

Christian calendar is wrong, says Pope: Blundering sixth-century monk was several years out in calculation of Jesus's birth date

- **Pope Benedict XVI blames 'mistake' on Dionysius Exiguus in his new book**
- **Monk credited with inventing modern calendar based on Anno Domini era**
- **Pontiff also claims that donkeys have no place in traditional nativity scene**

By [Mail Foreign Service](#)

The Christian calendar is based on a blunder by a sixth-century monk who was several years out in his calculation of Jesus's birth date, the Pope has claimed.

Benedict XVI blames the 'mistake' on Dionysius Exiguus, who is credited with inventing the modern calendar based on the Anno Domini (AD) era.

The Pope's views are revealed in the final part of his three-volume work on the life of Jesus, published yesterday.



Calculations: Pope Benedict XVI (left, pictured yesterday) said the Christian calendar is based on a blunder by a sixth-century monk. The claims were made in his new book (right), *The Infancy Narratives: Jesus of Nazareth*

'The calculation of the beginning of our calendar - based on the birth of Jesus - was made by Dionysius Exiguus, who made a mistake in his calculations by several years,' he writes.

'The actual date of Jesus's birth was several years before.'

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- Killjoy Pope crushes Christmas nativity traditions: New Jesus book reveals there were no donkeys beside crib, no lowing oxen and definitely no carols

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Academics have long disputed when Jesus was born, with many believing it was probably between 6BC and 4BC. The Pontiff's intervention is certain to fuel the debate.

The leader of the world's one billion Catholics is also likely to raise eyebrows with his claim in the book that donkeys and other animals do not have a place in the traditional nativity scene.



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St Peter's Square in the heart of the Vatican City regularly has a large Christmas scene with an array of animals, but the Pope is certain their inclusion is historically inaccurate. 'In the gospels, there is no mention of animals,' he writes.

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Pope Benedict XVI

He believes that they were probably a pre-Christian Hebrew invention, as outlined in the Old Testament Book of Habakkuk, considered by some to predict the nativity.

The Pope, 85, also says angels never sang to shepherds to proclaim Christ's birth, as celebrated in the carol Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.

Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives hit bookshops in 50 countries yesterday, with more than a million copies planned for the initial print run.

In it, the Pope interprets the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which describe the months just before and after Jesus's birth.