

I have included this recent evidence as significant in our understanding of when Jesus may have been born. We know from the scriptures that Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great, and shortly before his death.

Herod was believed to have died in 4 or 5 BC, but now this may have to be reconsidered. However, the fact is there are just so many imponderables to make a conclusive decision about the actual date of Christ's birth, so that no one can be certain. Most calculations are based upon the Hebrew calendar with postponements, which did not exist at the time of Christ and we have no record of the actual sighting of the moon during this period, which would have determined the date of Passover, together with the arrival of abib barley, the determinant of the month of Abib.

An Age of Discovery, by Samuel Martin, Century One Foundation

In 1966 a professor named W.E. Filmer published a paper stating his belief that Jesus was born in 3 or 2 BC and that Herod died in 1 BC, which is a very different date than most scholars today accept. Most scholars believe King Herod died in 4BC. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus is crucial in this debate. In Filmer's paper, he noted that an 18th century monk had seen editions of Josephus, which pointed to the possibility that a different year was referenced than appears in most printed editions of Josephus today.

David Beyer, a layman with an interest in ancient history, took it upon himself to travel to the British Museum and the Library of Congress and physically check 46 separate editions of Josephus. To make a long story short, his research proved that 18th century monk correct! There was a scribal error identified to have happened in 1544. All editions of Josephus published before 1544 had the number correct. This one error has thrown off the understanding of this dark decade of history, but now many scholars agree with Mr. Beyer, including the late Professor Jack Finegan, the recognized authority on Biblical Chronology and the author the "Handbook of Biblical Chronology."

The efforts of this one lay person revolutionized the study of this important time period when Jesus was born. Mr. Beyer only published his research officially in 1995, so this is all very new, however, the point is, this was unknown a few short years ago, yet we now have more facts to help understand the Gospel narratives about the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

We are now in a period of time which in some ways resembles the time when St. Paul lived. During that time, new mechanisms were created to disseminate information that was before that time not in existence. For example, it has been noted in the important book, "The Birth of the Codex" by Skeat and Roberts, that the modern form of book that we have today, with leaves attached to a spine positioned between two covers, was created in the last part of the First Century. Scholars are now realizing that this development came from the Christian community. In fact, we can point to St. Paul as the inventor of the book form that we have today (for more information on this, please be in touch with me). This allowed for a revolution in knowledge and organization of information at that time. You no longer needed to carry around cumbersome and expensive scrolls made of animal skins or of papyrus to have your books. You could now have them

organized in a single volume and in a specific order. This was a revolution in knowledge which gave access to information to so many including the common person on the street.

This is happening again today due to one development - the Internet. The Internet is the modern equivalent as an invention of what the codex form of book was in ancient times. As was the case in ancient times, the playing field was levelled. Now information of a religious nature could be secured by so many more people. Men and women could access it. It was no longer restricted to priests who could enter temples. Now women had access, just like men. This was, of course, started by Jesus himself. Joachim Jeremias, speaking about Jesus and his custom of allowing women to follow Him, said it was "an unprecedented happening in the history of that time" and the consequence was that one of them, Mary Magdalene, not Peter, was the first to witness Jesus's resurrection from the dead." (John Stambaugh & David Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment* p.104)

This was a change at that time and it is a change again today. Now the playing field of scholarship and information is open to all without restriction and information is flowing like never before. Don't think we have reached the plateau. Far from it! This is especially the case for theological knowledge. The changes taking place are dramatic and far reaching. It is really an exciting time to be alive if one is interested in theology. I can even say that some of the whispers that I hear today in the halls of academia here in Jerusalem will in some cases not come out officially for the next 3-5 years and some of these discoveries are really amazing. Stay tuned!

Let us note that almost on a daily basis here in Israel archaeological discoveries are being made, but while physical discoveries are being made in the field with spades, tractors and digging implements, new discoveries are also being made in libraries on university campuses and other places around this world. Thankfully, some forward thinking presses are embracing this new trend in knowledge and taking risks to see the cause of learning advanced by allowing scholars (like Bailey among thousands of others) to share their new ideas with us. Thank God that this is happening, because truth will be advanced because of this. And what is this new truth going to show? It is going to show that that good old Book, known as the Holy Bible was, is and always will be God's Holy Word to mankind:

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."