

The April 6th LDS Tradition

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April 6 & Christ's Birthday Many Latter-day Saints believe April 6th is the birthday of Jesus Christ, given in a revelation by the Lord Himself to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Evidence in the Joseph Smith Papers Project does not support this. No statements by Joseph Smith or other *early* Church leaders connect April 6 to the Lord's birthday. In addition, April 6 is not tied to a Biblical calendar Holy Day (as established by the Lord). In 1830, April 6th was a Tuesday, two days before the full moon. Passover followed two days later on **April 8th**. April 6th was the day the LDS Church was officially *organized according to the laws of the State of New York*. Both December 25 (the traditional Christian holiday for Christ's birth) and April 6 have become *traditions* for Christ's birth, but without substantive support. Where and when did the April 6th tradition begin as the Lord's birthday in LDS culture?

New Research Research in the Joseph Smith Papers project reveals that that verse 1 of D&C 20 is an *introductory head note* written by historian and scribe John Whitmer for the revelation of Joseph Smith that follows it, *not* a statement by the Lord, nor the Prophet Joseph Smith. The verse 1 statement written and *added* by Whitmer reads, "*The rise of The Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it (the church) being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April.*"

Researchers in the Joseph Smith Papers project believe that Elder James E. Talmage read verse 1 of D&C 20 *as if the Lord was speaking*, revealing that He was born on this date 1,830 years before, *and* that the revelation was given on April 6, 1830. Research indicates that *both assumptions* by Talmage were incorrect. Steven C. Harper, volume editor of the Joseph Smith Papers project and a BYU assistant professor of church history, stated that verse 1 of D&C 20 was simply an introductory head note written by John Whitmer, not a statement by Jesus Christ *or* Joseph Smith. This is evident in the recent discovery of the Book of Commandments and Revelations manuscript of D&C 20, published as part of the Joseph Smith Papers project.

John Whitmer was an early church historian and scribe to Joseph Smith at the time D&C 20 was recorded. Whitmer's *addition* of the *introductory head note* preceding the revelation, "was something he did for **many** of the revelations," according to Harper. "**So those are separate from the texts** that Joseph produces by revelation." John Whitmer used similar language in other writings. In another headnote example, Whitmer stated, "It is now **June the twelfth**, one thousand eight hundred and thirty one years, since the coming of our Lord and Savior in the flesh." His language is the same there as for verse 1 of D&C 20 (excepting the June 12 date) and was simply a common 19th-century way of expressing **the current date**.

According to Harper, the Book of Commandments and Revelations manuscript for D&C 20 also shows that **this particular revelation – D&C 20 – was given on April 10** [a Saturday that year] **not April 6** [a Tuesday]. Verse 1 references the organization date of the church a few days earlier, but has nothing to do with the birth date of Christ. Harper stated that the introductory verse to Section 20 "*shouldn't be read as if it is a revelation of the birth date of Jesus Christ.*" See Michael De Groot, What was the real date of Jesus' birth? Deseret News, Dec. 24, 2010.

Early dedications of LDS temples did occur on April 6 (Nauvoo, Salt Lake, St. George & Palmyra). This was done to commemorate *the organization date of the LDS church*, *not* the Savior's birthday. The first LDS temple at Kirtland Ohio, the one in which the Savior visited, was dedicated one week after the spring equinox (Mar. 20, 1836) on **March 27, 1836**. Two weeks after this date *near* full moon, the Lord accepted the temple on **April 3rd in a personal visit** (*Sunday* that year). **April 3rd** in 1836 was **Nisan 16** on the Hebrew Calendar, **His resurrection day**, the Hebrew Holy Day known as **Firstfruits!** This is an important Holy Day on God's calendar!

Early Church leaders said nothing about the Lord's birthday being April 6th. This date has become a modern LDS *tradition* believed to be the Lord's birthday, based on the opinion of James E. Talmage. He made the following statement in his book "Jesus the Christ" (1915), writing, "**We believe** that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, April 6, B.C. 1." Elder Talmage based his belief on **an assumption** tied to verse 1 of D&C 20 - his **assumption** that Whitmer's statement was made by the Lord Himself to the Prophet Joseph Smith on April 6th. Neither assumption has been proven to be correct! Talmage's opinion later became a false tradition.

Passover (spring equinox) was the time Christ *died* and was *resurrected*, *not* the time of His birth (believed by this author to be the New Moon of 3 BC, *Rosh Hashanah*, New Year's Day, the lone Holy Day tied to *trumpeting* – of the coming of the King – it is the civil New Year's day of the king). Joseph Smith did choose April 6th for the laying of the original Nauvoo Temple cornerstones in 1841, doing so to celebrate the day the LDS Church was officially organized in 1830 according to the laws of the state of New York.

Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley, Pres. Spencer W. Kimball, and Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have expressed support for the April 6th date *as the Lord's birthday*, whereas Pres. J. Reuben Clark Jr., a counselor in the First Presidency of the LDS Church, wrote that Christ's birth was may have been December of 5 B.C. or early 4 B.C. (1954). Elder Bruce R. McConkie, also an LDS Apostle, favored December 5 B.C. as well as the alternative date of 4 B.C. (1979). There is thus no real consensus among LDS leadership on the Lord's birthday, even though beliefs and opinions are heartfelt and sincere.

The significance of early April (but not the 6th) on the Lord's calendar lies with **Passover** - Christ's *death* at full moon (**April 8th** in 1830, not April 6th). There is also the statement made by Joseph Smith in early April, where he said, "We obtained of him [Jesus Christ] the following by the spirit of prophecy and revelation [the revelation given **on April 10th**]; which not only gave us much information, but also pointed out to us *the precise day upon which, according to his will and commandment, we should proceed to organize his Church* [a few days earlier on **April 6th**] once more here upon the earth" (HC 1:64-70, April 1830, current heading for D&C 20).

We should remember that **no** statements exist by Joseph Smith nor other early Church leaders tying April 6 to Christ's birthday. The question then is, why would the Lord draw attention to early April for the organization date of the Church in 1830? The answer seems to be - to focus our attention on the whole reason for our Savior's descent here, **to redeem or release us from sin, death, and hell - out of love** - in the *Atonement* and the **Resurrection**. Joseph Smith said, "the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that **He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven**; and all other things which pertain to our religion are *only appendages to it*" (TPJS, p. 121). Early April is the time of our Lord's **sacrifice and resurrection**, perhaps the later being **April 6** of 3 BC! His sacrifice took place near *the full moon* of the Hebrew month of Nisan (2 weeks after the spring equinox). On our imperfect calendar, which no longer uses the phases of the moon, as did the Lord's Bible calendar, this was in early April in 1830. His *birth*, however, was most likely near the other equinox in the fall, on *the New Moon of New Year's Day* coinciding with *the coming of the king* - the Holy Day *Rosh Hashanah* (meaning "head of the year", addressed on the other side of this paper. April 6 of 744 AD is the heliacal rise of Venus as a morning star at the Parowan Gap (Native American temple site).

12 Reasons why Rosh Hashanah is most likely our Lord's Birthday

See *The Star That Astonished the World*, by Ernest L. Martin & *Seven Heavenly Witnesses of the Coming of Jesus Christ*, by Val Brinkerhoff

1. The heavens are important *lights* and *witnesses* for us (Gen. 1:14). Man can't change them. An explosion of greater-light heavenly signs, including major conjunctions of *Jupiter* (the **king** planet) and *Venus* (the **virgin** planet) occurred prior to Christ's birth from 3 to 2 BC signaling *the coming of the Lord*. Conjoined, they were **new star** promised in scripture (Matt. 2:2,7; Hel. 14:5). Rosh Hashanah is tied to **trumpeting** and *the coming of the King* to "make all things **new**" (Rev. 21:5). It is the "*hidden day*" at **New Moon**, the first day of creation, of the civil New Year, of each month, and the day the Bridegroom comes to get His Bride. Note these connections hereafter.
2. John's heavenly sign of Christ's birth (JST Rev. 12) occurred on *Rosh Hashanah* (of 3 BC), a very important annual Hebrew **Holy Day** on God's calendar (Gen. 1:14). It is day 1 of the 7th or Sabbath month of Tishri, and is one of three "**Sabbath**" Holy Days on the Lord's calendar, this one marked by the heavens via the first crescent after the *New Moon*. The New Moon and the day following it mark the civil *New Year's Day* of the king & *the first day each month*. It is a "*firstborn*" day, one consecrated to the whole (each month and year).
3. The timing of Christ's birth was signaled by John's sign of "**the woman traveling in birth, pained to be delivered**" in JST Revelation 12. All signs in this chapter occur in the constellation Virgo (Mary, Christ's mother) at sunset of Rosh Hashanah of 3 BC. *It also occurred at the time of the Sabbatical Year of Release*, the end of one year & start of the next. He "releases" us from sin, death & Hell.
4. Rosh Hashanah is the only *Holy Day* tied to **trumpeting** (Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1), specifically a long and loud blast with a *ram's horn*. The *ram* was the *substitute sacrifice* for Isaac by Abraham. Silver horns were also used for trumpeting on this day, but secondarily.
 - a. The long and loud "trumpet" blast **heralds the coming of the King** (His birth and second coming).
 - b. It also announces the need for all to *repent* in preparation for *the King's judgment*, which occurs on the Day of Atonement (another annual Holy Day) ten days later in this same seventh or Sabbatical month (Tishri 10).
 - c. Trumpeting also summons all to **return to the Lord**, to **gather** in a "*solemn assembly*" at the temple.
 1. It was a *public acknowledgement of Jehovah as their King and Judge*. They were to come before Him.
 2. Trumpeting was also the signal for *the first day of the King's reign* (Psalm 47:6-7).
 3. They were also to hear the **public reading of His Law** at this time each year (Ex. 19:19; Isa. 27:13; Neh. 8:2, 9-10). Note that the revelation on *the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood* (the law) was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith on this same day (see heading for D&C 84). The Law was read to the people each 7th or Sabbatical Year.
 4. Trumpeting is also a summons for the elect to be *gathered* in the last-days at *Christ's second coming* (Mat. 24:31), and to awaken those who sleep (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes. 4:16). It is also a call for angels to pronounce *judgment* upon the inhabitants of the earth (Rev. 8:2; 10:7).
 - d. Rosh Hashanah has multiple descriptive names. One of these is *Yom Teruah* - "**the day of the awakening blast**", tied to the call to "**awake and arise**" from sleep, a metaphor for ignorance, deception & sin. Rosh Hashanah is the day of the coming of the Bridegroom, signaled by trumpeting, a great shout, or "cry" in Matthew 25:6. It is **the time He comes to get His bride**, typically midnight, while the Bride awaits. Many guests are *invited* to the wedding party, but too many have fallen asleep and must awake (come out of deception, idolatry, sin etc., see Psalm 78:65; Dan. 12:1-2; John 11:11; Eph. 5:8, 14; 1 Cor. 15:46; Rom. 13:11).
5. Jewish tradition holds that Rosh Hashanah was **the first day of creation** (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah, 11a).
6. It was also believed to be the day Adam and Eve were created (Mishnah, San Hedrin, 38b).
7. Birthdays of other "*deliverers*" are also believed to have occurred on this same day, including Noah and Samuel.
8. The zodiac sign for the seventh Sabbatical month of Tishri is *Libra*, the scales of *justice* and *judgment*, administered by the great King as *Judge* Jesus Christ.
9. Rosh Hashanah is also the only *Holy Day* which is "**hidden**" (27:5; 81:3; Mat. 24:36), meaning that only the Father knows when the Bridegroom has made all things ready for the Bride (the church), when a place is prepared for her. Rosh Hashanah is thus known to the Jews as this "**hidden day**" (see Appendix A, p. 191), the day of the coming of the Bridegroom to get His bride and **their marriage**.
10. Additional Hebrew traditions point to Rosh Hashanah being a special day tied to *liberty* or a "**release**". The focus of our Savior's mission was to **release** us (*redemption*) from sin, death, and hell - in His *Atonement* and *Resurrection*.
 - a. Many women in the Bible were **released** from the curse of barrenness (age or infertility) on this same day.
 - b. Rosh Hashanah is believed to be the Day the land became dry, **released** from the great flood waters (see Gen. 8:13).
 - c. Jewish tradition holds that this was the day Joseph (sold into Egypt) was **released** from prison after 12 years. He provided Jacob or Israel and his whole family a **release** from famine.
 - d. It was also the start and end day for Israel's "**release year**," the 7th Sabbatical Year, where the land rests or is **released** from agriculture for one year, the day all *debts were forgiven*, and *slaves were set free*. Note that Sept. 28 of 2015 is the third of three consecutive *Shemithah* or "**release**" years, on *Elul 29*, New Year's Eve (just before Rosh Hashanah and judgment). Each of the two previous "**release**" years (2001 & 2008) featured the greatest drop in the U.S. stock market ever.
 - e. Rosh Hashanah is believed to be the day the Israelites were **released** from their slave labor in Egypt, at a time for the ten plagues to be played out. Israel was **released** from their bondage and slavery to the Egyptians via the blood of the lamb spread above doorposts. Thereafter this **release** day was called *Passover*, the destroying angel passing over homes marked by lamb's blood.
11. Rosh Hashanah was the day the Angel Moroni came to the Prophet Joseph Smith **7 years in a row** (see the author's paper, Moroni's 40 Scriptures to Joseph Smith) to return *the law or covenant of the Gospel* to the earth. The Sabbath day (**rest**), Sabbatical year (**release**), and the Jubilee year (**restoration**) are all tied to 7-part time periods, indicating a time of **renewal**.
12. Other solid evidence, including history, exists for a fall birth of the Master. Three of them include:
 - a. Mary and Joseph (of royal lineage) were required to return to their ancestral homeland and specifically the city Bethlehem (birthplace of Davidic kings) at this time of year to meet the special requirement of not only *registration* for *taxation*, but an "*oath of allegiance*" to the Roman ruler over Judea at the time, Augustus.
 - b. John the Baptist's birth was six months prior to Christ's, marked historically by the temple "*course of Abia*".
 - c. Many Middle Eastern lambs are born in spring, but *Awassi lambs*, common in Israel, are **born in the fall**. Tabernacles is at full moon some 14 days later. Born at Rosh Hashanah, Christ's step-father Joseph could then leave Bethlehem and attend the Holy Day Tabernacles later on, an annual requirement for all males (along with Passover and the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost).

Mary completed her 7 days of purification, around day 9. *See The Star That Astonished the World, by Ernest L. Martin*