

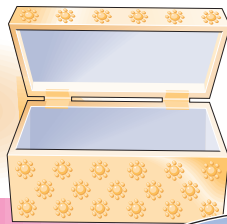
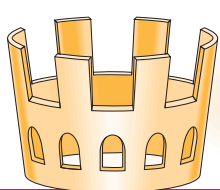
THE BIRTH OF JESUS NATIVITY

The only thing certain about the events surrounding the Nativity is that no one can be sure of the facts. The truth is lost in the mists of history. When was Jesus Christ born? Who were the wise men and where did they come from? Was the Star of Bethlehem a comet, a nova or a coming together of the planets...



WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

Known as **Magi** (from the Greek '**Magoi**' – wise men) they are most likely astrologers from Babylon. Skilled in astronomy and mathematics, these scholars are aware of the prediction that a 'King of the Jews' – a Messiah – will be born at about this time. The wise men, reported to number between two and fourteen, journey to Bethlehem to pay homage in Persian fashion to a future great king



GIFTS FOR A KING

The wise men present symbolic gifts to Jesus – gold for a king, incense for a God and myrrh for a man destined to redeem the world through suffering.

Gold: Coins have been in circulation since 450 BC.

Frankincense: Resinous gum with a bitter taste collected from the sap of the Boswellia family of trees. Burns with a steady flame giving off a pleasing scent

Myrrh: Mixture of aromatic resins, used at royal anointings, as a perfume and for embalming. Mixed with wine, it is given as a narcotic to condemned criminals before crucifixion

STAR OF BETHLEHEM

The 'star' appears three times, first to alert the wise men to begin their journey, a second time during the journey and finally when they are in Jerusalem, to direct them to Bethlehem.

May, 7 BC: The first of the triple conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn appears as a bright double star amid the constellation of Pisces. This is interpreted as evidence of the birth of the Messiah.

October to December: The second and third conjunctions take place. From Jerusalem the star is positioned high in the sky to the south, appearing directly over Bethlehem

8 BC

CENSUS ANNOUNCED

7 BC

THE STAR APPEARS

6 BC

CENSUS COMPLETE

5 BC

4 BC

HEROD DIES

People return to their place of birth for census

Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus orders census to calculate taxes. Jews must pay both poll tax and land tax. The census and tax collection takes up to two years to complete

Travels of the wise men

Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem for census

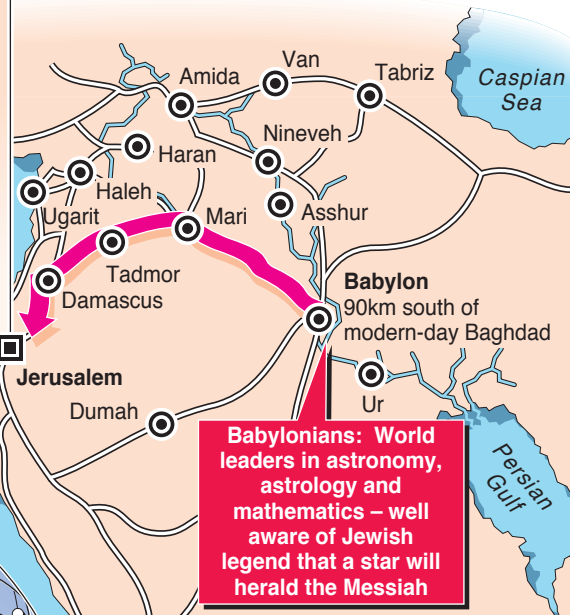
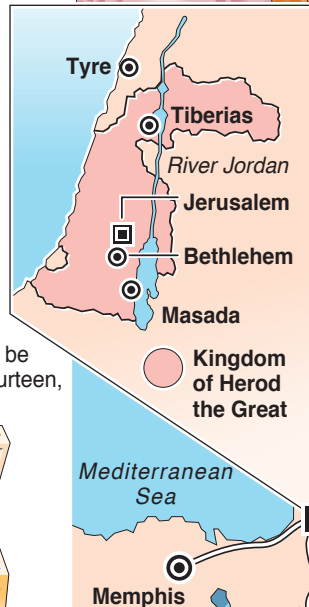
September, 7 BC:
Probable birth of Jesus

MASSACRE OF THE INFANTS

There is no evidence that Herod slaughters all children under two years of age in Bethlehem in an attempt to kill the new-born 'King of the Jews'. It does, however, fit the character of a man whose reign is steeped in blood, including that of his own son

Since it is known that Jesus was born during Herod's rule the birth has to have taken place in the four year period between the announcement of the census and the death of Herod

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Babylonians: World leaders in astronomy, astrology and mathematics – well aware of Jewish legend that a star will herald the Messiah

THE ROUTE OF THE MAGI

Following the appearance of the star – the first conjunction occurs on 27 May, 7 BC – the wise men decide to travel to Jerusalem to visit King Herod and seek the Messiah. At least a month is spent in preparation; buying stores, hiring men and camels for the journey.

The 'Fertile Crescent': The most likely route is the trade route from oasis to oasis. This 1,200km journey takes a camel train on average between four and five months to complete.

The star: The triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn results in the star appearing twice more during their journey. The second conjunction is on 6 October and the third on 1 December