

Some scientists say that really we humans have no free will and all that we do is determined by tradition, social custom, and environment. Let's face it. There's a lot of truth in that. We're locked into some pretty solid customs at Christmas and though people complain every year about the crass commercialism, the hectic shopping, the pressure to buy presents for everybody, and get all the decorations up including the tree, people still just keep on doing it every year. Why? Because it's a custom.

Now customs can be good or bad. If enough people decided to stop doing one, obviously it would no longer be a custom. But people like getting gifts, even if they don't like buying them, and enough people believe that the story of Bethlehem is important enough that they'll put up with all the pagan trappings that have swaddled around the birth of the Savior of the world. But keeping Christmas is not commanded in the Bible. The person of Santa Claus is a myth, as is his North Pole home and band of elves, not to



mention Comet and Dasher.

In Christian theology it's the scenes of Jesus' death and resurrection that carry important meaning; the death is commemorated by the communion service and the resurrection is a daily reminder that we must walk in newness of life. The birth of Christ is not made central in the theology of Paul, Peter, and especially John. And yet we keep on keeping Christmas because of the custom.

This custom can be traced to the pagan Roman holiday named Saturnalia, and from sun worship, since Christmas comes just after the winter solstice, when the sun is being "born again." The days get shorter and shorter as December progresses, until they are shortest about December 21. By observation with the eye, which is all the ancients had before telescopes, the sun could noticeably be seen being longer in the sky by about December 25. Thus any worries about the sun not showing its face in its December decreases were shattered when its increases were observed about December 25. The sun is "born again!" An ancient sun-worshipping custom was started.

Jesus was not born on December 25. He was born at a time when shepherds would be out with their flocks at night, which is not in December, even in Palestine. Christian oral tradition says that Jesus was born on September 29. In the calendar of the church of England September 29 is listed as the feast of St. Michael. A close study of the name "Michael" in the Old and New Testaments reveals that "Michael" is Christ. For instance, "Michael" is mentioned at Revelation 12:7 as head of the angels who cast out Lucifer from heaven. Only Christ would have the ultimate authority to do that. In Jude 9 we are told that Michael the archangel disputed with Satan about the body of Moses. Only Christ could rightfully engage Satan in such a debate. Further, the title "archangel" means the "head of the angels." That is Christ. Thus the feast of St. Michael, on September 29, is really a commemoration of Christ's birth into this world, His incarnation as Jesus from Nazareth.

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This famous sentence, beginning John's gospel, is a clear revelation that Christ was with God the Father from eternity, and was God Himself, reigning with the Father. Thus the word "incarnation", from the same root as "carnal", meaning "flesh", is used to refer to the most astounding of historical events; God Himself taking human flesh in the womb of Mary! The Creator and Sustainer of the Universe laying in donkey's feed box, a helpless babe!

"When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a women..."(Gal. 4:4)

"The days were completed for her to give birth."(Luke 2:6)

These two scriptures seem to indicate that the time of Jesus' birth was fully planned in the foreknowledge of God. Why September 29?

In 4 B.C., the year Jesus was born, the 10th of Tishri fell on September 29 of our present calendar. That day was Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. Jesus was born on Yom Kippur! God so loved the world that He gave it an offering for all its sins. The Day of Atonement was, and is, the most solemn Jewish feast day. The people were to fast and afflict their souls before God, in anticipation of the High Priest's exit from the temple's Most Holy Place. When he finally came forth it was evidence that their sins had been purged away, and all was made right with God.

God instituted this special feast at Mount Sinai for the purpose of getting the worshippers looking by faith to that day when the Messiah would come and put away all sin. But the Jews had let selfishness and pride all but obliterate the Divine purpose in their religious calendar. So while many worshippers massed upon the temple site (like the Muslims of our day to Mecca), blindly obeying a religious habit, waiting for the High Priest to come forth, it was a few humble shepherds only who saw the true High Priest after he had come forth from the most holy place of Mary's womb!

One of the Levitical stipulations for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, was that the high priest would remove his beautiful, glorious garments, and put on the white linen garb of the common priests. (Lev. 16:4, 23) The symbolism is plain: the Son of God would lay aside His royal robes, and leave the adoration of all the angels in the bliss of Heaven, and clothe Himself with humanity and share in the dismal lot of humankind. "And the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us..." (John 1:14) Christ's birth in Bethlehem was thus the beginning of the true Yom Kippur, God's initial "making good" on His promise to redeem the race. The headlines in Heaven certainly read: "Son of God takes human flesh! First beachhead established in Operation Redemption."

There were many distant visitors sojourning at this time in the vicinity of Jerusalem for the Tishri feasts, especially the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles. The Roman government probably planned the census enrollment during these feasts to ease their administration. Bethlehem was seething with people returned for the enrollment. All the rooms in the famous city and its environs were booked up. And who is making room for Him who is Lord of Lords and King of Kings? Where is the eager anticipation among the people of God for Him who was to fulfill all that was written in Moses and the Prophets? Where is the earnest seeking of the long-promised Messiah?

"And she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a feeding box, because there was no room for Him in the inn." (Luke 2:7)

Oh sublime paradox and lofty contradiction! Food indeed for the deepest meditation!



When the wise men had come through Jerusalem and inquired of the Jewish theologians, they were quick to inform the Oriental astrologers that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem:

4 And when he (Herod) had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, "In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.'" (Matthew 2:4-6)

But there is no record that these Bible-smart theologians asked the magi if they could travel with them to see their Messiah. There is no record that they gladly sent messengers to Bethlehem to tell the common people: "Get excited! The prophecy of Micah about the Messiah being born in your town is likely to soon be fulfilled! Congratulations! Keep your eyes open." No. Too often pride rules in the heart of men, even in (especially in?) men with lofty religious profession.

Since we know Jesus was not born on December 25, what reason is there to continue the custom of gift-giving? Must we admit that we are simply going the way of Rome, engaged in Saturnalia, or can we find yet a godly rationale for this holiday we love? In His unique way, the God of Heaven has turned this pagan feast day into a day to glorify Himself! For if we count 280 days, the length of human gestation, back from September 29, it comes to December 25! Mary was inseminated by the Holy Spirit on this day! What a gift that was, causing her forever to be blessed of women!

It is customary in the Orient to consider one's birthdate the date of conception. Following this Oriental custom, Jesus WAS born on December 25!

The genealogy of Christ has some very interesting turns. And if we can spend time charting the likes of the genealogy of the house of Windsor, certainly we can spend a moment contemplating the Savior's. Rahab, mentioned at Matthew 1:5, in the lineage between Abraham and David, was a harlot. Ruth, also mentioned there, was a pagan. How could it be that Christ "avoided" all this "bad blood?" How is it that Christ was born sinless, the thoroughbred and pedigree of Heaven, uncontaminated by all the sin and guilt stemming from Adam's fall, while the ancestors of His blood line were obviously fallen human beings carrying the "original sin" characterizing all humans since Adam's fall? (See Romans 5:15-19)

There have been various attempts to try and "save" Jesus from this dilemma.

**THE CATHOLIC INVENTION.** The Catholic formulation is probably the most desperate attempt. The doctrine of the immaculate conception teaches that Mary was without sin through a special miracle of God. Now that this Catholic doctrine has Mary perfect, it is easy to find a way for Jesus to be perfect and avoid the taint of "original sin." But there is no evidence for this incredulous doctrine. It is certainly anti-Biblical. Mary herself says in the Magnificat that she rejoiced in her "Savior." (Luke 1:47) Evidently she needed a Savior. Perfect people do not need a Savior.

**DR. MORRIS.** Henry Morris, the dean of creation scientists in America, and a noted Bible commentator, has suggested in his notes on the Psalms, that God implanted a Divinely inseminated ovum in Mary's womb. This formulation, too, finds a way to get Jesus sinless. But it ignores the many prophecies that say that the Messiah would have to be the SEED of Abraham and the SEED of David. A divinely implanted ovum would not truly be the biological seed of Abraham or David.

**HEPPENSTAL.** Dr. Edward Heppenstal, another theologian, has postulated that sin is not biological, and thus the sin-nature of Jesus' ancestors would not effect him. But this is a difficult position to defend when, for instance, the Second Commandment says:

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20: 4-6)

Romans 5:15-19 also says that death passes to all men because of Adam's sin, and death is certainly biological! Heppenstal's formulation, then, seems to fall short of providing the key to explaining how the Son of God could be a human like us, and yet avoid the taint of original sin.

**BAD BOY THESIS.** Another suggestion by some theologians is simply to give up the attempt to solve the dilemma and say that Jesus DID inherit mankind's fallen nature, the same as every other descendant of Adam. But by this configuration, Jesus would have tendencies to sin inherited from his ancestors. In some families it is demonic harassment, in some it is alcoholism, in some excessive anger, in some it is sexual deviance, abuse and lust, etc. This hardly seems to be the "solution" needed, because if Jesus had innate desires to sin, such as lusting after a woman, then, according to Jesus Himself in the Sermon on the Mount, He has committed sin already, and thus He is in no position to be the Savior of the world. He would stand in need of a Savior Himself.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION. I have one suggestion to offer, which would provide a means to allow all the biblical evidence to stand, would allow Jesus to be born "perfect" and would still allow Him to be the seed of Mary (not, of course, of Joseph). Some conditions in humans are sex-linked, such as the bleeding disease, hemophilia. The gene for hemophilia is located on the X chromosome, the female sex chromosome. Females have two X chromosomes; males have one X and one Y chromosome, the latter containing little genetic information. Males who inherit a hemophilia gene on their X chromosome suffer the disease. Because the gene is recessive, females with a gene for hemophilia on one X chromosome and a normal gene on the other can transmit the disease to their male offspring but are themselves protected from its effects. It is interesting, considering our subject, that one form of hemophilia is called "Christmas disease." Since sex-linking occurs in some diseases, why not the "disease" of "original sin?"

Everyone who has a father would have the disease of original sin, because it is passed through men (the same as hemophilia is passed through women); and every human being has had a human father except for Adam and Jesus. (Eve would be in a special situation also...) Jesus is called the second Adam. Thus Jesus is sent to redeem the human race where it had fallen: in Adam. Jesus is placed in a similar condition to the first Adam. He has a Divine Father. If "original sin" is transmitted through men, then Jesus avoids this condition because Joseph was not His biological father. The above is just a suggestion. It doesn't fall into the problems of the other formulations, and it has the advantage of not only squaring with the Bible, but also with the phenomena of nature, presumably caused by God, of certain-sex transfer of various conditions. But since it is only a suggestion, I rest my case on faith.

I believe that Jesus is the seed of Mary, the seed of David, the seed of Abraham. I believe He is free of the taint of sin-nature plaguing the rest of the human race. I believe He is fully God and fully man. I believe that He is aware of the temptations we experience as humans because He was human. In fact He is still NOW human since at 1 Timothy 2:5 He is called a "man!"

Jesus fulfilled several prophecies in a unique way. First He had to be in the kingly line of David, for the Messiah must have right to David's throne. Joseph, Mary's husband, was descended from David through his son, King Solomon. Because of this Joseph could transfer legally to Jesus his claim to David's throne, without being His biological father. Indeed, if Joseph had been Jesus' biological father, Jesus could not be the Messiah, because there was a curse spoken over Solomon's line by the prophet Jeremiah, which stated that NO descendant of Jehoiakim or Jehoichin could sit on the throne of David. If Jesus would have been of the seed of Joseph he would have been a descendant of Jehoiakim and Jehoichin (these curses are spoken at Jeremiah 22:30 and 36:30) and thus could not lay claim to David's throne. Yet Jesus had to be of the "seed of David" to fulfill prophecies the likes of Psalm 132:11:

"The LORD made a promise to David, a sure promise that he will not take back. He promised, 'I will make one of your descendants rule as king after you.'"

Jesus became the literal "seed" of David through Mary, his mother, who was descended from David, but not through the line of Solomon but rather through David's son Nathan. Thus her womb provided the means to fulfill the seed promise, but not the throne promise, which only Joseph could provide.

The prophecy of Micah 5:2 necessitated that the Messiah be born in Bethlehem. Micah also wrote there that this One would be a "ruler" who had been "going forth" from "everlasting". Thus the prophet tells us that the One born in Bethlehem was also pre-existent, from eternity. Liberal theologians, Jehovah's Witnesses and others who deny this wonderful truth have not properly apprehended who Jesus really is. Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.



There is a mystery in the dreidel, unbeknownst to the Jewish children who will be playing it all around the world this Hanukkah, a mystery directly related to the subject at hand. The dreidel, which is like a spinning top, has 4 Hebrew letters on its faces, each standing for a word and a number value. The meaning of the 4 words is "A GREAT SIGN HAPPENED THERE."



Their numerical value is 358.

The ancient rabbis pursued the science of gematria, which derives meaning from the numerical value of words. A rabbi so trained would look for the meaning of the value **358**. There are three distinct uses of that value in the Bible, that refer to the **Messiah**. The first is the Hebrew word translated "messiah" at Dan. 9:25. It has a numerical value of **358**.

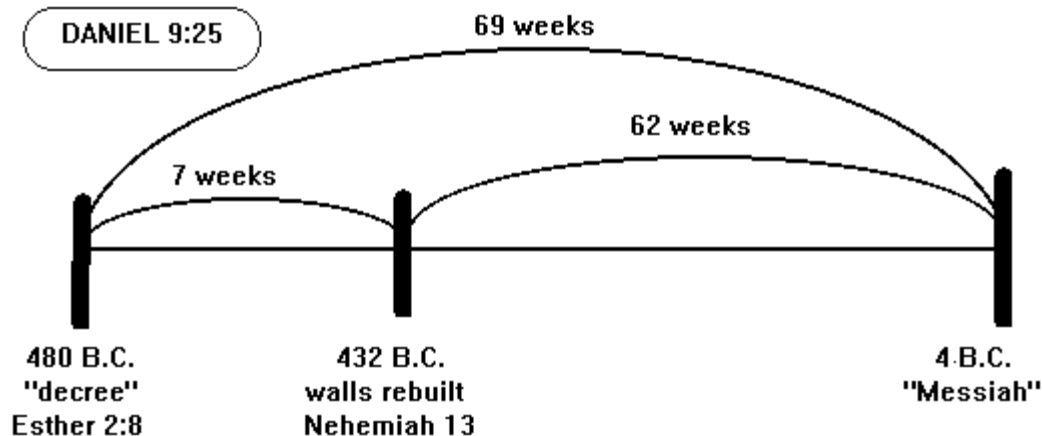
In Genesis 49:10 is a prophecy which uses "Shiloh" to refer to the messiah. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah...until Shiloh comes." (Genesis 49:10) The ancient rabbis agreed that "Shiloh" refers to the Messiah and the value of yeba Shiloh, "Shiloh comes", is **358**. "The sceptre" here refers to kingly rulership, which departed from Judah in 70 A.D. Thus the Messiah must have come before then. Of course, Jesus did. Shiloh has come!

A third use of a messianic word for Messiah with a value of **358** is *nachash*. This word means "serpent" at Numbers 21:9, and Jesus used it to refer to Himself at John 3:14. ("Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, the Son of Man must also be lifted up.") Thus we can see God's purpose in providentially allowing the dreidel numbers to equal **358**. The meaning of the words "A GREAT SIGN HAPPENED THERE" must refer to the Messiah. This phraseology would instinctively lead a Jew to Isaiah's prophecy:

"The Lord Himself will give you a SIGN: Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

Immanuel, God with us! Matthew uses this prophecy to refer to Jesus' birth, in Bethlehem. Thus the great sign is the virgin birth of God (for Immanuel means "God with us", Matt. 1:23). A great sign indeed!!! Our minds are dull and slow to fathom this wonderful thing.

There is a most remarkable prophecy that reveals centuries beforehand the very year Jesus would be born. Most modern scholars agree that He was born in 4 B.C. Since many major events of the Bible happen according to definite time prophecies (120 years to the flood Gen. 3:6, the 400 years of sojourn of Abraham's seed Gen. 15:13, the 70 year captivity Jer. 25:11) it should be no marvel that the date of birth of the Son of God Himself is revealed in Scripture. But it is revealed spiritually, according to the Biblical dictum "Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned". Certainly the Incarnation is the most spiritual and sublime of truths. The 70 week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 is the source of revelation of Christ's nativity.



**7 weeks= 49 days of 360 days=17,640 days**  
**17,640 divided by 365.25 = 48.3 years**

In verse 25 we are told that from a "decree" to rebuild Jerusalem until the "Messiah" will be 69 weeks. There are 483 days in 69 weeks. Now a day often represents a year in Bible prophecy (see Ezekiel 4:6) so "69 weeks" can equal "483 years". It is also a traditionally established axiom of prophetic interpretation that a prophetic year contains 360 days. Thus 483 "prophetic years" would only be 476 of our current years of 365.5 days. (483 X 360 days divided by 365.5 equals 476.) Thus we should expect to find that from a "decree" until the Messiah that there will be 476 years, and indeed we find this. For Queen Esther is issued a "decree" (same Hebrew word as in Dan. 9:25) at Esther 2:8. Since Esther can typify Jerusalem spiritually (since women often represent God's people, see Jer. 6:2, Rev. 12 and Mark 3:34 and 35) here we have a decree to restore Jerusalem, spiritually speaking. This decree was issued in 480 B.C. Counting 476 years, we come to 4 B.C., the birth year of the Messiah, Jesus in Bethlehem. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Romans 11:33

There are several other indications of a 4 B.C. birth for Jesus. Luke 2:2 says that Quirinius was governor of Syria when the census of Caesar was taken. Quirinius was governor from 4 B.C. to 1 B.C. and the register was commenced during the first year of his reign. Also, the Jerome Biblical Commentary lists 27 A.D. as the year that Jesus began His public ministry and since He was 30 at that time (Luke 3:23 and Number 4:3), He would have to have been born in 4 B.C. (Remember there is no zero year when calculating from A.D. to B.C.) Furthermore, there are well-known special planetary conjunctions in 7 and 6 B.C. that led the wise men to Jesus in 4 B.C. Herod asked the wise men intensely about their star-gazing. He based his command for baby boys two years old and under to be killed from this round of questioning. This squares with the conjunctions of 7 and 6 B.C. which led the wise men to look for some grand event.

The conjunction involved Venus, Saturn and Mars. To the wise men this would have indicated that a Messiah (Venus) was to be born among the Jews (long associated by astrologers with Saturn) with intense persecution (Mars, the symbol of war and opposition; this would be Herod's reaction). God honored their searching by giving them a supernatural star in the heavens which led them to Jesus.

Have you been led to Him? Wise men still seek Him.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**