

*As I was reading through the various passages relating to the birth of Jesus, I was struck how often we have allowed traditions to become part of the story. Do we celebrate tradition or facts of Christmas, (as best we know)?*

1. Did a star lead the Magi to Jerusalem?  
No. Matthew 2:2 states-- For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. It does not say the star guided them to Jerusalem. However, the star did guide them from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.
2. Did the star that went before the Magi go east, west, north or south from Jerusalem to Bethlehem?  
South. Bethlehem is about 5 miles south of Jerusalem.
3. Where were the Magi from?  
Matthew states east of Jerusalem. Speculation is Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Yemen Joke—the wisemen were firemen because they came from afar (a fire). You have to use Okie pronunciation to say a fire—afar. Ok, ok I best leave the humor to Brady.
4. Most likely what did the Magi ride camels, horses, or elephants?  
Camels were usually a beast of burden. It is more likely they were riding horses.
5. Were the Magi kings?  
No, even though the song says We Three Kings. The Magi were more than likely personal advisors to the king who studied the stars.
6. How many Magi were there?  
We are not told how many. It has often been said there were three because there were three gifts. It is likely there were also some servants present with the Magi.
7. Was Jesus born in December, March, or September?  
December is the least likely of the three.

The biblical accounts point to the fall of the year as the most likely time of Jesus' birth, based on the conception and birth of John the Baptist. Since Elizabeth (John's mother) was in her sixth month of pregnancy when Jesus was conceived (Luke 1:24-36), we can determine the approximate time of year Jesus was born if we know when John was born. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest serving in the Jerusalem temple during the course of Abijah (Luke 1:5). Historical calculations indicate this course of service corresponded to June 13-19 in that year.

It was during this time of temple service that Zacharias learned that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a child (Luke 1:8-13). After he completed his service and traveled home, Elizabeth conceived (Luke 1:23-24). Assuming John's conception took place near the end of June, adding nine months brings us to the end of March as the most likely time for John's birth. Adding another six months (the difference in ages between John and Jesus) brings us to the end of September as the likely time of Jesus' birth.

It is also feasible that Jesus's birth could be in the Spring if Zacharias was in his second service of the year not the first (there were 24 divisions of priests --add 24 months onto the above dating and it is

Spring)

The least likely date would be December. In addition to the above, the shepherds would not have been in the field in December. December was possibly chosen due to there being a pagan holiday near winter solstice (December 21).

8. A typical manger scene consists of a stable, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and wisemen. Which of these is out of place?

Wisemen. The manger scene evolved into one setting to accommodate all participants in the scene in one place. Matthew tells us the Magi found Jesus at a house.

9. Were the angels male or female?

Most of the named angels in the Bible are male names. However, female angels are what we see depicted today.

10. Where did the Magi find Jesus, in a house or a stable?

House

11. According to Matthew did the Magi present their gifts to Jesus, Mary and Joseph?

Matthew states the Magi saw the child with Mary his mother. Joseph is not mentioned.

12. How old was Jesus when he was circumcised? Who usually did the circumcision?

Jesus was 8 days old when circumcised, according to Jewish law. Priests normally did the circumcision.

13. Where did Mary, Joseph and Jesus go after leaving Bethlehem?

Matthew states Egypt. Luke states Nazareth. There is much written on the possible reasons for the variance with no clear reasons.

14. What did the angel of the Lord and the heavenly hosts sing when told of the birth of a savior who is Christ the Lord?

Luke states "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God **saying** Glory to God in the highest. Singing was not mentioned even if it makes a great song, "Glory to God in the Highest".

15. When was the time of purification for Mary? And what were her restrictions?

40 days after birth of Jesus.

Mary was not to touch anything holy or enter a sacred space.

16. Was the purification done in Bethlehem?

Purification was done at the temple in Jerusalem. Bethlehem was a small town and probably not large enough for a temple.