Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Editor,

Call me a heretic, but Jesus Christ was not born on December 25th. The date was already popular in pagan religious celebrations as the birthday of the sun. The Gospel of Luke actually suggests that Jesus may have been born in the summer or early fall. Since December is cold and rainy in Judea, it is likely the shepherds would have sought shelter for their flocks at night and Roman censuses were not taken in the winter, when temperatures often dropped below freezing and roads were in poor condition.

“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 there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” Luke 2:1,8. Accordingly, it was traditional for the shepherds of that region to send their sheep to field from the spring until the beginning of October.

Biblical accounts indicate the fall of the year as the most likely time of Jesus’ birth, based on the conception and birth of John the Baptist. His mother Elizabeth was six months pregnant when Christ was conceived (Luke 1:24-36). John’s father, Zacharias, was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during the course of Abijah - father (i.e., “possessor or worshipper”) of Jehovah.

During this time of temple service, Zacharias learned that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child (Luke 1:8-13). If John’s conception took place near the end of June, nine months later brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for his birth. Adding another six months (the difference in ages between John and Jesus) brings us to the end of September as the likely time of Jesus’ birth.

Because most New Testament Scholars date the death of King Herod the Great to 4 B.C. that would also place the birth of Jesus in close proximity since Herod played a major role in the narrative of Jesus’ birth. Jesus was born before Herod died. When he was told by the Magi of the birth, Herod gave orders to kill all male children in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

Two dating systems were in use at the time of Julius Caesar in A.D. 46. One was his new Julian calendar and the other calendar began with the year Rome was established in 753 B.C. A mathematically-minded monk named Dionysius Exiguus invented the concept of A.D. and decided that Christ was born in A.D. 1. This system was adopted approximately 200 years later in Europe.

While December 25th is an American holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, the Easter holiday is the celebration of the death and resurrection of the Savior, another date that is unresolved. When the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be, only the Father knows according to Jesus.

In any case, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Mervyn Tilden
Gallup, NM