

seem to have moved westward across the southern sky. This could have been the Magi's astral marker. Comet No. 53 on the Williams list is a tailless comet – which could have been a nova – that appeared over March and April in 4BC in constellation Aquila, which was also visible all over the East.

The star that the Magi followed – the **Star of Bethlehem** – could be any of the astral markers that appeared in 6, 5 and 4BC.

(The Greek term used in the Bible for star, “aster”, can mean any luminous heavenly body, including a comet, meteor, nova, or planet.)

### **The shepherds**

*Luke 2: 8:* “And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night.”

In Palestine – as in the rest of the Middle East at the time – shepherds stayed with their flocks in the fields only from Spring to Autumn. They brought their sheep in during the winter to protect them from the cold and rain. It is thus unlikely that the shepherds went to Bethlehem in December.

The Bible does not mention the celebration of Christ's birthday, and the early Christians seem not to have celebrated His birthday. However, to avoid persecution, they would hang holly on their doors during December just as the Roman pagans did