



Christmas: A day in history

1. Jesus would have been born between 7 and 4 BC. Why? Because extra-Biblical sources tell us that Herod the Great died in March or April of 4 BC. This would put Jesus' death to 27–30 AD, which doesn't conflict with any of the reigns of Pontius Pilate (procurator over Judea from 26–36 AD), Caiaphas (high priest from 18–37 AD), Herod Antipas (Tetrarch of Galilee & Perea from 4 BC–39 AD), or Tiberius Caesar (ruling the Roman empire from 14–37 AD).
2. There is no extra-Biblical record of Herod's "Massacre of the Innocents" (Matthew 2:16-20) in Bethlehem. However, it is known historically that Herod had several of his own children, and one of his wives, killed, for fear that they would overthrow him. And Josephus writes that Herod commanded a large group of distinguished men to come to Jericho, and he gave order that they should be killed at the time of his death so that the displays of grief that he craved would take place. Fortunately for them, Herod's son Archilaus and sister Salome did not carry out this wish.
3. There are no extra-Biblical records concerning the Roman census of Luke 2:1, but there are records of other censuses taking place in other years. Based on those records some scholars have calculated that the Romans tended to take a census at regular intervals, which would mean a census would have been ordered at around 8–7 BC.
4. Caesar Augustus ruled from 31 BC–14 AD. (*Luke 2:1*) However, it is known that Quirinius was governor of Syria from 6 AD to 10 AD, too late to accommodate the birth of Christ. Some scholars believe that Quirinius served two terms as governor, though no extra-Biblical source corroborates that. Other scholars believe that Luke has been misinterpreted, and that either Quirinius was a Legate at the time (ruling in a different capacity), or, that the text should read "*this was the first census that took place prior to Quirinius being governor of Syria*".
5. It is thought that the star the wise men saw might have been an alignment of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces, which happened in 7 BC, and the alignment of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn in 6 BC, that began in Pisces but moved to the constellation Aries later in the year. Jupiter was known to astrologers as the King's planet, and Pisces and Aries were both constellations associated with the Hebrew people, as was the planet Saturn.

Seen on the web... www.max7.org

Great children's ministry website --- tons of resources suitable for children's ministry, Sunday School, etc: all free, downloadable --- Bible lessons, puzzles, games, videos, more... also features resources in ten different East Indian dialects!

Ideas for Advent

1. Make a Jesse Tree

A Jesse tree is traditionally a portrait of Jesus' family tree as outlined in Matthew 1, using an actual tree as a template.

In current years it has become a way of teaching children some of the familiar Bible stories, using the 25 days of advent as a means of sharing 25 Bible passages.

Symbolic ornaments of each story are crafted and placed on a tree each day in December. By the time the Christmas story is read on December 25th, you have a fully decorated Christmas tree.

For template ideas, go to

www.shalfleet.net/advent/jesseeetree.htm

2. Make an Advent Chain

Make 25 paper chain links and hang it from the ceiling. Each paper link contains a daily scripture and an instruction. Every day in December, one link is removed, the scripture is read, and the instruction followed. Here are examples:

Christmas is...

1. A time of sharing: John 3:1-21
- do something nice for someone
2. A time for memories: Luke 1:68-79
- share a favourite Christmas memory
3. A time for greetings: Luke 1:39-55
- phone someone you haven't talked to in awhile
4. A time for charity: Matthew 25:31-40
- donate to your favourite charity
5. A time for visiting: Romans 15:1-7
- visit a shut-in
6. A time of hope: John 14:1-6
- share a time of answered prayer
7. A time of faith: Isaiah 55:6-11
- share a prayer request, and pray
8. A time of promise: Galatians 3:23– 4:7
- share your favourite scripture promise
9. A time for light: 1 John 1
- decorate with Christmas lights
10. A time for music: Psalm 150
- sing a verse of your favourite carol
11. A time for being in touch: John 15:1-11
- send an encouraging note to someone
12. A time for singing: Colossians 3:12-17
- go carolling
13. A time for family: Luke 1:5-80
- play a game together
14. A time for baking: John 6:32-40
- bake cookies together