

Appendix 4A, Detail A

Year of Death of Herod the Great and Year of Birth of (Miriam/Mary [A]-) Jesus

The questions of the years in which Herod the Great died and Jesus was born have yielded extensive scholarly exposition. The general range of estimations place (a) at the earliest, Jesus' birth c. 6 to 4 b.c./b.c.e. and Herod's death c. 4 b.c./b.c.e.; (b) at the latest, Jesus' birth c. 2 b.c./b.c.e and Herod's death, c. 1 b.c./b.c.e. to 1 a.d./c.e.

The varying theories all rest upon the following:¹

- (1) A moon eclipse, reported by *Josephus* as occurring not long before Herod's death. Three moon eclipses, one in 4 b.c.e. and two in 1 b.c.e., are of record in the extended timeframe.
- (2) A Roman registration/census and a taxation conducted by one Cyrenius/² Quirinius. While only one Quirinius appearance in Judaea is fixed by the record in 6 c.e., there is some evidence (but also burdened by uncertainty) that he was administratively involved in the region as early as 12 b.c.e., possibly serving in differing capacities at different times.

To employ Quirinius' involvements in calculations depends fully, however, on acceptance of item (3).

- (3) *Luke's* report that Jesus' birth took place at Bethlehem because Joseph was required there to be present for a registration/census conducted by Quirinius, "hegemon of Syria;" and *Matthew's* report that, afterwards, Joseph took the family from Bethlehem temporarily to Egypt, on learning that Herod had ordered destruction of all male children two years and under in Bethlehem's region.

To accept the *Luke* and *Matthew* reports would not mean, necessarily, that Jesus was close to two years old at the time of Herod's order; but it could indicate that enough time had intervened to cause Herod to blanket two years.

1. Herod the Great - Age At and Year of Death - Related Quotations.

Herod, at the time his father made him governor in the Galilee, was:

- (a) "age 15,"
or
(b) age 25—suggested (as by *Josephus'*editor) as the age *Josephus* actually intended. *AJ XIV.VIII.2.*

As to Rome's designation of Herod to be king, before he had conquered Antigonus

¹ Relevant quotations are in parts 1 and 2 below; uncited data is drawn from this book's narratives.

² "Cyrenius" (an appointee of Caesar Augustus) in Greek is rendered *Quirinius*. "*Quirinius Sulpitius, a Roman consul..., appointed governor of Syria....*" L 527.

³ E.g. (a) "[T]he *Dictionnaire du Nouveau Testament* in Crampton's French Bible (1939 ed., p. 360) says: 'The scholarly researches of Zumpt (*Commentat. epigraph.*, II, 86-104; *De Syria romana provincia*, 97-98) and of Mommsen (*Res gestae divi Augusti*) place beyond doubt that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria.'" (b) "In the *Chronographus Anni CCCLIII*, a list of Roman consuls, the name of Quirinius appears in 12 B.C.E." Secular sources--primarily certain inscriptions found at Antioch and Rome--provide the basis for accepting that Quirinius administered provincial duties more than once. *Aid*, pp. 1363-64.

II, Herod “obtained it on the 184th olympiad, when Caius Domitius Calvinus was consul the second time, and Caius Asinius Pollio [sic.].” AJ XIV.XIV.5.

The four years of the 184th olympiad were [776 - (183 x 4 =) 732 =]
44, 43, 42, and 41 b.c.e.

Textwise, after Herod’s return from Rome’s hearing of the cause of Alexander III and Aristobulus IV, it is reported that “[a]but this time it was that Cesarea Sebaste was finished...the twenty-eighth year of Herod’s reign, and into the hundred and ninety-second Olympiad.” AJ XVI.V.1.

The four years of the 192nd olympiad were [776 - (191 x 4 =) 764 =]
12, 11, 10 and 9 b.c.e.

The immediate timeframe of Herod’s death is defined by *text sequencing of*.

(a) “Now Herod’s distemper became more and more severe...[being] almost seventy.... ...[T]he grief also that Antipater [III] was still alive aggravated his disease, whom he resolved to put to death...as soon as he should be well again....” Wars I.XXXIII.1.
followed textwise by

(b) a “certain popular” sedition,⁵ after which Herod “deprived Matthias of the high priesthood...and burnt the other Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was a eclipse of the moon.” AJ XVII.VI.4.

It is not said whether the moon eclipse was partial or full.

A partial eclipse of the moon occurred in 4 b.c.e. on the night of March
12/13 (about two weeks before that year’s Passover).⁶

A full eclipse of the moon occurred in 1 b.c.e. on January 7 (Gregorian calendar) or 9 (Julian calendar).

A partial eclipse of the moon also occurred in December of 1 b.c.e.

During Herod’s last days, a period incalculable from the texts:

(a) He received word that Rome left it up to him whether to banish Antipater III or have him slain;
(b) He revived a bit; then, “overborne by his pains,” he threatened suicide. The tumult that followed caused Antipater III, believing his father had died, to bribe jailers to release him. The prison keeper informed Herod, who, “although he was at death’s door,” commanded his guards “to kill Antipater without any further delay....” AJ XVII.VII.1.

Herod: (a) “died the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain;” Herod
“survived the slaughter of his son five days;”

(b) “reigned thirty-four years since he had caused Antigonus [II] to be slain”/
“procured Antigonus to be slain;”

(c) having reigned “thirty-seven years since he had been declared king by the
Romans.” AJ XVII.VIII.1, Wars I.XXXIII.8.

After Herod’s death:

(a) His successor-son Archelaus mourned seven days and then gave a feast for “the multitude,” after which at a meeting of principal persons he received strong urgings for retributions for various acts wrought by his father.

⁴ After “Pollio” in the quotation, *Josephus’* editor adds “[the first time].” Lempriere 170 (list of consuls) names Calvinus and Pollio only once, together, AUC 714, but that translates to 38 b.c.e., in the 185th olympiad--see Appendix 3A, VI, Attachment 1, B (1) (c), concerning year conversions.

⁵ Refer to Appendix 4B, III for details.

⁶ The position of *Josephus’* editor, which follows this passage, is that “this eclipse of the moon...is of the greatest consequence for the determination of the time for the death of Herod [the Great] and Antipater [III], and for the birth...of Jesus.... It happened March 13th, in the year of the Julian period 4710, and the 4th year before the Christian era.”

(b) Archelaus attempted to postpone issues, in that he was preparing to go to Rome to secure confirmation of his kingship. He was beset by more strident demands, and the sedition worsened.

(c) “[T]he feast of unleavened bread...was now at hand, ...called the Passover,” and “an innumerable multitude...came” from out of the country into the city.

(d) Serious hostilities erupted. Archelaus dealt with it severely, after which he “went down now to the sea-side” to embark for Rome.

Wars II.I.1-3, II.II.1.

2. Jesus Year of Birth - Related Quotations.

“[W]ent out a decree beside Caesar Augustus to be getting registered all the inhabited [country]...this registration *first* occurred being hegemon⁷ of the Syria Quirinius, and they were going their way all to be getting registered, each into of himself city. Went up also Joseph, from the Galilee out of city Nazareth into the Judea into city of David which is being called Bethlehem,” the city of his father and his house. “It occurred...there were fulfilled the days...to give birth.., and she [Mary A] gave birth to the son of her....”

Luke 2:1-7 (italics supplied).

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem “[i]n the three hundred and ninth year of the era of Alexander, when [Caesar] Augustus published a decree that all persons should go to be taxed in their own country.”⁸

First Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus (apocryphal), I:4.

“[W]ent out a decree...to be...registered all the inhabited [country]...this registration first occurred being hegemon of the Syria Quirinius.... Went up also Joseph, from the Gaililee out of city Nazareth into the Judea into city of David which is being called Bethlehem.” “It occurred...there were fulfilled the days...to give birth.., and she gave birth to the son of her....”

Luke 2:1-7.

“Jesus...generated in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king.” *Matthew 2:1.*

“High priests/”magi” from the East arrived at Jerusalem and began to ask , ““Where is the [one] born king of the Jews?”” Herod the Great questioned “all the chief priests and scribes of the people...where...? The[y] but said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of the Judea.’”

Matthew 2:2-5.

“Then Herod secretly having called the magi...sent them into Bethlehem,” instructing them when they found Jesus to “report back to me.” Instead of returning to Herod, “through another way they withdrew into the country of them.”

Matthew 2:7-9, 12.

After they had withdrawn, Joseph was convinced by a dream to take “along the young child and the mother of it of night and withdr[a]w into Egypt,” in that Herod was seeking “to destroy” the child.

Matthew 2:13-14.

When the magi failed to return to Herod, he, “enraged,” “took up all the boys the (ones) in Bethlehem and in all the districts of it from two years and down more.” Herod calculated the period “two years and down” “according to the time which he carefully ascertained” by the appearance of the magi.

Matthew 2:16.

After Herod’s death, Joseph “took along the young child and the mother...and entered into the land of Israel.” Hearing, however, “that Archelaus is reigning of the Judea,” he “became afraid there to depart” and instead “withdrew into the parts of the Galilee, and...he settled into city...Nazareth.”

Matthew 2:21-23.

“Cyrenius, a Roman senator...had gone through other magistracies...till he had been

⁷ This Greek word is translated as “governor” in the text quoted here, but also basically was used for a variety of officials such as legates, procurators, etc.

⁸ *Lost Books*, p. 38.

consul, and one...of great dignity, [and he] came into Syria, with a few others, being sent by [Augustus] Caesar to be a judge of that nation, and to take account of their substance. Coponius...a man of the equestrian order, was sent together with him, to have the supreme power over the Jews. Moreover [later?], Cyrenius came himself into Judea...now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substances, and to dispose of Archelaus's [Herod's first successor's] money...." "...Cyrenius, one that had been consul, was sent by [Augustus] Caesar to take account of people's effects in Syria, and to sell the house of Archelaus."

AJ XVIII.I.1, XVII.XII.5.

"...stood up Judas the Galilean in the days of the [second?] registration and made stand off the people behind him...."

Acts 5:37.

When Archelaus' "country was laid to the province of Syria," "Cyrenius...disposed of Archelaus's money, and ...the taxings were come to a conclusion, which were made in the thirty-seventh year of Caesar's [Augustus's] victory over Antony at Actium."

AJ XVIII.II.1.

The generally accepted year for Actium is 31 b.c.e.,⁹ according to which 37 years would yield 6 c.e.

(3) Herod the Great Year of Death - Exploration.

(a) Based on Reign-Related Data.

	b.c.e.	-----age-----
Herod became governor of Galilee c.	¹⁰ 47	
At age reported by Josephus:		15
At Josephus' editor's suggested 'corrected' age:		25
Herod designated by Rome to be king in	¹¹ 41	<u>+ 6</u> 21 <u>+ 6</u> 31
Herod reigned 37 years from Rome's designation of him as king	<u>-37</u>	<u>+37</u> <u>+37</u>
Projected date of death and age, based on Herod-related data:	4 b.c.e.	58 68
Year of one moon eclipse:	4 b.c.e.	

There is not precise correlation, however, between 41 b.c.e. as the year of Herod's designation to be king, and Josephus' statement that Caesarea Sebaste was completed in Herod's "28th" regnal year which fell "into the 192nd olympiad"--41 b.c.e. - 28 = 13 b.c.e.-- while the four years of the 192nd olympiad would have been 12, 11, 10, 9 b.c. A similar one-year imprecision occurs when the stated 34 years of Herod's reign, after his conquest of Antigonus II and taking Jerusalem, are deducted from a total reign of 37 years. There the year yielded for Herod's death is (37 - 34 =) 3 b.c.e., which could be accounted for in an 'overlap' of months.

The proposed change in Herod's age from 15 to 25, when he became governor in the Galilee, does correspond well with his reported age at death of almost 70. (Based on the above approximate timetable, Herod would have been born c. 72 b.c.e.)

(b) Based on Other Data.

The year of Herod's death only can be related to a Quirinius involvement if the Luke 2 report is accepted.

⁹ Refer to Appendix 4A at 31 b.c.e.

¹⁰ This estimated date is drawn from dates assigned to Julius Caesar's ascendance over Pompey and ensuing events--refer to Appendix 4A for that period.

¹¹ This year can be found also assigned generally to 40 b.c.e., e.g. Ency. 102.

If the *Luke* 2 report is not accepted, a moon eclipse remains the sole dating factor. In that case, Herod's death could have occurred in c. 1 b.c.e. or 1 c.e.--see the summary table below in (4)(c).

A question related to *which* eclipse involves the passage of time compared to intervening events, between Herod's death and the Passover reported textwise after Archelaus took office. If the eclipse was that of 4 b.c., then Herod's death, a seven-day mourning period, Archelaus' feast for the people, and the ensuing uprising all would have occurred in some two to three weeks' time. If the eclipse was either one of the two occurring in 1 b.c.e., the intervening time would have been more than two and three months, respectively.

(4) Birth of Jesus - Exploration.

(a) Discounting the *Matthew* 2 and *Luke* 2 Reports.

If the *Matthew* and *Luke* reports are not taken into account, the date of Herod's death is of no use in calculating the year of Jesus' birth.

(b) Crediting the *Matthew* 2 and *Luke* 2 Reports.

The pivotal point in this instance is the Quirinius involvement. The *Josephus* language above (AJ XVIII.I.1, XVII.XII.5) does not preclude that Quirinius was involved more than once with administrative affairs in Judaea, or that a registration commenced prior to Herod's death. The use of the word "first" in *Luke*'s reference to registration, *vis-a-vis* the word "registration" in *Acts* relative to the later rebellion of Judas the Galilean, admits the possibility of two (or ongoing) administrative activities.

Obviously, the c. 6 c.e. completion of taxations if taken as Quirinius' sole involvement, is well before both 4 b.c.e. and 1 b.c.e. - 1 c.e. as potential dates of Herod's death. (Further, there then would have been no need for Joseph to flee from a murderous order by Herod, already outlived by Archelaus' term in office.) Conversely, posing 6 b.c.e. as the year both of registration and Jesus' birth implies 12 years between registration and the 6 c.e. taxations.

In summary, even when earlier Quirinius involvement is accepted, the year of Jesus' birth cannot be confirmed. In that regard, some attention is drawn by the statement in the apocryphal *Infancy*, that Caesar Augustus issued a taxation decree "[i]n the three hundred and ninth year of the era of Alexander." Alexander the Great's reign commenced c. 336 b.c.e.,¹² too early for use as the "era" referenced. If it is theorized that what was meant was the "era of the Greeks," it can be equated with the "era of the Seleucidae," which commenced 312 b.c.e.;¹³ and the year then indicated by *Infancy* would be 2 b.c.e.

(c) Data Comparison.

The following simply demonstrates how the unknown variables apply equally to the primary estimations:

Quirinius registration?	?
Proposed year of birth of Jesus	6 or 5 b.c.e.
Herod command to kill infants?	?
Escape to Egypt?	?
Moon eclipse March	4 b.c.e.
Death of Herod (before Passover)	4 b.c.e,

¹² Refer to Appendix 3A, IV.

¹³ Refer to Appendix 3A, VI, Attachment 1, B, Calendrical Conversions.

Quirinius registration?	?
<u>Proposed year of birth of Jesus</u>	<u>2 b.c.e.</u>
Herod command to kill infants?	?
Escape to Egypt?	?
Moon eclipse January	1 b.c.e.
Death of Herod (before Passover)	1 b.c.e.
Quirinius registration?	?
<u>Proposed year of birth of Jesus</u>	<u>2 b.c.e.</u>
Herod command to kill infants?	?
Escape to Egypt?	?
Moon eclipse December	1 b.c.e.
Death of Herod (before Passover)	1 c.e.

(5) Year of Death of Jesus.

Even if Jesus' birth year were known,¹⁴ the year in which he died would not be deducible from the present record.

The theory that Jesus died in 33 c.e. selects 2 b.c.e. as the birth year and conjectures the following factors:

- (a) that Jesus entered rabbinical work "commencing as if of years thirty" (*Luke 3:23*) --seen as correspondent with *Leviticus 4:2-3, 22-23 and 29-30*, when Moses numbered sons of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari for priestly services (book one);
- (b) that Jesus was "of years 12," when he accompanied his parents to a passover at Jerusalem (*Luke 2:42*);
- (c) arbitrary assignments of lengths of time to Jesus' reported adult travels and activities;

and by

- (d) combining all of the foregoing with the report that Jesus' involvement with John the baptizer occurred in "year...five and tenth of the governorship of Tiberius Caesar" (*Luke 3:1-2*). The reign of Caesar Tiberius *CDN* has been placed at 14 - 37 c.e., yielding c. 28/29 c.e. as his 15th year.¹⁵

¹⁴ e.g. "However punctiliously...celebrate[d is] Jesus' birth each 25 December, not only the date but also the year of his birth are unknown, and on present evidence unknowable."

Wilson, p. 54.

¹⁵ Refer to Appendix 4A, Attachment 1,