Using John the Baptist's Conception for Jesus' Birth Date: Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D, Ph.D

Luke 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of **the course of Abia** (trans. from Greek, Heb. = Abijah): and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

Luke 1:8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God **in the order of his course**, ...

Luke 1:23 …as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

Luke 1:24 And after those days his wife **Elisabeth conceived**, ...

On God's instructions (1 Chr. 28:11-13), King David had divided the sons of Aaron into 24 groups called "courses" (1 Chr. 24:1-4) so that the Temple of the Lord would be staffed with priests all year for its service (1 Chr. 24:7-19, 2 Chr. 23:8). The 24 courses of priests were:

1 Chr 24:7	1. Jehoiarib	2. Jedaiah
1 Chr 24:8	3. Harim	4. Seorim
1 Chr 24:9	5. Malchijah	6. Mijamin
1 Chr 24:10	7. Hakkoz	**8. Abijah**
1 Chr 24:11	9. Jeshuah	10. Shecaniah
1 Chr 24:12	11. Eliashib	12. Jakim
1 Chr 24:13	13. Huppah	14. Jeshebeab
1 Chr 24:14	15. Bilgah	16. Immer
1 Chr 24:15	17. Hezir	18. Aphses
1 Chr 24:16	19. Pethahiah	20. Jehezekel
1 Chr 24:17	21. Jachim	22. Gamul
1 Chr 24:18	23. Delaiah	24. Maaziah

> Each group served Sabbath to Sabbath twice during the year
> (2 x 24 = 48 weeks per year).
> All the priests would also serve during:
>   Passover
>   Pentecost
>   Tabernacles. (Deu. 16:16)
> These 48 + 3 = 51 weeks are about the mean length of the Hebrew 354 day lunar-solar year.

Scripture absolutely depicts the Hebrews as using a *Nisan*-to-*Nisan* year;[1] thus, the priestly courses began on the first Sabbath of *Nisan* (their first month). In 6 BC, that was the 6th of *Nisan* (Mar. 25 Gregorian). Zacharias was of the 8th course (1 Chr. 24:1 & 10), but due to Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, his first ministration was delayed such that it didn't end until c.17 *Sivan* (June 3, Gregorian). Were Jesus born during this administration, His birth would have fallen around September 10, 5 BC[2] – at least 10 days before the Feast of Trumpets. However, a fall birth presents several thorny, seemingly fatal problems.[3]

During his 2nd ministration, Zacharias had to serve at the Temple until *Chisleu* 12 (Nov. 21 Gregorian). His departure had been delayed a week as he had to serve at the Feast of Tabernacles (Hebrew month 7, day 15 = *Tishri* 15, 6 BC = Sept. 26, 6 BC). Estimating 4 days for the aged Zacharias to return home in the Judean hills (Luk. 1:39, c.25 miles), John the Baptist would have been conceived c.Nov. 26, 6 BC (and born between August 21-Sept. 9, BC 5).

Six months after John's conception (c.183 days), Jesus would have been conceived c.21 *Iyyar* 5 BC (May 26, Gregorian: Luk. 1:24-36). As the normal human gestation span is 270-290 days, His birth would fall between Feb. 19 and Mar. 10 of 4 BC. To limit our error, we take the mean of 270-290 and go 280 days to Jesus' birth – *Adar* 5 = c.1 Mar., 4 BC. This is as precise as the biblical data will allow for our Lord's birth – an exact date is impossible.[4] The Passover of 4 BC fell on April 9, a Wednesday (Gregorian).

As Christ's Birth was c.1 March, 4 BC (Greg.): if we now add 10,957 days [30 solar years (His age when He began His ministry–Luk. 3:1 & 23) times 365.2422 (the number of days in a solar year)] to 1,278 days (3½ solar years, the length of His ministration) we arrive at 12,235 days. If we now divide the 12,235 days by 365.2422 (the days in a solar year) we obtain 33½ years – Jesus' age at His crucifixion.

---

[1] Floyd Nolen Jones, *Chronology of the Old Testament* (2016), pp. 106 ff. and 116 ff.

[2] As the crops were not yet ripe at the 12th new moon in BC 5 (Harvard Center for Astrophysics computer calendar program), the OT Jews made Adar 59 days long (F. Jones, *Chronology*, pp. 107-109). If not realized, all calculations will be wrong.

[3] Jones, *Chronology*, (2016), pp. 213-214 & 216-217.

[4] Herod left Jerusalem and went to Jericho the day of a March 11, 4 BC lunar eclipse (Gregorian) and died there c.19 days later just before Passover – yet had been in Jerusalem when the wise men came (Jos. *Ant*.17.6.1-3; Mat. 2:1-3, 19-20). This well fits our March 1 BC 4 date, as Christ was born before Herod died and thus *before* this lunar eclipse. His birth could not have been much before as this would fall well into February, and shepherds would not then be in the field tending sheep (Luk. 2:8).

Finally, although many so believe, Jesus' birth could *not* have been on Passover day, Pentecost or Tabernacles because all the Hebrew males were required to be in Jerusalem during those days (Deu. 16:16): but at the time of the Nativity all the men had to go "into his own (i.e., *ancestral*) city" to be taxed (Luk. 2:3).