

Luke 2:1-7: His Will Be Done

**2 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. <sup>2</sup>This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.**

Caesar Augustus had brought the Roman Republic so much under his control, that finally he had transformed it into the Roman Empire. Now in saying that the census covered the world, literally the inhabited land. They meant inhabited by Roman citizens as opposed to barbarians—the whole Roman world. Luke is using the common language for an edict that covered the whole Roman empire.

**<sup>3</sup> And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.**

In the hands of God, this Emperor was just a pawn. God needed to get Mary, who was nine months pregnant to make a journey of about 75 miles overland from Nazareth to Bethlehem, so that prophecy could be fulfilled. The prophecies of God are always fulfilled, completed from the time they're spoken. Typically, Romans registered people in the place they were living, just like we do today, not by where their ancestors lived. It could very well be that Herod disguised the Roman Census as an appeal to tribal patriotism amongst the Jews, asking them to return to their tribal homes to be counted, and so Joseph returned to the City of David as the ancestral home of that branch of the tribe of Judah.

**<sup>4</sup> Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,**

Bethlehem Ephrathah was just a small city, likely about 300-1000 inhabitants. But this city of Ruth and Naomi, Boaz, and of course David was where God had said that the Messiah would be born, and this one prophecy effectively eliminated all other cities and towns throughout the world as a place in which the Messiah could be born.

Now Mary and Joseph were both of the House of David, so they would be going back to their ancestral home of Bethlehem. Justin Martyr tells the Roman government about Micah's prophecy and about the little town of Bethlehem in his 1st Apology defending the faith (chapter 34) saying: "Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, in which Jesus Christ was born, as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing made under Cyrenius, your first procurator in Judæa." So in A.D. 156 or so, the physical tax record was still able to be looked up in the Roman Archives.

**<sup>5</sup> in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.**

So, we know from verse 5 that Joseph and Mary travelled together for the census. This verse emphasizes the relationship between Mary and Joseph, since it indicates that Mary would not want to give birth without Joseph being there. Mary was still in danger as a woman who had become pregnant before marriage. Mary was safe as long as it was clear that Joseph was accepting responsibility for the family, and that meant she needed to stay with him.

**<sup>6</sup> While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.**

Jesus arrived at the exact day and hour he was supposed to. He arrived at night, so the shepherds could receive their visitation from the angels who pointed them to Jesus. Thousands of years of waiting for the Messiah, but suddenly when God's timing was fulfilled, everything happened.

God doesn't usually explain Himself to us. Our job is just to wait on the Lord and trust Him that He will see things through.

**<sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son;**

Mary gives birth to her firstborn son. Mary and Joseph had other children later. The mention that Jesus is the firstborn lets us know why we find Mary and Joseph and Jesus at the Temple 40 days later in Luke 2:23-24.

But, Luke is also stating clearly that Jesus is the firstborn son of a Davidic family in the ruling line, and therefore a legal right to inherit David's throne, along with inheritance rights from Joseph.

**and she wrapped Him in cloths**

Wrapping newborns in strips of cloth, or swaddling, is not only an ancient practice to us today, but was an ancient practice to Mary and Joseph as well. It helped identify the baby to the shepherds who were looking for him. In Luke 2:12, when the angels announced the birth to the shepherds, they told them **"This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."**

**and laid Him in a manger,**

Jesus was laid in a manger, a feed trough, so therefore likely in a room designed to accommodate animals.

**because there was no room for them in the inn.**

And it would be quite possible that there was no room in the guest rooms of people's houses, because David had a lot of descendants, and there were a lot of people crowding into this small town for the census.

Ancient tradition associates the birth of Jesus with a cave. Both Jerome and Paulinus of Nola mention a desecration. This indicates that the cave was a sacred site to Christians before the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century. God, knowing that man would sin, knowing that He would have to send Jesus to Earth, and knowing that each and every person that Jesus saved would be a sinner, knew that humble beginnings would best prepare Jesus for His mission. Romans 5:8 puts it like this: **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

Bethlehem, this little, seemingly insignificant town, only gained prominence because it was a place of God's choosing.

No-one made room for them. When we're comfortable in our own surroundings, the tendency is not to make room for Jesus—and maybe that's why we find ourselves so rarely in comfortable surroundings! Sometimes it takes these difficult circumstances to wake us up to our need for Him.

How many times have you been so concerned about how God was going to solve a problem you're praying about, and then are amazed that God, once you gave it over to His provision, immediately provided the solution? God is waiting for us to realize that should be calling on Him to meet our needs according to His will. His provision is more than we could have hoped for.