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A Time Line Countdown Leading Up to Jesus' Birth - Part B

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A TIME LINE COUNTDOWN LEADING TO THE INCARNATION & BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST (PART B)

11

When: 735 B.C.

Where: Moresbeth-gath (a town near Jerusalem)

What: *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting”* (Micah 5:2).

Who: Micah

Comment: This is the first reference in regards to the birthplace of the Messiah. The first mention of the city itself is found in Genesis 35:19 where Rachel, Jacob’s beloved wife, died giving birth to Benjamin.

12

When: At least two years before Jesus was born in 5 B.C.

Where: Persia

What: *“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men”* (Matt. 2:1, 2, 7, 16).

Who: Wise men

Comment: This marks the first occasion where Jesus was called the King of the Jews. The final can be seen in John 19:19: *“Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”*

- On both occasions, an evil tyrant was involved:
 1. First: King Herod
 2. Final: Governor Pilate
- The words were spoken at the first and written at the second.
- Worship of the Savior was the theme of the first, while ridicule in regards to the second.

“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots and the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.’ The soldiers

also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, 'If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself'" (Luke 23:34-37).

13

When: Fifteen months before the birth of Jesus in 5 B.C.

Where: Jerusalem temple

What: *"But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.' Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, 'Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.' Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth"* (Luke 1:13, 24-26).

Who: Zacharias

Comment: This is the first of four divine "fear not" reassurances in regards to the incarnation story. On each occasion it seems the angel Gabriel was involved:

- To Zacharias, promising him and his barren wife Elisabeth a son (Lk. 1:13)
- To Mary, announcing she had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah (Lk. 1:30)
- To Joseph, explaining to him the purity of his pregnant wife (Mt. 1:20)
- To some frightened shepherds, announcing the birth of the Messiah (Lk. 2:10)

14

When: Nine months before Jesus was born

Where: Nazareth

What: *"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth"* (Luke 1:26).

Who: Mary

Comment: In this extended passage (Lk. 1:26-38), Gabriel informs her of the following:

- His revelation
 1. That she was highly favored by God
 2. That even though a virgin, she would give birth to a son
 3. That His name would be Jesus
 4. That He would be great, and known as the Son of the Most High
 5. That He would be given a kingdom which would never end
 6. That her aged cousin Elisabeth was already carrying a special child in her womb

- Her response

"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her" (Lk. 1:38).

15

When: Eight months before the birth of Jesus

Where: A small village in Judea

What: *“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord’” (Luke 1:39-45).*

Who: Mary and Elisabeth

Comment: Upon learning of Elisabeth’s condition Mary leaves Nazareth to visit her in an area near Jerusalem.

16

When: Five months before the birth of Jesus

Where: Mary returns to Nazareth from her visit with Elisabeth

What: *“And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house” (Luke 1:56).*

Who: Mary

Comment: However, for some unknown reason, upon arriving back in Nazareth, Mary does not tell Joseph concerning her pregnancy.

17

When: Four months prior to Jesus’ birth

Where: Nazareth

What: *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS” (Matt. 1:18-25).*

Who: Joseph and Gabriel

Comment: Joseph arranged to make Mary his full, legal wife. Joseph must be considered by all standards of measurement a truly just man, with the spiritual maturity of a David, Moses, or Paul. In fact, the New Testament Joseph may be favorably compared to the Old Testament Joseph. Both had fathers named Jacob.

18

When: One month

Where: En route from Nazareth to Bethlehem

What: *“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered”* (Luke 2:1).

Who: Mary and Joseph

Comment: This records the third of four all-important journeys to Bethlehem, leading to the incarnation event:

- First trip: Involving Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1:19)
This resulted in Ruth meeting and marrying Boaz. Thus, this couple would later become the great-grandparents of King David (Ruth 4:17-22).
- Second trip: Involving the prophet Samuel
At God’s command he goes to Bethlehem and there is commanded to anoint a seventeen year old shepherd lad named David as future king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:11-13).
- Third trip: Involving Joseph and Mary
- Fourth trip: Involving the wise men (Matt. 2:1-6)

19

When: Twenty-four hours prior to the birth of Jesus

Where: Bethlehem

What: *“And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn”* (Luke 2:7).

Who: Mary, Joseph, and the innkeeper

Comment: Note especially the phrase, *“ . . . there was no room for them in the inn.”* These words, perhaps as no others prompt us to ask in regards to the glorious incarnation story, *“Have I made room for Him in my life?”*

Hymn writer, C. C. Williams, may have had this passage in mind when he composed the following lyrics:

Have You Any Room for Jesus?

Have you any room for Jesus,
He who bore your load of sin?
As He knocks and asks admission,
Sinners, will you let Him in?

Refrain

*Room for Jesus, King of Glory!
Hasten now His Word obey;
Swing the heart's door widely open,
Bid Him enter while you may.*

Room for pleasure, room for business,
But for Christ the Crucified,
Not a place that He can enter,
In the heart for which He died?

Refrain

Have you any room for Jesus,
As in grace He calls again?
O today is time accepted,
Tomorrow you may call in vain.

Refrain

Room and time now give to Jesus,
Soon will pass God's day of grace;
Soon thy heart left cold and silent,
And thy Savior's pleading cease.

Refrain