

**The Inscrutable Question: Angelic Service to Christ in the Incarnation, Mt. 2:13-23; Mk 1:13; Mt 28:1-7; Acts 1:9-11; Rev 5:11-14**

Meyer, Peter. "The Julian and the Gregorian Calendars." Internet:  
[www.magnet.ch/serendipity/hermetic/cal\\_stud/cal\\_art.htm](http://www.magnet.ch/serendipity/hermetic/cal_stud/cal_art.htm)

#### (i) The Julian Calendar

Originally the Romans numbered years *ab urbe condita*, that is, "from the founding of the city" (of Rome, where much of the character of the modern world had its beginnings). The calendar which Julius Caesar adopted in the year 709 a.u.c. (what we now call 46 B.C.) was identical to the Alexandrian Aristarchus' calendar of 239 B.C., and consisted of a solar year of twelve months and of 365 days with an extra day every fourth year.

Julius Caesar wanted to start the year on the Spring Equinox or the Winter Solstice, but the Senate, which traditionally took office on January 1st, the start of the Roman civil calendar year, wanted to keep January 1st as the start of the year, and Caesar yielded in a political compromise.

The Roman date-keepers initially misunderstood Caesar's instructions concerning the new calendar ... every third year following 43 B.C. (i.e. 40 B.C., 37 B.C., etc.) was a leap year, until 10 B.C., after which, according to this hypothesis, Augustus Caesar (Julius Caesar's successor) suspended leap years, reinstating them with the leap year of 4 A.D.

The system of numbering years *A.D.* (for "Anno Domini") was instituted in about the year 527 A.D. by the Roman abbot Dionysius Exiguus, who reckoned that the Incarnation had occurred on March 25 in the year 754 a.u.c., with the birth of Jesus occurring nine months later. Thus the year 754 a.u.c. was designated by him as the year 1 A.D. It is generally thought that his estimate of the time of this event was off by a few years.

#### (ii) The Gregorian Reform

The average length of a year in the Julian Calendar is 365.25 days (one additional day being added every four years). This is significantly different from the "real" length of the solar year. However, there is uncertainty among astronomers as to what the length of the solar year really is. The main competing values seem to be the "mean tropical year" of 365.2422 days ("mean solar days") and the "vernal equinox year" of 365.2424 days. The difference of the length of the Julian calendar year from the length of the real solar year is thus 0.0078 days (11.23 minutes) in the former case and 0.0076 days (10.94 minutes) in the latter case.

Whatever, this error accumulates so that after about 131 years the calendar is out of sync with the equinoxes and solstices by one day. Thus as the centuries passed the Julian Calendar became increasingly inaccurate with respect to the seasons. This was especially troubling to the Roman Catholic Church because it affected the determination of the date of Easter, which, by the 16th Century, was well on the way to slipping into Summer.

Pope Gregory XIII on 1582-02-24 he issued a papal bull establishing what is now called the Gregorian Calendar reform. The Gregorian reform consisted of the following:

Ten days were omitted from the calendar, and it was decreed that the day following (Thursday) October 4, 1582 (which is October 5, 1582, in the old calendar) would thenceforth be known as (Friday) October 15, 1582.

The rule for leap years was changed. In the Julian Calendar a year is a leap year if it is divisible by 4. **In the Gregorian Calendar a year is a leap year if either (i) it is divisible by 4 but not by 100 or (ii) it is divisible by 400.** In other words, a year which is divisible by 4 is a leap year unless it is divisible by 100 but not by 400 (in which case it is not a leap year). Thus the years 1600 and 2000 are leap years, but 1700, 1800, 1900 and 2100 are not.

#### (iii) Adoption of the Gregorian Calendar

The Gregorian Calendar was adopted immediately upon the promulgation of Pope Gregory's decree in the Catholic countries of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Poland, and shortly thereafter in France and Luxembourg. Hungary followed in 1587. The rest of the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland made the change during 1699 to 1701. By the time the British were ready to go along with the rest of Europe, the old calendar had drifted off by one more day, requiring a correction of eleven days, rather than ten. The Gregorian Calendar was adopted in Britain (and in the British colonies) in 1752, with (Wednesday) September 2, 1752, being followed immediately by (Thursday) September 14, 1752.

To complicate matters further New Year's Day, the first day of the new year, was celebrated in different countries, and sometimes by different groups of people within the same country, on either January 1, March 1, March 25 or December 25. January 1 (decreed by Pope Gregory) seems to have been the usual date but there was no standard observed. With the introduction of the Gregorian Calendar in Britain and the colonies New Year's Day was generally observed on January 1. Previously in the colonies it was common for March 24 of one year to be followed by March 25 of the next year. This explains why, with the calendrical reform and the shift of New Year's Day from March 25 back to January 1, the year of George Washington's birth changed from 1731 to 1732. In the Julian Calendar his birthdate is 1731-02-11 but in the Gregorian Calendar it is 1732-02-22.

Sweden adopted the Gregorian Calendar in 1753, Japan in 1873, Egypt in 1875, Eastern Europe during 1912 to 1919 and Turkey in 1927. Following the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia it was decreed that thirteen days would be omitted from the calendar, the day following January 31, 1918, O.S. becoming February 14, 1918, N.S.

The Gregorian Calendar is the calendar which is currently in use in all Western and Westernized countries, and Dionysius Exiguus's system of numbering years A.D. has endured to the present time.

The abbreviation **A.D.** is short for "Anni Domini Nostri Jesu Christi", i.e., "in the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ". January 1, 1 AD is "usually taken" to be the start of the first Christian millennium, but a case could be made for January 1st, 1 BC.

**Meyer, Peter. "When Does the New Millennium Begin?" Internet:**  
[www.magnet.ch/serendipity/hermetic/cal\\_stud/newmill.htm](http://www.magnet.ch/serendipity/hermetic/cal_stud/newmill.htm)

"When Does the New Millennium Begin?" is a question which arouses great controversy, divides families and causes sleepless nights. I hope that this article will dispel the confusion which surrounds this question, and allow the reader to make an informed choice.

Most experts in calendrical matters will answer that the new millennium begins on the 1st of January in the year 2001, despite the fact that this answer is not the one that most people would like to hear (because, despite what the experts say, they intend to celebrate the new millennium on 1st January 2000). So let us first look at why the experts generally maintain this view. Then we can consider whether we wish to agree with them.

Since the "Anno Domini" system did not come into effect until the 6th Century A.D. it is artificial to speak of the years 1 A.D., 100 A.D., etc., because people living at that time knew nothing of this system of numbering years (since it had not then been invented yet). Furthermore the Romans in the reign of Augustus (27 B.C. to 14 A.D.) were somewhat lax in the proper observance of leap years. But we can project backwards (and forwards) from 525 A.D. Then we can say that the period from 1 A.D. through 10 A.D. was a period of ten years. Similarly from 1 A.D. through 100 A.D. is a period of 100 years, and from 1 A.D. to 1000 A.D. is a period of 1000 years. The word "millennium" means "a period of 1000 years" so we can conclude that the period from 1 A.D. through 1000 A.D. constituted one millennium, and in fact, the first millennium of the Christian era. So the second millennium of the Christian era begins with the year 1001 A.D., or more exactly, on 1st January 1001 A.D. And the third millennium of the Christian era begins on 1st January 2001 A.D.

So for Christians — or at least, for all who adhere to the Christian system of numbering years — the answer is clear: The new millennium begins on 1st January 2001 A.D.

A millennium is, by definition, a period of 1000 years. But it is no part of the definition that a millennium must begin or end with a particular year number. If we adopt the astronomical year numbering system then we can begin the "first" millennium with year 0 just as well as with year 1. Why not? For non-Christians there is no reason why not.

Within a millennium we may distinguish centuries as, for example: 1900 through 1999, the "twentieth" century; 2000 through 2099, the "twenty-first" century; 2100 through 2199, the "twenty-second" century, and so on. Within centuries we have, for example, that 1990 through 1999 is the tenth decade of the 20th century, and 2000 through 2009 is the first decade of the 21st century.

It is thus clear that the answer to the question as to when the new millennium begins depends on which system of year-numbering one chooses to use. Christians may prefer to stay with the system of years "Anno Domini", in which case they must answer that the new millennium begins on 1st January 2001 A.D. Scientists and others who prefer a more rational and useful system of numbering years may prefer to adopt explicitly the astronomical system. In this case they are free to begin millennia from the years 1, 1001, 2001, and so on (in which case the third millennium begins on 1st January 2001), or from the years 0, 1000, 2000, and so on (in which case the third millennium begins on 1st January 2000).

Whatever! It's still the 20<sup>th</sup> century according to the Gregorian calendar which is the one we use, the Rapture hasn't occurred, and we're not dead. In fact, it has been over 2,000 years since Herod gave the order to execute the Christ Child. That occurred when the Lord was between one and two years of age. We learn about Herod's decree to "massacre the innocents" in Bethlehem and the angelic protection of our Lord in:

**Matthew 2:13** - Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.

1. The angel's instructions include a mandate to take the Child and His mother to Egypt and to remain there until he, Joseph, receives further instructions.
2. The angel also gives Joseph information as to why he is being ordered out of the country, "Herod is going to search for the Child in order to destroy Him."
3. Also notice the verb phrase, "is going to search." It is made up of the present active indicative of μέλλω / *mello* / , which means, "to be about to do something." It is followed by the present active infinitive of the verb ζητέω / *zeteo* / , and it means, "to search."
4. Herod is about to search for the Child. The angel is informed by God of these impending circumstances and is instructed to get the Christ Child out of harm's way before Herod issues his decree. After delivering the message, Joseph responds accordingly:

**Matthew 2:14** - And Joseph arose and took the Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt;

**v 15** - and was there until the death of Herod [ 4 B.C. ], that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, [ **Hosea 11:1b** ] "Out of Egypt did I call My Son."

5. At the death of Herod the angel went to Joseph and instructed him to move his family back to Israel.

**Matthew 2:19** - But when Herod was dead an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying,

**v 20** - "Arise and take the Child and His mother and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."

6. As stated earlier, there is quite a bit of controversy over the actual year and date of Herod's death. The arguments are based on extra-biblical information compared with other lunar eclipses that took place between March 23, 5 B.C. and January 10, 1 B.C.

However, if we accept the 4 B.C. date for the death of Herod then we can determine to some degree the date for the Virgin Birth. For this we reference:

**Finegan, Jack. *Handbook of Biblical Chronology: Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible*. Rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998) 297:**

As to the bearing on chronology of Herod's slaughter of the male children of Bethlehem "who were two years old or under" (according to Matthew 2:16), this suggests that what the wise men told Herod made him think that Jesus was already anything up to two years old, thus was born up to two years before. That time was obviously somewhat prior to Herod's death, and if that death was early in the year 4 B.C. the two years or less would point back to 6 or 5 B.C. That the magi came when Jesus was two years old was an opinion held by some of the early Christian writers. Passages found in Origen, Eusebius, and Epiphanius / Ep-i-FAY-ne-us / state that Jesus was two years old when the wise men came and when he was taken to Egypt, that he remained in Egypt for two years and was four years old when he returned from there, and that the return was in the first year of Archelaus / Arc-a-LAY-us / and the forty-first year of Augustus.

7. According to extra-biblical information the actual date of the Virgin Birth was in mid-winter, somewhere between December 25th and January 6<sup>th</sup> of the year 6 or 5 B.C. Our Lord's exit from Egypt therefore occurred in the spring of 4 B.C.
8. After leaving Egypt and returning to Judea, Joseph received additional guidance from the angel as to where he was to settle his family.

**Matthew 2:21 - And Joseph arose and took the Child and His mother and came into the land of Israel.**

**v 22 - But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned *by God* in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee.**

**v 23 - and came and resided in a city called Nazareth.**

9. Note that verse 22 states that Joseph was "warned *by God* in a dream." This quotation is taken from the New American Standard Version and the prepositional phrase, *by God* is printed in italic. The King James Version prints it in regular Roman type while the New International Version omits it altogether.
  10. The Greek text does not contain the noun for God which is **Θεός / Theos /**. In the English translations, the NASV stays with the original King James Version but indicates it is not in the original manuscript by the use of italic type. The NIV correctly omits the phrase.
  11. Thus we have our angelic messenger back on the scene for the fourth time. Joseph's first encounter with him was in Matthew 1:20-21 when the angel informed him of the virgin pregnancy of Mary.
  12. The second and third we have noted. In verse 13 Joseph is told to take his family and flee to Egypt. In verse 20 he is told at the death of Herod the Great to return to Israel. Finally, in verse 22 Joseph is instructed to settle in Nazareth.
- 5) The next occasion where we find angels serving the Lord in the Incarnation is following His ordeal in the Jornada, which included the temptations by Satan.

**Mark 1:13 - And Jesus was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to Him.**

1. The resurrection finds angels in attendance at the tomb. Christ did not need the stone to be rolled away from the door in order for Him to exit it in resurrection body. But the women and disciples who would come and visit the grave did need such assistance as we can see in:

**Matthew 28:1** - Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

**v 2** - And behold a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

**v 3** - And his appearance was like lightning and his garment was white as snow,

**v 4** - and the guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

**v 5** - And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

**v 6** - "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.

**v 7** - "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

2. At the conclusion of the Incarnation, the Lord ascended from the Mount of Olives in the presence of His apostles and accompanied by angels. Two angels were left behind to confirm to the apostles that what they saw was the Lord's ascension into heaven.

**Acts 1:9** - After he had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

**v 10** - And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them;

**v 11** - and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (See Zechariah 14:4)

3. And finally, as we have already noted, the angels worship Christ Who is seated on His throne in the third heaven.

**Revelation 5:11** - [NIV] Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels [ **rank and file elect angels** ], numbering thousands upon thousands and then thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne along with the living creatures [ **the four angelic heralds** ] and the twenty-four elders [ **the angelic general staff** ].

**v 12** - In a loud voice they sang, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

**v 13** - Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them, singing: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!"

**v 14** - And the four angelic heralds said, "Amen," and the twenty-four angelic staff officers fell down and worshiped.

- 6) The final category of angelic service will be their ministry to mankind. The major passages for this we have already studied and will only repeat them here:

**Psalms 91:11** - He will give His angels charge concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

**Hebrews 1:14** - Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?