

Appendix 1

Hippolytus and December 25th as the date of Jesus' birth

Abstract: This article analyzes the manuscript evidence, internal evidence, and external testimonies concerning the disputed passage in Hippolytus of Rome's *Commentary on Daniel 4.23.3*, which names December 25th as the birthday of Jesus. The principal contributions of this article are extensive analyses of two external testimonies in two of Hippolytus' other writings, his *Canon* and his *Chronicon*.

The article examines the term "genesis (γένεσις) of Christ" in the *Canon*, which Hippolytus places on April 2nd, and concludes that this refers to conception not birth, which matches up well with the date of Jesus' birth, December 25th, as it is given in Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel*. The article also observes that, in his *Chronicon*, Hippolytus believed that Jesus was born 9 months after the anniversary of the creation of the world. According to calculations made in Hippolytus' *Canon* and *Chronicon*, the world was created on the Vernal Equinox, March 25th, which would mean Jesus would have been born 9 months later on December 25th.

The article therefore concludes that Hippolytus believed Jesus was conceived on the Passover, possibly also on the Vernal Equinox, that Jesus was born on December 25th, the Winter Solstice, and that Jesus died on the Passover, Friday, March 25th 29 AD, the Vernal Equinox.

Copyright Tom Schmidt

www.chronicon.net

2010

Appendix 1

Hippolytus and December 25th as the date of Jesus' birth

Both liberal and conservative scholars have long doubted that December 25th was the original date in which ancient Christians marked the birth of Jesus. Most believe that before the 4th and 5th centuries¹ his birth was associated either with the Spring or sometime in January,² but later December 25th was chosen by Pope Liberius in 354 AD, possibly because it corresponded with the Winter Solstice and Pagan celebrations.³

This belief stands and falls on a disputed passage in Hippolytus of Rome's *Commentary on Daniel*, which he wrote most likely between 202-211 AD. In this article I will review the manuscript evidence, the internal evidence, and the external testimonies that concern the veracity of the passage given below. Along with recent scholarship I assume that the same author wrote the *Commentary on Daniel*, the *Canon*, and the *Chronicon*.⁴ The argument I make does not require Hippolytus himself to have written these works, though I believe he did.⁵

For the first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was December 25th, a Wednesday, while Augustus was in his forty-second year, but from Adam, five thousand and five hundred years. He suffered in the thirty-third year, March 25th, Friday, the eighteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, while Rufus and Roubellion were Consuls. ~*Commentary on Daniel* 4.23.3⁶

¹ Richard (51) p.48

² Roll (1995) p.77ff.

³ The Chronography of 354 AD Part 12

⁴ That the same author wrote the *Canon*, the *Chronicon*, and the *Commentary on Daniel* has most recently been supported by Richard (1951) p.43, Ogg (1962) p.4, Andrei (2006) p.141 and Mosshammer (2008) p.121 and also previously by Salmon (1892) p.173 and Bonwetsch (1895) p.526.

Richard (1951) p.48, Salmon (1892) p.173, Bonwetsch (1895) p.526, Ogg (1962) p.4 and Andrei (2006) p.144 assign these writings to Hippolytus. Cerrato (2002) p.101, 122, 254-255, Brent (1995) p. 273-276, and Nautin (1952) p.26 believe one person wrote the *Chronicon*, *Against All Heresies*, and the *Canon* while another who lived at the same time wrote the *Commentary on Daniel*.

⁵ Furthermore, my argument may be slightly modified to account for multiple authors, which I address in a footnote in the conclusion of the article.

⁶ My translation in Schmidt (2010)

Appendix 1

Manuscript Evidence

Table 1 lists the six Greek manuscripts and the Slavonic translation that cover Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel 4.23.3-4*. More manuscripts exist, but they are fragmentary and do not cover the passage at hand.

Table 1	
<u>Relevant Manuscripts</u>	
A=10 th Century B=15 th /16 th Century G ¹ =13 th Century G ² =14 th Century	J=11 th Century P=13 th Century S=Old Slavonic translation 11 th Century (4 manuscripts exist)

Tables 2, 3, and 4 represent the three different readings that various scholars have proposed as being the original and authentic text.¹ Table 2 contains the textual reading of all of the manuscripts except manuscript J; any differences between the manuscripts are noted.² Table 3 contains the textual reading of manuscript J.³ Table 4 contains a hypothetical reconstruction of the text,⁴ which is based on the testimony given in Hippolytus' *Canon*, which some scholars interpret as stating that Jesus was born, not conceived, on April 2nd, 2 BC.⁵

Table 2	
<u>Manuscripts A, B, G¹, G², P, S</u>	
<p>ἡ γὰρ πρώτη παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἡ ἔνσαρκος, ἐν ᾗ γεγέννηται ἐν Βηθλεὲμ [πρὸ τεσσάρων ἀπριλίων], ἐγένετο πρὸ ὀκτῶ καλανδῶν ἰανουαρίων, ἡμέρα τετράδι, βασιλεύοντος Αὐγούστου τεσσαρακοστῶ καὶ δευτέρου ἔτος, ἀπὸ δὲ Ἀδάμ πεντακισχίλιστῶ καὶ πεντακοσιοστῶ ἔτει· ἔπαθεν δὲ τριακοστῶ τρίτῳ ἔτει πρὸ ὀκτῶ καλανδῶν ἀπριλίων, ἡμέρα παρασκευῆ, ὀκτωκαιδεκάτῳ ἔτει Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, ὑπατεύοντος Ρούφου καὶ Ρουβελλίωνος [καὶ Γαίου Καίσαρος τὸ τέταρτον <καὶ> Γαίου Κεστίου Σατορνίνου]. Δεῖ οὖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὰ ἐξακισχίλια ἔτη πληρωθῆναι, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὸ σάββατον, ἡ κατάπαυσις, ἡ ἀγία ἡμέρα, ἐν ᾗ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ὧν ἤρξατο ποιεῖν.</p>	<p>For the first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was [April/March]⁶ December 25th,⁷ Wednesday,⁸ while Augustus was in his forty-second year, but from Adam, five thousand and five hundred years. He suffered in the thirty-third year, March 25th,⁹ Friday,¹⁰ the eighteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, while Rufus and Roubellion were Consuls [and Gaius Caesar, for the 4th time, and Gaius Cestius Saturninus]. And so it is absolutely necessary for six-thousand years to be fulfilled, so that the Sabbath rest may come, the holy day, in which God rested from all his works which he began to do. ~<i>Commentary on Daniel 4.23.3-4</i>¹¹</p>
<p>* A contains the December 25th date and the fragmentary date in March or April; other manuscripts contain only the December 25th date. * A and S contain the names of all four consuls; other manuscripts contain only the first two names. * G¹ and G² say that Jesus was born 5,501 years from creation. * G¹ and G² say that Jesus died in the 12th year of Tiberius. * S, G¹ and G² omit “which he began to do.” * B omits “five hundred years. He suffered in the thirty” πεντακοσιοστῶ ἔτει· ἔπαθεν δὲ τριακοστῶ</p>	

¹ The Greek text for these tables was taken from Richard (2000).

² Salmon (1892) p.177 and Bonwetsch (1895) p.526 argue for the authenticity of the reading in Table 2.

³ Ogg (1962) p.10 argues for authenticity of the reading of manuscript J in Table 3.

⁴ Richard (2000) p.244-246 and (1951) p.48 and Nautin (1952) p.26 support the reconstruction in Table 4.

⁵ Brent p.275f (1995) does not favor a specific view, but disagrees with the reconstruction in Table 4.

⁶ Lit: four days before [Kalends, Nonnes, or Ides] of April

⁷ Lit: eight days before the Kalends of January

⁸ Lit: the fourth day

⁹ Lit: eight days before the Kalends of March

¹⁰ Lit: The day of Preparation

¹¹ My translation in Schmidt (2010)

Appendix 1

Table 3 Manuscript J	
<p>ἡ γὰρ πρώτη παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἡ ἔνσαρκος, ἐν ᾗ γεγέννηται ἐν Βηθλεὲμ ἐπὶ Αὐγούστου γένηται πεντακισχilioστῶ καὶ πεντακοσιοστῶ ἔτει· ἔπαθεν δὲ τριακοστῶ τρίτῳ. Δεῖ οὖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὰ ἐξακισχilia ἔτη πληρωθῆναι, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὸ σάββατον, ἡ κατάπαυσις, ἡ ἁγία ἡμέρα, ἐν ᾗ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ.</p>	<p>For the first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was in the time of Augustus, five thousand and five hundred years. He suffered in the thirty-third. And so it is absolutely necessary for six-thousand years to be fulfilled, so that the Sabbath rest may come, the holy day, in which God rested from all his works. ~<i>Commentary on Daniel 4.23.3-4</i></p>
Table 4 Hypothetical Reconstruction Differences between Table 2 are underlined	
<p>ἡ γὰρ πρώτη παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἡ ἔνσαρκος, ἐν ᾗ γεγέννηται ἐν Βηθλεὲμ πρὸ τεσσάρων <νωνῶν> ἀπριλίων ἐγένετο, ἡμέρα τετράδι, βασιλεύοντος Αὐγούστου τεσσαρακοστὸν καὶ δεύτερον ἔτος, ἀπὸ δὲ Ἀδάμ πεντακισχilioστῶ καὶ πεντακοσιοστῶ ἔτει· ἔπαθεν δὲ τριακοστῶ τρίτῳ ἔτει πρὸ ὀκτὼ καλανδῶν ἀπριλίων, ἡμέρα παρασκευῆ, <πεντε>καιδεκάτῳ ἔτει Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, ὑπατεύοντος Ρούφου καὶ Ρουβελλίωνος. Δεῖ οὖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὰ ἐξακισχilia ἔτη πληρωθῆναι, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὸ σάββατον, ἡ κατάπαυσις, ἡ ἁγία ἡμέρα, ἐν ᾗ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ὃν ἤρξατο ποιεῖν.</p>	<p>For the first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem <u>on April 2nd</u>, Wednesday,¹ while Augustus was in his forty-second year, but from Adam, five thousand and five hundred years. He suffered in the <u>thirtieth year</u>, March 25th,² Friday,³ the <u>fifteenth</u> year of Tiberius Caesar, while Rufus and Roubellion were Consuls. And so it is absolutely necessary for six-thousand years to be fulfilled, so that the Sabbath rest may come, the holy day, in which God rested from all his works which he began to do. ~<i>Commentary on Daniel 4.23.3-4</i></p>

Analysis of Manuscript Evidence

The manuscript evidence, on its own, favors the disputed passage in Table 2 because the majority of manuscripts and the oldest manuscript contain it. Table 3 is supported by only one manuscript and Table 4 is not supported by any, but proponents claim that the *Canon* of Hippolytus does support Table 4's reading and that manuscript A can be reconstructed to support it as well. However, though there is wide support for the reading in Table 2, there have been obvious interpolations in the manuscript tradition and the oldest manuscript contains a second date, which raises the degree of uncertainty about the passage. Further discussion about the three different readings in Tables 2, 3, and 4 will take place in the section discussing Hippolytus' *Canon* and in the conclusion of this article.

¹ Lit: the fourth day

² Lit: eight days before the Kalends of March

³ Lit: the day of Preparation

Appendix 1

Internal Evidence

In this section I will evaluate the internal evidence in the disputed passage phrase by phrase.

- **“For the first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was [April/March] December 25th, Wednesday,”** the fragmentary date, which is included along with the December date in Manuscript A, is incomplete and probably refers to a date in March or April. The date of Wednesday, December 25th corresponds with 3 BC. However there is uncertainty with this date because the Julian calendar was followed incorrectly the first years after its inception in 44 BC. For several decades a leap year was inserted every third year and not every fourth. This was noticed and corrected by not inserting a leap year until the calendar was accurate, which finally occurred in 7 or 8 AD.¹ Unfortunately it is uncertain exactly how the correction was done. The above date of 3 BC assumes a retrograded Julian calendar much like the one Hippolytus employed in his *Canon*. However if Hippolytus was aware of the above calendar inaccuracy the date of Wednesday, December 25th could refer to a number of years before 3 BC depending on how Hippolytus accounted for the inaccuracy.
- **“...while Augustus was in his forty-second year,”** this is also mentioned in the *Commentary on Daniel* 4.9.1 and this corresponds, probably with 2 or 3 BC. Again, however, there is uncertainty with these two dates because Hippolytus’ list of Roman Emperors is incorrect in his *Chronicon* §757-778.² This is shared by his contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, who gives two different lists of Roman Emperors in his *Stromata* 1.21.144, though neither are the same as Hippolytus’.
- **“...but from Adam, five thousand and five hundred years,”** this is integral to Hippolytus’ whole argument and he states the same number in his *Commentary on Daniel* 4.24.1.
- **“He suffered in the thirty-third year,”** this is an ordinal number and probably means that, in cardinal years, Jesus was 32 years old when he died, though it could refer to him being a full 33 years old.
- **“...March 25th, Friday,”** this corresponds with 29 AD. As mentioned above, the Julian calendar was corrected by this time so there is no uncertainty with this date.
- **“...the eighteenth year of Tiberius Caesar,”** this corresponds with 31/32 AD; however this could potentially correspond with 28/29 AD if we count from when Tiberius began to co-reign. This is a well known uncertainty when treating the chronology of Jesus and many scholars have written about it. Though some discount the co-regency idea for lack of historical evidence,³ Hippolytus’ contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, seems to count from when Tiberius began to co-reign in one of his two lists of emperors⁴ and Epiphanius of Salamis also seems to do the same.⁵ It is unclear when Hippolytus began to reckon Tiberius’ reign because his list of Emperors is defective in his *Chronicon* and we do not know if he reckoned reigns of Emperors in multiple ways like Clement of Alexandria did.
- **“...while Rufus and Roubellion were Consuls [and Gaius Caesar, for the 4th time, and Gaius Cestius Saturninus].”** The first two consuls correspond with 29 AD.⁶ The second set corresponds with 41 AD⁷, which is obviously an error.

Analysis of Internal Evidence

¹ Blackburn and Holford-Stevens (1999) p.671

² For example Hippolytus excludes Trajan and Nerva. Even if the dates of these Emperors are included the list is still several years off.

³ Hoehner (1978) p.31f.

⁴ *Stromata* 1.21.144

⁵ *Panarion* 51.23.5

⁶ Meyer (1942) p.141

⁷ Meyer (1942) p.152

Appendix 1

Internally the major difficulty is how Jesus could be 33 or even 32 years old if he was born on December 25th 3 BC and died on March 25th 29 AD. A date of 5 BC would make more sense, but a date of 4 BC would work if we counted Jesus' age from conception. Mathematically the date of 3 BC cannot be correct. The only solutions to this are that Hippolytus, as was mentioned above, attempted to account for the incorrect introduction of the Julian Calendar and that he is not referring to 3 BC but 4 or 5 BC, or that a scribe has altered the text in some way, or that Hippolytus has simply made a mathematical error. Though this represents a problem, mathematical difficulties and even errors are not uncommon in ancient authors. For example Epiphanius makes a similar error in his *Panarion*:

For the Savior was born during the forty-second year of the Roman Emperor Augustus—in the thirteenth consulship of the same Octavian Augustus and the consulship of Silanus, as the Roman Consul lists indicate...eight days before the Ides of January. ~Epiphanius *Panarion* 51.22.3-4, 6¹

Then he adds:

For in fact, it was in the thirty-third year of his incarnation that the Only-begotten suffered for us... For after that consulship which came, as I indicated, in Christ's thirtieth year, there was another, called the consulship of Rufus and Rubellio. And then, at the beginning of the consulship after the consulship <of Rufus and> Rubellio—the one which later came to be called the consulship of Vinnicius and Longinus Cassius—the Savior suffered on the thirteenth before the Kalends of April <in his 33rd year, which was> the eighteenth year of Tiberius Caesar.

~Epiphanius *Panarion* 51.23.4-5²

In the above quotes Epiphanius claims Jesus was born January 6th, 2 BC³, the 42nd year of Augustus and that he died in his 33rd year, March 20th, 30 AD,⁴ the 18th year of Tiberius. As stated above 30 AD does not correspond with the 18th year of Tiberius whether counting from his reign or co-regency. More importantly, the time span between these two dates does not equal 33 or even 32 years, unless conception is considered for the latter option. In this regard Epiphanius, like Hippolytus, places Jesus' death in the 18th year of Tiberius, but unlike Hippolytus he gives the highly unlikely date of 30 AD. Furthermore, like Hippolytus he does not give enough time for Jesus to complete 33 or 32 years unless we count from conception.

In summary, the passage in Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* has some difficulties, but these are not insurmountable and are shared with Epiphanius, however they do raise some suspicions about the authenticity of the passage.

¹ Translation from Williams (1994)

² Translation from Williams (1994)

³ Meyer (1942) p.119

⁴ Meyer (1942) p.152

Appendix 1
External Testimonies

In this section I will evaluate the external testimonies related to the disputed passage.

External Testimonies	Commentary on Testimonies
<p>8. Hippolytus of Thebes He was born [γεννᾶται]...in the middle of the six thousand years in the 42nd year of King Augustus in the month of December, the 25th, the 10th hour of the night, Sunday.¹</p>	<p>(8) Hippolytus of Thebes and the (7) Slavonic fragment clearly name December 25th as the birthday of Jesus, but it is unclear how closely related, if at all, these are to Hippolytus' writings. Both are, in all likelihood, falsely attributed to him and represent medieval, or even later, writings. Both also give a different day of the week for Jesus' birth than Hippolytus does in his <i>Commentary on Daniel</i>.</p>
<p>7. Slavonic fragment Commentary on Revelation falsely attributed to Hippolytus Our Lord descended into Hades in the 5,533rd year...[this ellipsis contains a chronology from Adam] and from David to Christ 1,540, in total 5,500² years. In the 42nd year of Caesar Augustus, in the month of December, on the 25th, on Friday, at the seventh hour, our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the flesh from the holy Godbearer and perpetual virgin Mary.³</p>	
<p>6. George Syncellus 9th century ... his birth [ἐγεννήθη] was on the next day, 25 December, in Bethlehem a city of Judaea, in the forty-third year of the reign of Augustus Caesar over the Romans, in the consulate of Gulpicius, and Marinus and Gaius Pompeius, as it is reported in accurate and ancient manuscripts. We have not compiled this on our own. It is based rather on the traditions that have come down from Hippolytos, the blessed apostle, archbishop of Rome, and holy martyr...~George Syncellus <i>Chronography</i> §381 (p.455)⁴</p>	<p>(6) George Syncellus attributes the date of December 25th to Hippolytus. He also cites Hippolytus' <i>Commentary on Daniel</i> in the same work,⁵ which implies that he is citing from this commentary.</p>
<p>5. George of Arabia 8th century Also the holy Hippolytus, bishop and martyr, has said as well in the 4th book concerning the Prophet Daniel: "The first coming of our Lord in the flesh in Bethlehem occurred in the days of Augustus in the year of the world 5,500. He lived 33 years after his birth. 6,000 years must come until the end, when the Sabbath rest comes on which God rested from all his works which he did." ~George of Arabia <i>Letter to the Presbyter Joshua</i> 115⁶</p>	<p>(5) George of Arabia omits the date of December 25th and closely mirrors the textual reading in Manuscript J, however Marcel Richard has noted that George omits many phrases in the passages he quotes, which raises suspicions about the accuracy of this quote.¹</p>

¹ My translation from Bonwetsch (1894) p.524 as cited from Fabricius 2.60.

² The passage reads "1,500 years" for "5,500 years" but it must obviously be 5,500 years given the author's argument.

³ My translation from the German translation in Achelis (1897) p.238.

⁴ Translation from Adler and Tuffin (2002)

⁵ For example in §260

⁶ Translated from the German translation of Ryssel (1891) p.49 §115

Appendix 1

<p>4. Cyril of Scythopolis (c.530-555 AD)</p> <p>A) [Sabas died]...from the creation of the world, when time began to be measured by the movement of the sun, the 6,024th year, but from the incarnation [ἐνανθρώπησις] of the Word of God from the virgin and from his birth [γέννησις] according to the flesh, the 524th year according to the times recorded by the holy fathers, Hippolytus the ancient and most famous of apostles and Epiphanius of Cyprus, the chief priest, and Hero the philosopher and confessor. ~Cyril of Scythopolis <i>Life of Sabas</i> p183²</p> <p>B) [Euthymius died]...from the creation of the world, when time began to be measured by the movement of the sun, the 5,965th year, but from the incarnation [ἐνανθρώπησις] of the Word of God from the virgin and from his birth [γέννησις] according to the flesh, the 465th year according to the times recorded by the holy fathers, Hippolytus the ancient and most famous of apostles and Epiphanius of Cyprus, and Hero the philosopher and confessor ~Cyril of Scythopolis <i>Life of Euthymius</i> p.60³</p>	<p>(4A & 4B) Cyril of Scythopolis testifies that Hippolytus believed Jesus was born 5,500 years from creation, which corroborates Hippolytus' statement in his <i>Commentary on Daniel</i>.</p>
<p>3. Chronography of 354 (354 AD)</p> <p>A) Christ was born [natus] December 25th ~ <i>Chronography of 354 Part 12</i>⁴</p> <p>B) (301)...from Adam until the transmigration into Babylon under Jeconiah, 57 generations, 4,842 years, 9 months. (302) And after the transmigration into Babylon until the generation [generatio] of Christ, there was 14 generations, 660 years, and from the generation [generatio] of Christ until the Passion there was 30 years and from the Passion up until this year which is year 13 of the Emperor Alexander, there is 206 years. (303) Therefore all the years from Adam up until year 13 of the Emperor Alexander make 5,738 years.</p>	<p>(3A & 3B) The <i>Chronography of 354</i> is a compilation of various sources, two of which give a date for Jesus' birth. The first, found in part 12, specifically names December 25th and is typically considered the earliest source to give this date. The second date, given in part 15, is in actuality a Latin translation of Hippolytus' <i>Chronicon</i> known as the <i>Liber Generationis I</i>. It claims that Jesus was born 9 months after the anniversary of the creation of the world. Parts 12 and 13 also name Hippolytus as a presbyter of Rome² and give the date of his martyrdom³. These two references to Hippolytus represent much of what we know about Hippolytus from outside sources.⁴ It is therefore of particular interest that this important source on Hippolytus names December 25th as the birthday of Jesus and also translates Hippolytus' date for Jesus' birth without contradiction, implying that the two dates agree with one another.</p> <p>However, scholars are divided as to whether the Latin translation of Hippolytus' <i>Chronicon</i> was originally part of the <i>Chronography of 354</i>.⁵ Therefore it remains uncertain if the date of December 25th given in the <i>Chronography of 354</i> derives from Hippolytus. Further discussion of the <i>Liber Generationis I</i> (3B) will be given later on along with Hippolytus' <i>Chronicon</i> (1B).</p>

¹ Richard (1951) p.21

² My translation from Schwartz (1939)

³ My translation from Schwartz (1939)

⁴ My translation from Mommsen (1892)

Appendix 1

~ <i>Chronography of 354 Part 15 Liber Generationis I</i> §301-303 ¹	
<p>2. Passover Computation (243 AD) Desiring to learn the time of his birth [nativitas], let us carefully count these 1548 years from the Exodus, i.e. from the first line of the table, and we shall arrive at the day of his nativity [nativitas]. That day being in the sixth sedecennitas [sedecennitate] in the thirteenth line is found to be 28 March, a Wednesday. O the splendid and divine providence of the Lord, that on that day, even the very day, on which the sun was made, 28 March, a Wednesday, Christ should be born [nascor]. ~Passover Computation 18-19⁶</p>	<p>(2) The <i>Passover Computation</i> is based off of Hippolytus' <i>Canon</i> and states that the "nativitas" of Jesus was March 28th. This term usually means "birth" as it seems to in this case, but its testimony is reliant on our analysis of the original Greek in Hippolytus' <i>Canon</i> (1A).</p>
<p>1. Hippolytus (c202-235 AD) A) Genesis [γένεσις] of Christ: Wednesday, April 2nd 2 BC; Passion: Friday, March 25th 29 AD ~Hippolytus <i>Canon</i>⁷</p> <p>B) (686)...from Adam until the transmigration into Babylon under Jeconiah, 57 generations, 4,842 years, 9 months. (687) And after the transmigration into Babylon until the generation [generatio] of Christ, there was 14 generations, 660 years, and from the generation [generatio] of Christ until the Passion there was 30 years and from the Passion up until this year which is year 13 of the Emperor Alexander, there is 206 years. (688) Therefore all the years from Adam up until year 13 of the Emperor Alexander make 5,738 years. ~Hippolytus <i>Chronicon</i> §686-688⁸</p>	<p>The two pieces of data given by Hippolytus in his works (1A) the <i>Canon</i> and (1B) the <i>Chronicon</i> have been the subject of much debate and will be discussed below. Additional analysis of the testimonies from the (3A & 3B) <i>Chronography of 354</i> and (2) the <i>Passover Computation</i> will be included where appropriate.</p>

² The Chronography of 354 AD Part 13

³ The Chronography of 354 AD Part 12

⁴ Though Brent (1995) p.289-290 would claim that this Hippolytus is different from our Hippolytus.

⁵ Salzmon (1990) p.50

¹ My translation from Helm (1955)

⁶ Translation from Ogg (1955) Latin notes from Hartel (1871). I have substituted the word "table" for the word "pinax."

⁷ Translation from Mosshammer (2008)

⁸ My translation from Helm (1955)

Appendix 1

The Canon of Hippolytus

A fragment of Hippolytus' *Canon* came to light in a stunning discovery of an ancient statue of a seated man in a graveyard near the Via Tiburtina in Rome in 1551 AD. So rare is a find like this that this statue now sits at the entrance to the Vatican Library. On one side of the statue is inscribed a list of writings. Using this list, scholars have identified the statue as either Hippolytus himself or a representation of the community in which Hippolytus was a member. The list of writings represents his works and perhaps those of his community as well.¹ Whether the statue represents him or merely symbolizes his community does not matter for our question at hand.

On another side of the chair there is a lunar table, which was taken from Hippolytus' lost work the *Canon*.² He drew it up to calculate the date of the first full moon which occurs around the Vernal Equinox, which was March 25th according to the Julian calendar.³ Passover was on this date and Easter on the first Sunday after it. In this way Hippolytus meant to establish the dates of Passover and Easter for all years, past and present.

The table gives a list of the seven days of the week in a 16 by 7 grid. Another column supplies a calendar date. The heading of the lunar table indicates that the first year corresponds to 222 AD Saturday April 13th. Indeed, there was a full moon on this date.⁴ There are also twelve notes scattered throughout the table, which indicate important events in biblical history that occurred on that specific Passover, including two important notes associated with the life of Jesus.

Calculating future and past dates of the Passover is quite complicated and Hippolytus failed at his attempt. The chart is inaccurate three years after it began.⁵ In fact, twenty years after Hippolytus wrote his *Canon*, an anonymous author corrected it in a work called the *Passover Computation*, although he also was wrong.

Despite this, the notes associated with the statue leave us with a valuable tool. Because the table repeats every 112 years, we can theoretically calculate the specific year, month, and day of the two notes concerning Jesus' life. These are his "genesis" in Row 2 Cycle 1 and his "passion" in Row 16 Cycle 2. To find the date of Jesus' passion we must count backwards from the first date, which is 222 AD, the top of Cycle 1. We start at the bottom of Cycle 7 and move up, then begin again at the bottom of Cycle 6, and continue in this manner until the noted date is reached.



Bunsen (1852)

¹ Brent (1995) p.297-299 and Andrei (2006)

² See image from Bunsen (1852), Brent (1995) has more pictures.

³ Pliny *Natural History* 18.66 in Bostock and Riley (1855)

⁴ <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/phase/phases0201.html> accessed July 2, 2010.

⁵ The chart is accurate up to 224 AD. In 225 AD it is one day off, in 228 AD it becomes two days off, in 234 AD it becomes 3 days off, and in 235 AD it becomes 4 days off. <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/phase/phases0201.html> accessed July 2, 2010.

Appendix 1 The Canon of Hippolytus

In the first year of the Roman emperor Alexander Severus, the 14th of the Passover moon fell on Saturday, the Ides of April, during an intercalary month. For the succeeding years it will be as indicated in the table below. Events of the past were as noted. One must break the fast when Sunday comes.¹

Year	Full Moon	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4	Cycle 5	Cycle 6	Cycle 7
1	April 13th	7	6 ^A	5	4	3	2	1
2	April 2nd	4 ^B	3	2	1	7	6	5
3	March 21-22nd	1 ^C	7	6 ^D	5	4	3	2
4	April 9th	7 ^E	6	5	4	3	2	1
5	March 29th	4	3	2	1	7	6	5
6	March 18th	1	7 ^F	6	5	4	3	2
7	April 5th	7	6	5	4 ^G	3	2	1
8	March 25th	4	3	2	1	7	6	5
9	April 13th	3	2	1	7	6	5	4
10	April 2nd	7	6	5	4	3	2	1 ^H
11	March 21-22nd	4	3	2	1	7	6	5
12	April 9th	3	2	1	7	6	5	4 ^I
13	March 29th	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
14	March 18th	4	3	2	1	7	6	5 ^J
15	April 5th	3 ^K	2	1	7	6	5	4
16	March 25th	7	6 ^L	5	4	3	2	1

A	Ezra according to Daniel and In the desert	G	Joshua according to Daniel
B	Genesis of Christ	H	Exodus
C	Hezekiah	I	In the Desert
D	Joshua	J	Ezra
E	Josiah	K	Exodus according to Daniel
F	Hezekiah according to Daniel and Josiah	L	Passion

Note: April 13th of Cycle 1 corresponds with Saturday, April 13th 222 AD. The dual dates that add “according to Daniel” reflect Hippolytus’ calculations in his *Commentary on Daniel*; the other dates reflect his calculations in his *Chronicon*. The column entitled “Year” is not present in the inscription and was placed here as an aid to the reader.

As said before, the table repeats every 112 years, so when we first come to the bottom of Cycle 2 we are at 141AD, which is obviously incorrect, so we must go another 112 years.² Having done this we reach Friday, March 25th 29AD, the Vernal Equinox. This is the date which the *Canon* states that Jesus died and agrees exactly with the disputed passage in Hippolytus’ *Commentary on Daniel*.

This brings us to the most important piece of evidence in the *Canon*, which is in the second row of Cycle 1. On Wednesday, April 2nd the note reads “Genesis of Christ.” This date corresponds to 2 BC.³ “Genesis” is the same word for the first book in the Bible and typically means “beginning” or “origin.” It comes from the Greek word γένεσις.

Scholars have long debated whether “genesis” refers to the birth of Jesus or his conception. If “birth” is meant then the date of April 2nd contradicts the date of December 25th in the disputed passage in

¹ This table and heading were taken from Alden and Mosshammer (2008) p.117-125. I substituted “Passover” and “intercalary” for the words “Pascha” and “embolismic,” respectively, on the heading of the table. The note is my own.

² Another method is simply to subtract 193 from 222.

³ 222-223=-1 and then subtract one more year because there is no year 0. So we get -2 or 2 BC

Appendix 1

Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel*. If "conception" is meant then the inscription on the statue would agree closely with the date of December 25th because it aligns well with a 9 month gestational period.

"Genesis" is a difficult term to precisely define because often its contextual usage leaves open to question whether someone's birth or conception is being spoken of. However, no scholar has performed an exhaustive study of this word in the writings of Hippolytus and his community. Only relatively recently was this even possible. Using the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) database to search all of the more than 170,000 words in Hippolytus' writings and those of his community we find 134 instances of the word "genesis."¹ Reading through every one, we find, as expected, all are either ambiguous or do not apply to our discussion at hand, except for one:

"They draw [a horoscope] from the genesis of the people who are being examined from unquestionably the depositing of the seed and conception or from birth." ~*Against All Heresies* 4.3.5²

This work was written by a member of Hippolytus' community in Rome, perhaps even himself.³ As you can see "genesis" may refer to either conception or birth, but the author favors "conception" as he qualifies it with the particle "ἤτοι" which means "unquestionably." This directly refutes the notion that only "birth" is meant by the term "genesis" as the community of Hippolytus considered either option valid, but in this case the community favored "conception" as the meaning of the term "genesis."

Additionally, word searches of authors outside of Hippolytus' community, but who lived during his lifetime, reveal evidence that "genesis", when referring to a person, meant "conception." Galen, a contemporary of Hippolytus and a founder of western medicine, affirms in his work *On Semen* that "genesis" occurs in the womb.

...but with the genesis of the animal in the womb the matter [semen] is abundant.
~Galen *On Semen* 1.13.17⁴

Clement of Alexandria, a Christian contemporary of Hippolytus, agrees:

It is not therefore frequent intercourse by the parents, but the reception of it [the seed] in the womb which corresponds with genesis.
~Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 3.12.83.2⁵

And he says the same in another quote:

And whenever angels give good news to the barren, they introduce souls before conception. And in the Gospel "the babe leapt" as a living being. And the barren are barren on account of this, that whenever there is union for the depositing of seed the soul is not introduced, so as to secure conception and genesis.
~Clement of Alexandria *Eclogae Propheticae* 50.2-3⁶

Methodius of Olympus, who lived in the third century, states⁷:

¹ This search covered every work ascribed to Hippolytus in the TLG as of June 2010.

² My Translation from Marcovich (1986)

³ Brent (1995) p.297-299 and Andrei (2006)

⁴ My translation from De Lacy (1992)

⁵ My translation from Treu (1985)

⁶ My translation from Treu (1985)

⁷ Philo of Judea says much the same as Methodius in his work *Allegorical Interpretation* 3.185.3

Appendix 1

For the beginning of genesis is the casting of seed into the passages of the womb.

~Methodius of Olympus *Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 2.1.29¹

Lastly, the word “genesis” is used only 5 times in the New Testament and twice relating to Jesus. It is used in Matthew 1:1, “The book of the genesis of Jesus Christ,”² where it perhaps means “genealogy” or “origin.” The second time it is used is in Matthew 1:18 where it seems to reference Jesus’ conception:³

The genesis of Jesus Christ happened in this way. After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child by the Holy Spirit. ~Matthew 1:18⁴

Hippolytus may have had this very verse in mind when he wrote “Genesis of Christ” in his *Canon*. Given that Hippolytus’ own Roman community, his contemporaries and possibly the Gospel of Matthew all seem to support “conception” as the meaning of the word “genesis,” Hippolytus very likely did as well. Therefore in Hippolytus’ mind Jesus would then have been born sometime nine months after April 2nd, which corresponds quite well with the date of December 25th given in his *Commentary on Daniel*.

This also means that the evidence against the hypothetical reconstruction given in Table 4 is overwhelming. Proponents of the view, such as Richard and Nautin, defended the reconstruction because it agreed with the *Canon* by claiming that Jesus was born on Wednesday, April 2nd 2 BC.⁵ However it is now clear that no manuscripts support or external testimonies support the reading and most importantly even the *Canon* of Hippolytus does not support it because “genesis” seems most likely to refer to conception and not birth.

However, though a date of April 2nd for the conception of Jesus harmonizes with December 25th as given in the disputed passage in the *Commentary on Daniel*, it contradicts both the year of Jesus’ birth and also his age as given in the same passage. The *Canon* clearly claims Jesus was born in 2 BC, while the *Commentary on Daniel* seems to indicate 3 BC or, if Hippolytus took into account the irregularities associated with the introduction to the Julian calendar, possibly 4 or 5 BC. Additionally, when we count up Jesus’ age in the *Canon* we find that he was only 29 years and 3 months old when he died, if we count from his birth. This seems fairly young. However, if we count from conception, as the *Canon* appears to do, then Jesus would have been 7 days shy of 30 years when he died. However both of these potential ages still contradict the statement that Jesus died in his “33rd year” as stated in the *Commentary on Daniel*.

These contradictions force us to revisit the internal evidence and manuscript evidence concerning the disputed passage. Previously I noted how internally the passage in the *Commentary on Daniel* had some difficulties because it is mathematically impossible for Jesus to have been born in 3 BC and for him to reach his 33rd year if he died in 29 AD, as implied in the *Commentary on Daniel*. Given this, the date of 2 BC, though it matches the date given in the *Canon*, would make even less sense.

The manuscript evidence also does not help to solve this discrepancy. Manuscript B is the only one that omits Jesus’ age, but it is also missing several words before this and therefore contains a nonsensical reading. Even George of Arabia agrees that Jesus died in his 33rd year. Furthermore the date of Jesus’ death

¹ My translation from Debidour and Musurillo (1963)

² My translation from Aland (1983)

³ Hippolytus however may have had access to the variant reading γέννησις in Matthew 1:18, so this piece of evidence cannot be viewed as decisive.

⁴ My translation from Aland (1983)

⁵ Richard (1951) p.48 and Nautin (1952) p.26. They claimed that Manuscript A’s fragmentary date πρὸ τεσσάρων ἀπριλίων could be changed to πρὸ τεσσάρων <νῶνδν> ἀπριλίων which would exactly correspond to Wednesday, April 2nd 2 BC, the same date for Jesus’ genesis in the *Canon*. In my mind this coincidence between the reconstructed passage and the *Canon* is less than the other coincidence between the *Canon* and the disputed passage, which is discussed on page 206. This is especially true because Richard and Nautin had to reconstruct Jesus date of birth and also his age to create a coincidence while this other coincidence is present in the manuscripts already.

Appendix 1

is given in all manuscripts except J and though George of Arabia omits it, the *Canon* corroborates it. On account of this it is hard to claim that Jesus' age or his date of death was added by a later scribe.

Looking beyond the surface of this contradiction we can make three intriguing observations. First there is essentially a two year difference between Jesus' age in the *Canon* and his age in the *Commentary on Daniel*; he is 30 in the latter and 32, that is in his 33rd year, in the former. Second, the disputed passage in the *Commentary on Daniel* states that Jesus was born on December 25th, which was the Winter Solstice to the Romans. This suggests that Hippolytus believed Jesus was conceived on March 25th, the Spring Equinox, exactly 9 months previously. Third, looking back at the *Canon* we see that if we increase Jesus' age by two years but keep the same date of death, as is done in *Commentary on Daniel*, Jesus would have been conceived on March 25th 4 BC, which Hippolytus thought was the Passover, exactly 9 months before December 25th.¹

This agrees perfectly with the passage in the *Commentary on Daniel* and matches up with even greater precision than the April 2nd date for Jesus' conception which is given in his *Canon*. The date of 4 BC also allows for Jesus to reach 32 years of age and consequently his 33rd year, which solves the other difficulty in the *Commentary on Daniel*. This is therefore likely more than a coincidence and suggests that Hippolytus was using the same exact method of reckoning Passovers in both documents. Furthermore this also suggests that at some point Hippolytus changed his mind about Jesus' age, but not the date of his death, something that even scholars of our day do. Another piece of corroborating evidence concerning Hippolytus' change of mind will be discussed in the next section.

Summary of Analysis

In summary the *Canon* of Hippolytus states that Jesus died on Friday, March 25th 29 AD, which agrees with the disputed passage in Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel*. The *Canon* also states that the genesis of Jesus was April 2nd 2 BC. Research using the TLG database shows that "genesis" most likely refers to conception, which would harmonize well with a birth date in late December. Though the month and day of Jesus' birth harmonizes between the two texts, his age is two years more in the *Commentary on Daniel*. However, if we examine the chart in the *Canon* and add two years to Jesus' life but keep the same date for his death, as the *Commentary on Daniel* does, we find that the *Canon* specifies that Jesus would have been conceived on March 25th, exactly 9 months before December 25th, precisely as indicated in the *Commentary on Daniel*.

¹ I am indebted to Ogg (1962) p.6 and Salmon (1892) p.177-179 who first made these observations.

Appendix 1

The *Chronicon* of Hippolytus

Hippolytus also wrote a geographical and historical work called the *Chronicon*. A portion of it is preserved in the original Greek and three different Latin versions cover the remainder: the *Liber Generationis I*, the *Liber Generationis II* and the *Chronicon Alexandrini* also known as the *Excerpta Barbari*. An Armenian version is also extant.¹ The *Liber Generationis I* is by far the most faithful to the Greek text because the other two Latin versions are abbreviated and vary widely from it.² The Armenian generally follows the *Liber Generationis I* but is not directly based on the original Greek text.³

In this work Hippolytus uses the Bible to count the years from the creation of the world until his present day, 235 AD. He mentions important biblical events along the way and, as luck has it, he gives dates concerning Jesus' life. This same passage was briefly discussed earlier in relation to the *Chronography of 354*, which, I noted, may have originally included this Latin translation of the *Chronicon*. The passage reads as follows:

(686)...from Adam until the transmigration into Babylon under Jeconiah, 57 generations, 4,842 years, 9 months. (687) And after the transmigration into Babylon until the generation [generatio] of Christ, there was 14 generations, 660 years, and from the generation [generatio] of Christ until the Passion there was 30 years and from the Passion up until this year which is year 13 of the Emperor Alexander, there is 206 years. (688) Therefore all the years from Adam up until year 13 of the Emperor Alexander make 5,738 years. ~*Chronicon* §686-688

This passage harmonizes with the *Canon* perfectly. It states that Jesus died 206 years before year 13 of Emperor Alexander, which was 235 AD; this means Jesus died around 29 AD, which corresponds with both the *Canon* and the *Commentary on Daniel*. The *Chronicon* also states that Jesus was 30 years old when he died, which is exactly what the *Canon* states when we count from Jesus' conception.

However, Hippolytus gives no calendar date for the birth of Jesus, only saying that his "generation" was 5,502 years and 9 months from creation of the world. What month and day this corresponds to is uncertain. It is also not clear whether this refers to his birth or conception. The Latin translation, the *Liber Generationis I*, uses the term "generatio" in the two places that I have translated above as "generation of Christ." Markwart's translation of the Armenian translates this term specifically as "birth."⁴ Furthermore the Latin and Armenian translators seem to confuse things. If we add up the numbers in the passage above we see that Hippolytus believed that Jesus was born 5,502 years 9 months from creation of the world, that he died 5,532 years 9 months from the creation of the world, and that year 13 of the Emperor Alexander Severus was 5,738 years 9 months from the creation of the world. However the final sentence, §688, contradicts this and leaves out the 9 months.

This last sentence, §688, seems to be correct because in §700 Hippolytus says the same thing. In §699 Hippolytus also says that Jesus died 206 years before year 13 of the Emperor Alexander and in §698 he says that Jesus lived 30 years. These three dates agree with the table in Hippolytus' *Canon* as well⁵. Hippolytus also believed that these three dates occurred on the Passover,⁶ which means that we cannot expect 9 months to be made up by those dates as the Passover takes place around the same time every year.

¹ See introduction in Helm (1955) for discussion.

² This is quite clear after comparing the sections that the translations and the Greek overlap.

³ Helm (1955) p.XII

⁴ Lit: "Geburt" §270 of Markwart's translation of the Armenian in Helm (1955). The other two less faithful Latin translations omit this passage.

⁵ How the *Canon* agrees that year 13 of the Emperor Alexander Severus was 5,738 from the creation of the world will be shown later on in this section.

⁶ §698-699 of the *Chronicon*

Appendix 1

So how are we to account for the fact that Hippolytus states that Jesus' "generation" was both 5,502 years 9 months and 5,502 years from the creation of the world? In the *Canon* Hippolytus most likely marks the beginning of Jesus' 30 years of life from his conception, as we have seen in our word study of the word "genesis." Furthermore the *Commentary on Daniel* also uses the term "genesis of Christ" to mark the beginning of the final 500 years of the world¹ and the 434 years between Ezra and Christ², which indicates that Hippolytus counted Jesus' age from his conception in this work as well.³ If Hippolytus is doing the same thing in his *Chronicon*, the extra 9 months could be accounted for because they are taken up during Jesus' gestation period. In this sense Jesus was born 5,502 years 9 months from the creation of the world, but was conceived 5,502 years from the creation of the world and then died 30 years after his conception, which agrees completely with *Canon*. This would mean that in all three of Hippolytus' documents relating to the chronology of Jesus' life we find him counting Jesus' age from his conception not his birth.

In the original but now lost Greek of his *Chronicon* Hippolytus would have probably used two different Greek words to specify first the birth of Jesus and second his conception. He may have followed the model in the Gospel of Matthew⁴ and used "γενεά"⁵ to indicate Jesus' generation, which of course begins at birth, and γένεσις,⁶ to indicate his conception, the same word which Hippolytus used in his *Canon*.⁷ The Latin translator misunderstood this and used only one Latin word "generatio" to translate both Greek words.⁸ Saint Jerome made the very same mistake when he was translating the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew because he also used "generatio" to translate γένεσις in Matthew 1:1 and 1:18 and γενεά in Matthew 1:17⁹

The passage should read:

(686)...from Adam until the transmigration into Babylon under Jeconiah, 57 generations, 4,842 years, 9 months. (687) And after the transmigration into Babylon until the birth [γενεά] of Christ, there was 14 generations, 660 years, and from the genesis [γένεσις] of Christ until the Passion there was 30 years and from the Passion up until this year which is year 13 of the Emperor Alexander, there is 206 years. (688) Therefore all the years from Adam up until year 13 of the Emperor Alexander make 5,738 years. ~*Chronicon* §686-688

Though we cannot be sure of the original Greek wording, it is clear that Hippolytus believed that Jesus was born 9 months after the anniversary day in which the world was created, because the two most accurate translations, the *Liber Generationis I* and the Armenian translation maintain this¹⁰, while the other two less faithful Latin translations omit this passage.

¹ *Commentary on Daniel* 4.24.4

² *Commentary on Daniel* 4.31.1. The number 434 agrees exactly with the *Canon* as well.

³ Counting Jesus' age from his conception is also supported in the disputed passage in Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* 4.23.3. As discussed at the end of our analysis of the *Canon*, the disputed passage indicates that Jesus was born on December 25th 4 BC which means that he cannot have reached his 33rd by March 25th 29 AD unless we count from conception.

⁴ Matthew 1:17-1:18

⁵ Matthew 1:17

⁶ Matthew 1:18 or possibly Matthew 1:1

⁷ Another option is that Hippolytus could have used the same Greek terminology employed by Clement of Alexandria for Jesus' birth and conception in his *Stromata* 1.21.146, which are ἐγεννήθη and γένεσις

⁸ The Armenian translator seems to have made the same mistake according to Markwart's translation.

⁹ Gryson (1994)

¹⁰ Mathematically speaking this is also the only satisfactory solution. If we were to assume that Hippolytus used the same Greek word in both instances, then we would still have 9 extra months to deal with. If we were to assume that Hippolytus is here saying that Jesus was conceived, not born, 9 months from the anniversary day of creation, then we would still have 6 extra months because 9 months after 9 months from the anniversary of creation would be 18 months, or 6 months from the

Appendix 1

Given this, if we can discover the month and day in which Hippolytus believed the world was created, we can then add 9 months to find Jesus' birthday. Many early Christians believed that the world was created on the Vernal Equinox, March 25th. The author of the *Passover Computation*, which corrects Hippolytus' *Canon*, also believed this and claimed that his predecessors, of whom Hippolytus was likely one, did as well. After describing the first day of creation he says:

That day is now understood to be the 25 March. Some from among us, who previously desired to exhibit this new month and indicate the days of Passover according to the Jews, reckoned from it. ~*The Passover Computation* 4¹

If Hippolytus also believed this, then he would also very likely believe that Jesus was born on December 25th, the Winter Solstice, exactly 9 months after the Vernal Equinox.

If we can match one of the events that Hippolytus dates from the creation of the world in his *Chronicon* with a calendar date we can then determine the day he thought the world was created. Three dates immediately stand out, the first refers to the current day in which Hippolytus completed his *Chronicon*, the second refers to the death of Jesus, and the third to Jesus' conception.

Hippolytus stated that there were exactly 5,738 years from the creation of the world to his present day, year 13 of Emperor Alexander Severus.² He also adds that at this time the Passover was served.³ Later, in the final section of the work, he says that the reign of this emperor lasted 13 years 9 days.⁴ Emperor Alexander Severus died in mid March⁵ and Hippolytus' *Canon* stipulates that the Passover be celebrated on March 18th in 235 AD, however, by this time the Passover moon had drifted to March 22nd.⁶ These dates indicate that Hippolytus believed that the world was created on or near a Passover or sometime in mid-March.

Secondly, Hippolytus believed that Jesus died exactly 206 years before his present day or 5,532 years from the creation of the world⁷. Both Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* and his *Canon* state that Jesus died on March 25th, the Vernal Equinox, which was also the Passover. This indicates that Hippolytus believed that the world was created on the Passover or on March 25th.

Thirdly, in his *Chronicon* Hippolytus believed that Jesus was conceived exactly 5,502 years from creation, however in his *Commentary on Daniel* he says this occurred 5,500 years from the creation of the world.⁸ According to his *Canon* both of these dates correspond with the Passover, and refer respectively to April 2nd or March 25th, the Vernal Equinox.⁹ This indicates that Hippolytus believed that the world was created on the Passover on March 25th or on the Passover of April 2nd.

The above dates imply that Hippolytus used a hybrid system of calculating years based upon the idea that the world was created on or near both the Passover and the Vernal Equinox. This helps make sense of why, in §692-699 of his *Chronicon*, he dated famous Passovers in the Bible from the creation of the

anniversary of creation. However, if we assume that Jesus was born 9 months from the anniversary day of creation, then the extra 9 months are accounted for by his gestation period.

¹ Translation from Ogg (1955)

² *Chronicon* §687-688, 699-700

³ *Chronicon* §699

⁴ *Chronicon* §778

⁵ Hopkins (1907) p.260-270 gives the date as March 13th but there is uncertainty.

⁶ <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/phase/phases0201.html> accessed July 2, 2010.

⁷ *Chronicon* §698

⁸ Hippolytus dates Jesus' genesis 5,500 years from creation in 4.24.4 and 4.31.1. His mention of Jesus' birth as being 5,500 years from creation in 4.23.3 is a general statement and he himself in the next section (4.24.4) specifically cautions that we are, "to count the remaining 500 years" from Jesus' genesis.

⁹ As mentioned before, the *Commentary on Daniel* says Jesus was born on December 25th which would mean he was conceived 9 months beforehand and implies a date of March 25th the Vernal Equinox. The *Canon* corroborates this date and claims that this was also the Passover, as was pointed out at the end of our analysis of the *Canon*.

Appendix 1

world using whole years with no additional months or days, as he was using this hybrid system which counts from Passover to Passover even though the date of Passover moves about slightly in the calendar.

Turning back to the table in Hippolytus' *Canon*, we can theoretically calculate the date of the first Passover and discover the precise day in which Hippolytus thought the world was created. Given that in his *Chronicon* Hippolytus thought that the world was 5,502 years old when the "Genesis of Christ" occurred¹ we need to simply subtract 5,502 years from the "Genesis of Christ" in the *Canon* to find the date of the first Passover. 49 x 112 gets us to 5,488 and then if we, counting inclusively², continue 14 more years we reach Thursday, March 29th.³ This date indicates the first Passover Moon.

Of course, according to a rigid interpretation of the Bible, the moon was created on the 4th day of the week, but would not have been seen until the following night, the 5th day, Thursday (in the book of Genesis days begin at nightfall not at midnight).⁴ Thus, this agrees with the theory that March 25th the Vernal Equinox was the first day of creation and that the Passover Moon occurred the first day the moon was visible. Hippolytus' *Chronicon* claims that Jesus was born 9 months from this date which therefore corresponds with December 25th and agrees exactly with the disputed passage Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel*.

Now of course one may point out that in the *Commentary on Daniel* Hippolytus said that Jesus was conceived 5,500 years⁵ and not 5,502 years from the creation of the world as both the *Chronicon* and the *Canon* indicate. However, this two year difference helps corroborate an earlier conclusion, which was mentioned at the end of our analysis of the *Canon*. Previously we noted the following observations: first, there is also a two year difference between Jesus' age given in the *Commentary on Daniel*, where he is 32, or in his 33rd year, and both the *Canon* and the *Chronicon*, where he is 30. Second, the *Commentary on Daniel* also states that Jesus was born on December 25th, which was the Winter Solstice. This suggests that Hippolytus believed Jesus was conceived on March 25th, the Spring Equinox, exactly 9 months previously. Third, if we look at the *Canon* we see that if we increase Jesus' age by two years but keep the same date of death, as is done in *Commentary on Daniel*, Jesus would have been conceived on March 25th 4 BC. This means that the *Canon* and the *Commentary on Daniel* agree with one another in principle.

Now we can add a fourth observation; to find the day in which Hippolytus thought the world was created, we need to inclusively subtract exactly 5,500 years from the Passover of March 25th 4 BC date, the day in which the *Commentary on Daniel* indicates Jesus was conceived. When we do this we come to the same exact day for the first Passover that we reached above: Thursday, March 29th. This therefore also indicates that the world was created on March 25th the Vernal Equinox. As stated above, 9 months after this date is

¹ *Chronicon* §687

² Hippolytus alternated between counting inclusively and exclusively. For example, in his *Chronicon* §693 and in his *Canon* he gives 41 years between the Exodus and Joshua and therefore counts exclusively in both instances. He also counts exclusively for the age of Jesus in both works. However, in his *Chronicon* §695 he counts inclusively to determine the number of years between Hezekiah and Josiah and then he adds another inclusive count upon this in §696 to determine the years between Josiah and Ezra, meaning that he is actually one year off from a pure inclusive count and two years off from an exclusive count, while in the *Canon* he only counts exclusively for both of these dates. Inconsistencies like these are more understandable when you consider how difficult Greek and Roman mathematical notation was.

³ I credit Ogg (1962) p.6 for first making this observation

⁴ The *Passover Computation* addresses this debate about when exactly the moon was first seen and hence when the first Passover began, "But that being so, the moon, which was engaged to commence the night, cannot have been made after the going down of the sun and then have become visible in the sky; indeed it was under an obligation to be visible from daybreak and to accompany the sun, along with which it had attained to a very high office." ~Chapter 6 Translation from Ogg (1955)

The author of the computation believed that the moon was created and was first seen at daybreak. No doubt the author of the *Passover Computation* felt the need to make this distinction because he differed with his source, Hippolytus. Also it was very important for the author of the *Passover Computation* that the moon be made at daybreak because he had to, in his mind, start the phases of the moon at the precise moment to coincide with the life of Jesus and his present day. Hippolytus had to do the same, but in his case he would therefore have believed that the moon did not begin its phases until twelve hours later, at nightfall, when the moon is typically first seen, which was the beginning of the 5th day of creation and the first Passover.

⁵ See footnote 8 on page 17

Appendix 1

December 25th which matches up perfectly with Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* and is also exactly 9 months from the anniversary of creation, just as his *Chronicon* indicates.

Appendix 1

Summary and Conclusion

We first looked at the manuscript evidence for the disputed passage in Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* 4.23.3 and found that only manuscript J did not contain the date of December 25th while all others, including the oldest, did. Then we looked at the internal evidence which showed that the passage may contain a mathematical error or that Hippolytus was simply accounting for an incorrect implementation of the Julian calendar, in either case similar reckoning is performed by Epiphanius of Salamis. Then we moved to external evidence which showed mixed support for the passage; George Syncellus supports it and George of Arabia supports manuscript J. The *Chronography of 354* supports the date of December 25th, but we cannot be sure that it is based off of Hippolytus' writings.

Then we turned to Hippolytus' *Canon* which claims that the "genesis" of Jesus was on the Passover of April 2nd 2 BC. An extensive word study using the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae database showed that Hippolytus' own Roman community, his contemporaries and possibly the Gospel of Matthew support "conception" as the meaning of the word "genesis." This harmonizes well with a birth date of December 25th and provides conclusive evidence against the authenticity of the hypothetical reconstruction given in Table 4 because no manuscripts or external testimonies support it and as our word study shows, Hippolytus' own *Canon* does not support it either.

Next we examined Hippolytus' *Chronicon* and found that, according to Hippolytus, Jesus was born 5,502 years and 9 months after the anniversary of the creation of the world. Evidence in the *Chronicon* and the *Canon* indicate that the world was created on the Vernal Equinox, March 25th which means that Jesus would have been born 9 months later on December 25th. This matches perfectly with the *Commentary on Daniel*.

However, the *Commentary on Daniel* differs from the *Chronicon* because it says that Jesus was conceived 5,500 years and not 5,502 years from the creation of the world. The *Commentary on Daniel* also gives Jesus two extra years of life but keeps the same date of his death as his *Canon* and *Chronicon*. These differences in reality harmonize with the methodology given in the *Canon* because if we backdate Jesus' life by two years in the *Canon* but keep the same date for his death, as the *Commentary on Daniel* does, then the *Canon* would claim that Jesus was conceived on the Vernal Equinox, March 25th 4 BC 5,500 years from creation, exactly as implied in the *Commentary on Daniel*. Hippolytus would have therefore believed that Jesus was born December 25th exactly 9 months later, which also is corroborated by Hippolytus' *Chronicon* and is explicitly stated in his *Commentary on Daniel*.

It certainly is not a coincidence that all of these numbers match so precisely and therefore strongly argues that Hippolytus believed Jesus was conceived on the Passover of March 25th the Vernal Equinox of 4 BC, 5,500 years from creation, but that he later changed his mind and believed that Jesus was conceived on the Passover of April 2nd, 2 BC. He however never seems to have changed his mind about the day and month of Jesus' birth because he states that Jesus was born on December 25th in his *Commentary on Daniel*, which seems to have been written before his *Canon*, most likely between 202-211 AD, which would coincide with the Severian persecution. Later, in his *Chronicon*, which was written at the end of his life in 235 AD, he says that Jesus was born 9 months from the anniversary of the creation of the world, which corresponds with the Winter Solstice, December 25th, just as claimed in his *Commentary on Daniel*.¹

Consequently it seems most likely that the source of confusion in manuscript evidence occurred because an ancient scribe, who like Epiphanius favored a different date for Jesus' birth, attempted to change the date of December 25th to what he himself believed was the correct date. Another possibility is that a

¹ It is also possible that Hippolytus changed his mind twice; that is that he wrote the *Canon* first, then changed his mind about the date of Jesus' conception and wrote the *Commentary on Daniel*, but then changed his mind back again and wrote the *Chronicon*.

Appendix 1

scribe was confused by the testimony given in Hippolytus' *Canon* and attempted to "correct" the date of December 25th.¹

However, even if we were disregard all of the above evidence in favor of the authenticity of the disputed passage and instead support the reading of manuscript J in Table 3, the calculations given previously still stand. This is because Manuscript J also claims that Jesus was 32 when he died and that he was conceived 5,500 years from the creation of the world. Just like with the disputed passage, this allows us to us to backdate his birth year to 4 BC in the *Canon*, which would mean he was conceived on the Passover, March 25th the Vernal Equinox. This would strongly suggest that he was born 9 months later on December 25th. The data from his *Chronicon* would confirm this conclusion.

Finally, even if we were to deny the authenticity of all manuscripts of Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel*, including Manuscript J, a strong argument can still be made that Hippolytus believed that Jesus was born on December 25th.² This is because he states that Jesus was born 9 months after the anniversary of the creation of the world in his *Chronicon*. After we compare Hippolytus' calculations in his *Chronicon* and *Canon* we see that he believed the world was created on the Vernal Equinox March 25th. Of course, 9 months after March 25th is December 25th the day in which Hippolytus thought Jesus was born.

From this we can safely say that, sometime between 202 and 211 AD, Hippolytus marked December 25th as the birthday of Jesus. This clearly had nothing to do with Pagan festivals, but was derived from the idea that Jesus was conceived on the Passover.

This date was chosen because it aligned precisely with the idea that the earth was created on the Vernal Equinox and that Jesus was conceived and killed on that very same day, March 25th which also coincided with the Passover.³ None of this, however, seems to be based off of any historical tradition about Jesus, but instead is based off of incorrect retrograded calculations concerning the dates of previous Passovers.

¹ A third possibility is that Hippolytus referred to both the genesis and birth of Jesus in the passage, much like how he appears to do in his *Chronicon*. This dual reference confused later scribes, just as how it appears to have confused the Latin translator of the *Chronicon* and St. Jerome when he translated the Gospel of Matthew. This confusion led to a deletion of part of the verse.

² This argument applies even if we were to assume that the same author did not write the *Canon*, the *Chronicon*, and the *Commentary on Daniel*, but only the former two writings as Cerrato (2002) p.101, 122, 254-255, Brent (1995) p. 273-276, and Nautin (1952) p.26 all claim.

³ Later he was to change his mind and claim that Jesus was only conceived on the Passover but not on the Vernal Equinox.