

## Appendix 2

**Clement of Alexandria and the date of Jesus' birth**<sup>1</sup>

Clement of Alexandria (wrote 193-215 AD) is the other writer with a claim to being the earliest person to date the birth of Jesus. In his work entitled "Stromata" he writes:

From the birth of Christ, therefore, to the death of Commodus are, in all, 194 years, 1 month, 13 days. And there are those who have determined not only the year of our Savior's genesis, but even the day, which they say took place in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Pachon... And treating of his passion, with very great accuracy, some say that it took place in the sixteenth year of Tiberius, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Phamenoth, but others the 25<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi and others say that on the 19<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi the Savior suffered. Indeed, others say that he came to be on the 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi." ~ *Stromata* 1.21.145-146<sup>2</sup>

Here is a summary of the dates Clement gives for Jesus, conception, birth, and death:

Conception=24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi;<sup>3</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> of Pachon

Birth=194 years, 1 month, 13 days from the death of Commodus

Death=25<sup>th</sup> of Phamenoth; 19<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi

Clement's dates for Jesus' life are difficult to determine because he may have used a mobile Egyptian calendar<sup>4</sup> and because he gives different dates for Commodus' reign in other places in this work<sup>5</sup>. However, one can safely conclude that Clement seems to be using the same method of calculating Jesus' conception, birth, and death as Hippolytus.

Clearly Clement believed that Jesus died on the Passover which he places on either the 25<sup>th</sup> of Phamenoth, the Vernal Equinox in the Egyptian Calendar<sup>6</sup>, or the 19<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi. He further believes that Jesus was conceived on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Pachon or the 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of Pharmuthi, of which the latter two dates correspond closely to two of the three dates of the Passover he gives for Jesus' death. Lastly, he believes Jesus was born sometime in late fall or early winter, given Commodus' date of death.<sup>7</sup> Now because Clement believed Jesus was conceived on the 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of a month it seems likely he would place his birth on the 24<sup>th</sup> or the 25<sup>th</sup> of a month, which could very well correspond to December 25<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was included as an afterthought and represents some thoughts I jotted down. It does not contain the same depth of research as the first appendix.

<sup>2</sup> My translation from Treu (1985)

<sup>3</sup> I am here assuming that the phrase, "he came to be (γενενησθαι)," refers to conception.

<sup>4</sup> This calendar seems to have been the cause of much confusion in the ancient world. More than 100 years after Clement, Athanasius of Alexandria would send out a circular epistle every year in order to give the exact day in which Easter was to be celebrated. See Willams (1854).

<sup>5</sup> *Stromata* 1.21.144

<sup>6</sup> Mosshammer (2008) p.115

<sup>7</sup> Dio Cassius (73.22.4-5) says that Commodus died on December 31<sup>st</sup> 193 AD. Using this date Clement would have believed Jesus was born in mid November. However if he was using the Egyptian mobile calendar he could have been referring to as late as early January. This calendar only had 365 days and no leap years so it lost roughly one day ever 4 years. See Mosshammer (2008) p.18.

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In summary Clement seems to use the same method to calculate Jesus' conception, birth, and death as Hippolytus used. He dates Jesus' death to the Passover and possibly also the Vernal Equinox, he seems to date his conception to the Passover, and he dates his birth to late fall or early winter. He also gives 4 different dates that are on the 25<sup>th</sup> of a month, coinciding with Hippolytus' belief that Jesus was conceived, born, and died all on the 25<sup>th</sup> of a month. Given that Clement is quoting from several sources it is quite possible that one of his sources actually includes Hippolytus himself.