All mankind would be wiped off the face of the earth in this battle for world control if Christ would not INTERVENE! To protect his people from extinction, He will *come in the nick of time!* He will STOP the battle BEFORE *total annihilation* can happen! "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened" (Mat. 24:22).

At the last trumpet sound, Jesus Christ will return to this earth upon a white horse followed by an angelic army and his resurrected saints (Rev. 19:11-18).

When the armies of the beast and of the kings of the east see Christ coming, they will stop battling each other and fight Christ! "And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse [Christ] and against his army" (Rev. 19:19).

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14).

The beast and false prophet will be captured and cast into a lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). The rest of the armies who fight Christ will be killed by Him and birds will be filled with their flesh (v. 21).

Is this the end of the German people?
(To be continued!)

Know Your Bible Answers

1) Abel. 2) He rested that day. 3) John. 4) Choosing right, not wrong. 5) Reuben.

Fun Fact

of creation, history, holidays & the Bible



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

It's often said that the first frost will come six weeks after you've heard the last cricket.

Witerature

Wit and wisdom to complement the truths of the Holy Bible can be found in secular writings.

Life Is a Gift by Tony Bennett, HarperLuxe, 2012, pp. 37, 39.

Be a Giver

"Being an entertainer has allowed me the good fortune of becoming close friends with other performers I had originally admired only from afar. I had been a fan of Judy Garland long before I met her. ...

"One of the best compliments I ever received was from Judy, who was interviewed by *Billboard* magazine in their tribute to me. In the piece, she said that I was 'the epitome of what entertainers were put on earth for. Tony was born to take people's troubles away. He loves doing it; he's a giver.' Given my respect for Judy and her talent, this was high praise indeed, and I always cherished her statement."

Luke 6:38, Acts 20:35, 2 Cor. 9:7

Quotable Quotes

"Talent alone won't make you a success. Neither will being in the right place at the right time, unless you are ready. The most important question is: 'Are you ready?'"

—Johnny Carson

Memory Scripture

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

—2 Cor. 9:7

Jesus' Birth

Continued from Page 1

be calculated from the Scriptures.

John the Baptist's father was a priest named Zacharias. He was of the division of Abijah (Luke 1:5). Temple service was divided into 24 divisions. Each division served for one week and then the process repeated (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, p. 988). Abijah's was the eighth division to serve (1 Chron. 24:10).

The first two divisions served the first two weeks of the year, in the spring. Passover, on the 14th of the first month, marked the end of the second division. Passover falls in late March or early April on our calendar. During the week of Passover and Unleavened Bread, there was a greater work load for the priests and they all served. Beginning after the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, the third division served.

It was about the middle of June when Zacharias completed his term in the Temple. "And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived ..." (Luke 1:23-24). So John was conceived about June 15. Nine months later, about March 15, John was born.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to visit Elizabeth when Elizabeth was six months pregnant (Luke 1:36-40).

From the scriptures, it appears that Mary first learned she was pregnant with Jesus at this time—about Dec. 15.

Since Mary conceived about Dec. 15, Jesus was born nine months later (six months after John was born)—in the middle of September—about the time of the fall feasts—nowhere near Dec. 25!

Whose Birthday Is It?

If Jesus wasn't born Dec. 25, who was?

"25 December was by the fourth century CE the date of the winter solstice, celebrated in antiquity as the birthday of Mithras and of Sol Invictus" (*The Oxford Companion to the Bible* edited by Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, 1993, p. 112). Mithras and Sol Invictus were names of sun gods. Those who celebrate Christmas are actually marking the rebirth of the sun and are unwittingly worshipping a sun god!

Does it matter to Christ if we celebrate his birthday on a day pagans used to celebrate the rebirth of the sun? Absolutely! In his pre-incarnate state, He told Israel not to worship him as pagans worshiped their gods (Deut. 12:30-32). The Apostle Paul tells us Christians not to mix our worship with that of pagans (2 Cor. 6:14-18).



North Korea Tests Huge Rocket Engine

"Kim Jong-un is headed to the moon.

"That, at least, is one of the official North Korean explanations for the testing last week of a rocket engine that, if as powerful as the North claims, would rival the commercial rockets ... to fire payloads into space.

"Inside the United States' intelligence agencies, though, there is considerable skepticism that North Korea is truly eager to plant a flag on the lunar landscape. The agencies are exploring another explanation: That Mr. Kim, the North Korean leader, is racing ahead ... to develop a way for its growing arsenal of nuclear weapons to reach New York and Washington" ("To the Moon, North Korea? Or Does a Rocket Have a Darker Aim?" by David Sanger and William Broad, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Sept. 26, 2016, p. 1).

A nuclear armed North Korea could be part of the prophesied "kings from the east" that will attack the king of the North (Europe) when it occupies the Holy Land at Christ's return (Dan. 11:40-44, Rev. 9:13-16, 16:12-16).

Quakes Strike Italy, New Zealand & Japan

"An earthquake, believed to be the strongest to hit Italy since 1980, struck the center of the country on Sunday [Oct. 30], four days after two back-to-back quakes severely damaged buildings and left thousands homeless in the area. The temblor on Sunday also caused fresh damage to the towns destroyed by a quake that killed nearly 300 people in August.

"The quake, which had a magnitude of 6.5, according to Italy's national geophysical and volcanology institute, struck at 7:41 a.m. with its epicenter near Norcia ("Italy, Already Rattled, Is Struck by Another Powerful Quake" by Elisabetta Povoledo, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Oct. 30, 2016, p. 1).

Two weeks later New Zealand was struck: "A powerful earthquake measuring 7.8 magnitude hit the east coast

of New Zealand's South Island early Monday [Nov. 13], causing tsunami waves and killing at least two people, officials said.

"Hours later, another strong quake measuring 6.4 magnitude struck the same region, northeast of Christchurch, around the small town of Hammer Springs, according to Geoscience Australia" ("New Zealand Struck by Powerful Earthquake" by Michelle Innes, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Nov. 13, 2016, p. 1).

"There was no avoiding fearful memories of the Japanese nuclear disaster of 2011 on Tuesday morning [Nov. 22] after a powerful quake off the coast of Fukushima caused a cooling system in a nuclear power plant to stop, leaving more than 2,500 spent uranium fuel rods at risk of overheating.

"But this time, the Tokyo Electric Power Company ... restored the cooling pump at the Fukushima Daini plant in about an hour and a half. ...

"[T]he Tuesday quake ... had a magnitude of 7.4, according to the Japanese weather service" ("New Quake Tests Resilience, and Faith, in Japan's Nuclear Plants" by Motoko Rich, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Nov. 22, 2016, p. 1).

"Earthquakes in various places" is one of the signs we are nearing Christ's return (Mat. 24:3, 7).

Ebola Virus Mutates

"The Ebola epidemic that tore through West Africa in 2014 claimed 11,310 lives, far more than any previous outbreak. A combination of factors contributed to the savagery, among them a mobile population, crumbling public health systems, official neglect and hazardous burial practices.

"But new research suggests another impetus: The virus may have evolved a new weapon against its human hosts. ... [A] genetic mutation may have made Ebola more deadly by improving the virus's ability to enter human cells" ("Ebola Evolved Into Deadlier Enemy During the African Epidemic" by Carl Zimmer, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Nov. 3, 2016, p. 1).

"Pestilences" are a sign we are nearing Christ's return (Mat. 24:3, 7).