

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

NOTHING RECORDED	NOTHING RECORDED	CHAPTER 2, VERSES 1-5	NOTHING RECORDED
		<p>2:1 - And it came to pass in those¹ days², that there went out a decree³ from Caesar⁴ Augustus⁵, that all the world⁶ should be taxed⁷.</p> <p>2:2 - (And this taxing⁸ was⁹ first¹⁰ made¹¹ when Cyrenius¹² was governor¹³ of Syria¹⁴.)</p> <p>2:3 - And all¹⁵ went to be taxed⁷, every one into his own¹⁶ city¹⁷.</p> <p>2:4 - And Joseph¹⁸ also went up from Galilee¹⁹, out of the city¹⁷ of Nazareth²⁰, into Judaea²¹, unto the city¹⁷ of David²², which is called Bethlehem²³; (because he was of the house²⁴ and lineage²⁵ of David:)</p> <p>2:5 - To be taxed⁷ with Mary²⁶ his espoused²⁷ wife²⁸, being great with child²⁹.</p>	

CHRONOLOGY: Late March 4BCE / Early April 4BCE*

* The established year for this chapter is based on the year of Jesus' birth, which is highly debated. Below is a list of possible years for Jesus' birth. The chronology of Jesus' life in this book is based on the author's belief that Jesus was born in 4BCE. The most likely years for Jesus' birth are 1BCE, 4BCE and 5BCE. The other years are problematic.

- Year theories:
- 1 BCE - Supported by the Apostle James E. Talmage & Secular Biblical Scholars Pearson and Hug & the creator of Gregorian Calendar: Dionysius Exiguus.
 - 2 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholar Scallinger.
 - 2/3 BCE - Supported by early Christian writers and historians Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Africanus, Hippolytus of Rome, Hippolytus of Thebes, Origen, Eusebius and Epiphanius.
 - 3 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Baronius and Paulus.
 - 4 BCE** - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Bengel, Wieseler & Greswell. **Supported by this Author.**
 - 5 BCE - Supported by the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, the Apostle J. Rueben Clark, and Secular Biblical Scholars Usher and Petavius.
 - 6 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Strong, Luvin and Clark.
 - 7 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Ideler and Sandclemente.

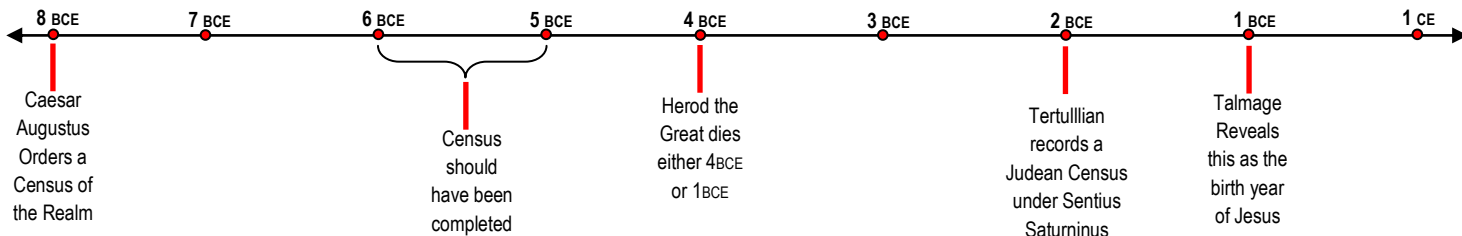
LOCATION: DECREE ISSUED TO JUDAEA (JUDAEA, IDUMAE, & SAMERIA), JOSEPH & MARY STARTED IN NAZARETH & TRAVELED TO BETHLEHEM

COMMENTARY: There appears to be a significant dating problem in this section. When one combines the various elements of the story, and analyzes the historical dates; several issues are evident. Let us first look at the available data;

- Herod Died in late March/ early April 4BCE in Jericho, though there is some evidence that Herod may have died in the same time of the year only in 1BCE.
- Caesar Augustus ordered three census of the realm; 28BCE, 8BCE, and 14CE.
- Christ was born in 1BCE according to one modern Apostle (James. E Talmage, Jesus the Christ). Ruben J. Clark and Bruce R. McConkie support 5BCE.
- Quirinius becomes proconsul / Governor of Syria is 6-7CE, long after the birth of the Savior.
- It is estimated that a census took 2 to 3 years to complete.
- Judaea was a separate province from Syria until 135CE.
- Herod Ruled as King over the province until between 4BCE and 1BCE, not a Roman governor or Proconsul.
- Christian historian Tertullian records that the Judean census took place when Sentius Saturninus was Proconsul to Syria in 2BCE; however, Roman records would indicate that neither Quirinius or Saturninus were governors during the key period. Roman records would say it was Publius Quinctilus Varus or an unknown governor.
- Most Records of Roman Governors of Syria record the following;

09BCE-07BCE	Gaius Sentius Saturninus
07BCE-04BCE	Publius Quinctilus Varus
04BCE-01BCE	Unknown
01BCE-04CE	Gaius Julius Caesar Vipsanianus
04CE-05CE	Lucius Volusius Saturninus
06CE-12CE	Publius Sulpicius Quirinius
- Herod was alive when Christ was an infant, possibly as old as 2 years old. Herod ordered the death of all infants less than 2 years old in an attempt to kill the Christ Child.





What we know of Christ's birth:

- He was born during a Roman Census
- He was born while Herod the Great was alive
- Luke Says that Cyruinis was Governor or Syria

The year 5BCE is a logical estimation for the birth of the Savior, based on historical data. Lots of factors make it very difficult to prove intellectually what the correct year is. Additionally, it is difficult to prove Elder Talmage's statement. It is very possible that the Roman Census of the empire is different from a Judean census Tertullian speaks of in 2BCE. It is also possible that Herod died later than the predominately accepted 4BCE. All this would help prove Elder Talmage's year for Christ's birth. Regardless, it is evident that the fact don't consistently add up, and there is plenty of questions as to the validity of the facts. Elder Talmage's statement may be difficult to prove; however, as with most things of a spiritual, the Lord has chosen to create an opportunity for trust and faith.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1- **those** - The word **'those'** is translated from the Greek word "ἐκεῖνος". Its English spelling would be "ekeinos", meaning "he, she, it, etc." The question is not whether the verse says "those days" or "his days", but rather what or who does it reference. When Luke started his narrative, back in Luke chapter 1, he give us a clue as to what this reference might be. He starts the narrative with, "THERE was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea...". It is most probably that the days, "those days", Luke is speaking of are the days of Herod. Christ was born in the days of Herod. It was during "his days" that the Savior was born. Significantly, Herod the Great began to reign in either 40BCE when the Roman Senate awarded him Judea or in 37BCE when he overthrew the existing king and took the throne. Depending on the date he started to reign, he ruled for 37 years and died in either 4BCE or 1BCE. Problematically, the name Herod became a title of the subsequent rulers of Judea. The question would then be, which Herod. It is often presumed that it speaks of Herod the Great, or the first Herod.
- 2- **days** - The word **'days'** is translated from the Greek word "ἡμέρα". Its English spelling would be "hēmera". The most appropriate definition for the usage of this word in this scripture is used of time in general, i.e. the days of his life. In this case, the days are in reference to the life of Herod. It was during the days of his life that the Savior entered mortality. Luke is helping the active reader establish the setting. Rather than spend a lot of time describing the conditions, socially, economically, and politically; he simply reference the days of Herod. I guess that readers of the time would clearly understand what that meant. For people of our day, it requires us to look at the conditions during Herod's reign. Once that understanding is gained, it is clear what those days were like. See also the commentary for Chapter 2, footnote #2.
- 3- **decree** - The word **'decree'** is translated from the Greek word "δῶγμα". Its English spelling would be "dogma", meaning doctrine, decree, or ordinance as it pertains to public decrees, the Roman Senate, or Rulers. **"The word "dogma" was used in classical Greek to denote an "opinion", and by extension even a philosophical "notion". By Roman times it had developed an official meaning, "public decree, or ordinance," being used especially of a Roman senatusconsultum, a decree from the Roman senate."** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 399). Many translators use alternative translations like, "edict", "executive order", or "declaration" in this verse. Regardless of the choice of words, it is clear that the leadership of Rome declared, through their powers to govern Rome and its provinces, that an official census be conducted for the purpose of collecting taxes, and assessing the empire. The bottom line is, the decree was a legal order sustained by Roman law.
- 4- **Caesar** - The word **'Caesar'** is translated from the Greek word "Καῖσαρ". Its English spelling would be "Kaisar". Translated literally Caesar means "severed". The surname of Julius Caesar, which was adopted by Octavius Augustus and his successors afterwards became a title, and was appropriated by the Roman emperors as part of their title. Caesar was eventually considered a living god. And it was with Augustus that this started. Though a false god, he was worshipped and revered by the people. He was referred to as "the Savior" of Rome. Caesar was definitely an anti-Christ. One bible scholar records, **"In the eastern Mediterranean world Augustus was further hailed as "savior" and "god" in many Greek inscriptions: soter tou symanios kosmou, "savior of the whole world" (Myra Inscription [see V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones, Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949) § 72]. His birthday (23 September) was celebrated "[the birthday] of the god has marked the beginning of the good news through him for the world" (Priene Inscriptions, 40-42 [see W. Dittenberger, OGIS, 2 § 458])."** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 394).
- 5- **Augustus** - The word **"Augustus"** is translated from the Greek word "Αὔγουστος". Its English spelling would be "augoustos". Translated literally Augustus means "the illustrious one". It was a title of religious rather and political authority. **"Normally, the title Augustus was translated into Greek as Sebastos"** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 399). The first piece of information necessary in understanding who **Caesar Augustus** was is the fact that Caesar became a title for subsequent Roman Emperors in honor of Julius Caesar. Additionally, Augustus was not a given name, but rather a crowning name bestowed upon an emperor who was originally named Octavian. Augustus also became a title used by subsequent Roman emperors. Octavian, the grand-nephew of Julius Caesar, was born on September 23, 63BCE in Rome. After Caesar (Julius Caesar) was assassinated on March 15, 44BCE, the 19 year old Octavian learned from his great uncle's will that he had both been adopted and made heir. Octavian then took the name Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, and a year later began to rule as part of the Second Triumvirate, along with the two Roman generals Marc Antony and Marcus Lepidus. Marc Antony married Octavia, Octavian's sister in 40BCE, but the marriage ended when he left her for Cleopatra of Egypt. Territorial disputes resulted in war between the two former brothers-in-law, which ended when the naval forces of Antony and Cleopatra were defeated at Actium on September 2, 31BCE. The start of the Roman empire is sometimes reckoned from that date, with Octavian, as **Caesar Augustus**, the first Roman emperor. Caesar Augustus died of an illness at Nola in Campania in 14 CE at age 76. His ashes were placed in the Mausoleum of Augustus in Rome.



Picture of Herod the Great reconstructed from a bust discovered by archeologist



Picture of Caesar Augustus reconstructed from a bust



Caesar Augustus

Augustus was questionably an attractive man. One Greek historian recorded of Augustus, "He was quite handsome.... Sometimes he would clip his beard; sometimes he would shave it. While his barbers were at work on him, it was not unusual for him to read or write.... His eyes were clear and radiant.... His complexion was between dark and fair. Though only five feet, six inches in height... his shortness was not too noticeable because of the good proportions of his figure." (Seutonius)

The world was looking for a Savior. It had been full of wars and strife. People wanted peace and happiness. Augustus promised this. He claimed to be the Savior of the World. It is not happenstance that Augustus is mentioned in the record of the Savior's birth. "Thus Luke, writing from a later period in the Roman age, associates the birth of Jesus with a famous Roman emperor and suggests that the real bearer of peace and salvation to the whole world is the one whose birth occurred in the town of David and was made known by angels of heaven. By relating Jesus' birth to a worldwide census, Luke hints at the worldwide significance of that birth. Jesus' birth is recounted in terms of worldwide significance of that birth. Jesus' birth is recounted in terms of lowly circumstances to contrast with the majesty and renown of him whom the rest of the Roman world regarded as its savior. The birth in the city of David gives the story a Jewish atmosphere, but it is transformed by the larger reference to Roman history. The child thus born under Pax Augusta will eventually be hailed as "the king, the One Who is to come in the name of the Lord" - and the result will be, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven"" (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 394).

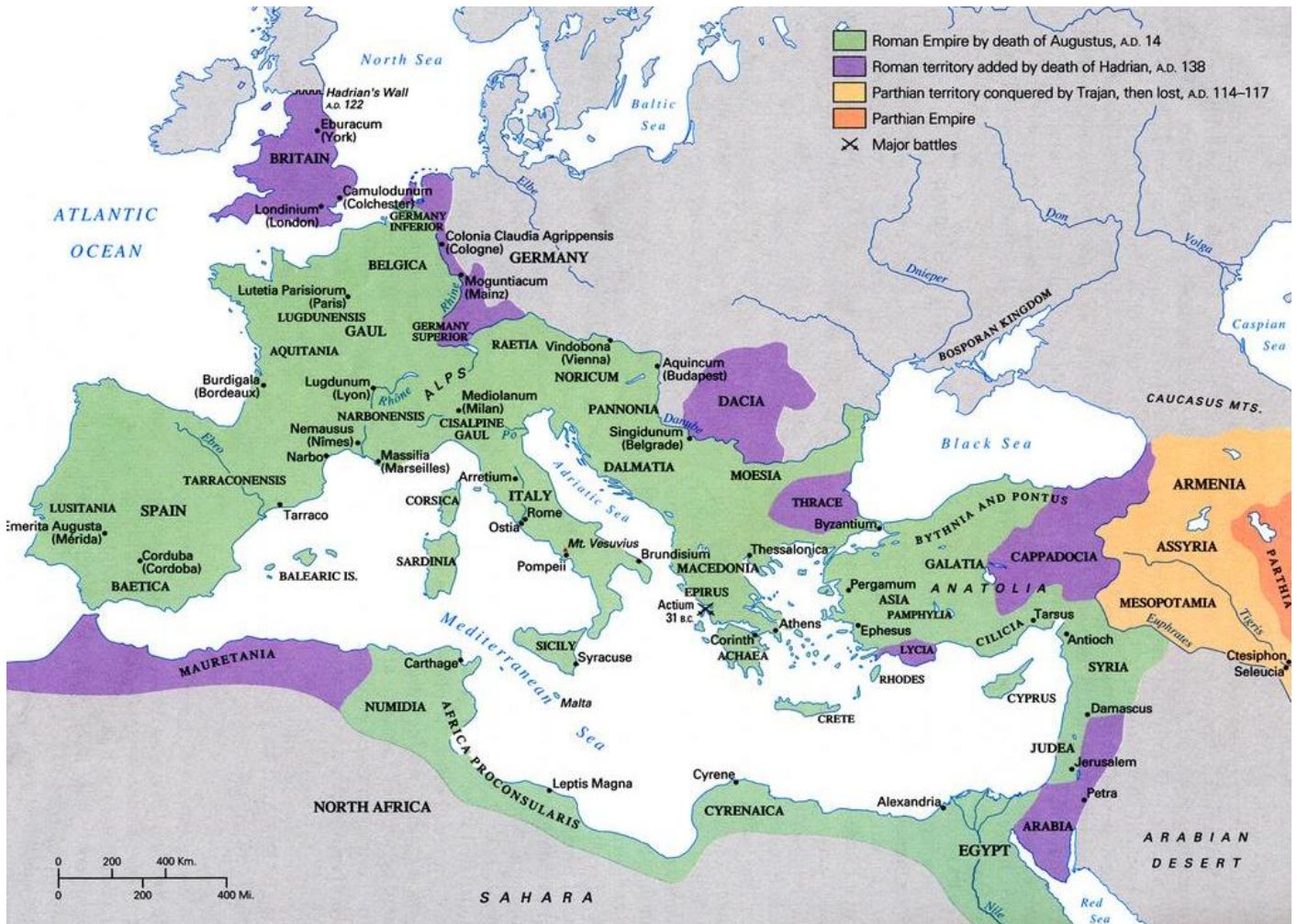
As part of his actions to strengthen his political ties to Caesar's former soldiers, in 42BCE, following the deification of Caesar, Octavian added Divi Filius (Son of the Divine) to his name, becoming Gaius Julius Caesar Divi Filius. It is interesting that as Jesus, the son of the living God, was about to enter into mortality, Satan provided the world with a great imitation. It should be no surprise that Satan would create in Caesar a savior, a son of god, an alternative to that which was actually true and necessary.

6 - world - The word "world" is translated from the Greek word "oikouμένη". Its English spelling would be "oikoumenē". It has several definitions as follows;

- 1) the inhabited earth
 - a) the portion of the earth inhabited by the Greeks, in distinction from the lands of the barbarians
 - b) the Roman empire, all the subjects of the empire
 - c) the whole inhabited earth, the world
 - d) the inhabitants of the earth, men
- 2) the universe, the world



"Though oikoumenē means "inhabited earth"...was often used with hyperbole in the official rhetoric of decrees and inscriptions for the Roman empire itself....It was meant to include Italy and the provinces. There is no evidence that it designated only the latter, as distinct from Italy, much less Palestine alone." (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 400). Below is a map of the world as it might have been seen at the birth of Christ.



7- **taxed** - The word "taxed" is translated from the Greek word "ἀπογράφω". Its English spelling would be "apographō", meaning "to enter in a register or records", "specifically to enter in public records the names of men", or "their property and income". It can also be used generally referring to "enrollment". The word bears striking resemblance to the English word apograph. The word 'taxed' carries a different connotation in our society, and though it is not a poor translation, a better English word in this application might be enroll or register.

In order to fully understand what is being said by using the word taxed, or at least its Greek origin, one must understand how the Roman tax system worked. "The Romans had a peculiar way of levying these taxes – not directly, but indirectly – which kept the treasury quite safe, whatever harm it might inflict on the taxpayer, while at the same time it threw upon him the whole cost of the collection. Senators and magistrates were prohibited from engaging in business or trade; but the highest order, the equestrian was largely composed of great capitalists. These Roman knights formed joint-stock companies, which bought a public auction the revenues of a province at a fixed price, generally for five years. The board had its chairman, or magister, and its offices at Rome. These were the real Publicani, or publicans, who often underlet certain of the taxes. The Publicani, or those who held from the emperor, employed either slaves or some of the lower classes in the country as tax gatherers – the publicans of the New Testament." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, Pages 53-54). In order to effectively auction off the taxes of a province, the populist would need to be counted as well as their means. This was done through a Roman Census. Census' were ordered by Caesar on a regular basis. The entire empire was "enrolled" in the census at about every 20 years. Periodically, regions and provinces took part in local census for tax purposes. There are many ancient records that document the census ordered by Caesar. Some are listed below.

The Census of Augustus Documented by Romans

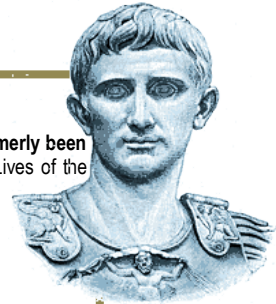
"He revived the office of the Censor which had long been disused and whose duty it had formerly been to take an account of the number of people." - Seutonius Roman Historian - Augustus 23 - Lives of the Twelve Caesars

"He took a census of the people three times" - Augustus 27

"He took a census of the Roman people street by street" - Augustus 40

"Since the consuls caused a law to be passed soon after this that he should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus and hold the census with him" - Seutonius Roman Historian - Tiberias 21- Lives of the Twelve Caesars

"This contained the number of citizens, subject kingdoms and taxes. All these details Augustus had written with his own hand" - Tacitus Annals - Book 1 Roman Historian



There are three empire-wide censuses documented during the reign of Caesar Augustus. They were in 28BCE, 8BCE, and 14CE. Ancient records often leave much to be desired, and there are plenty of sources showing conflicting dates. The Christian historian Tertullian records that a Judean census took place when Sentius Saturninus was Proconsul to Syria, attending to the day to day running of the province, which included Judea. He left early in 2BCE to be replaced by Quintillius Varus, about a year before the death of Herod, who was the king of Judea. Even so, the three dates of 28BCE, 8BCE, and 14CE seem to be the most accepted and prominent Census periods. To make matters more confusing, a Census typically took years to complete, most taking 2 to 3 years. That means that 8BCE Census could be listed as 7BCE or 6BCE and still be the same Census. Census' were long and tedious work. They were affected by weather, distances, and the cooperation of the people. One of the arguments made against the birth of Jesus being in December is that census work was not conducted in winter time. In the book Holy-Days and Holidays, author Cunningham Geikie explains: "This census could hardly have been at that [winter] season, however, for such a time would surely not have been chosen by the authorities for a public enrollment, which necessitated the population travelling from all parts to their natal districts, storms and rain making journeys both unsafe and unpleasant in winter, except in specially favorable years."

There are scholars who argue that though Caesar did conduct census' for the purpose of taxation, there was never a world-wide census. "Aside from this statement in Luke (and of later Christian and pagan writers who depend on him), there is no ancient evidence of a universal worldwide registration or census ordered by Caesar Augustus. No ancient historian tells of a Roman census conducted on this scale in the time of Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.)." (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 400). The answer may be in semantics. The Census', as a whole, did register the entire empire; though it may have been done in segments. It should not be argued that census' did not occur at all. The same author wrote, "Augustus, however, did conduct enrollments of the population in the empire during his long reign. These were of two sorts: (a) a census of Roman citizens, both in Italy and in the provinces; and (b) a census of provincial inhabitants." (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 400).

The enrollment of all the inhabitants of the empire was definitely for tax purposes; however, it did serve other functions. Roman historian Dio Cassius tells us that Augustus was so concerned about the declining marriage and birth rate in his empire, that he passed legislation that made promiscuity a crime, which penalized bachelors in their right to inherit, and which bestowed political advantages on fathers of three or more children. Because of his demonstrated concern about marriage and birth rate in his empire, it is likely that one of the reasons that Augustus authorized the censuses was to see whether his legislation was working, or, at the very least, to see how birth rates fared. People fueled taxes and populated armies.

Since Caesar was interested in more than mere tax money, census required to enrollment of everyone. The Romans executed the order by recalling families to the cities of their origin, thus establishing ties between families, individuals and familial wealth. We have evidence to show that such traveling was indeed done with a Roman census, in Egypt at least. A Roman census document, dated 104CE, has been discovered in Egypt, in which citizens were specifically commanded to return to their original homes for the census. Another census document from 119CE has been found in which an Egyptian man identifies himself by giving the following;

1. His name
2. The names of his father, mother, and grandfather
3. His original village
4. His age and profession
5. A scar above his left eyebrow
6. His wife's name and age
7. His wife's father's name
8. His son's name and age
9. The names of other relatives living with him



The document is signed by the village registrar and three official witnesses. This latter document is of special interest, because it gives us an idea of the kind of information that Joseph and Mary may have had to provide for the census.

"How burdensome were the various taxes and dues? To see this in full context, we should have to know what the situation was in other parts of the empire, what taxes were levied by successive head of state in Palestine, and what tribute went to Rome. On many of these points our information is inadequate. We know that in the Palestine of our period conditions varied from time to time and area to area." (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Page 157) To get an idea of how much Rome taxed the people, when Julius Caesar died he left ten million pieces of silver to Augustus Caesar, then Octavian, and five million to Caesar's wife Julia and others. (Jewish Antiquities XVII 190). **"...the Roman taxation, which bore upon Israel with such crushing weight, was quite of its own kind – systematic, cruel, relentless, and utterly regardless. In general, the provinces of the Roman Empire, and what of Palestine belonged to them, were subject to two great taxes – poll-tax (or rather income-tax) and ground tax. All property and income that fell not under the ground-tax was subject to poll-tax; which amounted, for Syria and Cilicia, to one per cent. The "poll-tax" was really two fold, consisting of income-tax and head-money, the latter, of course, the same in all cases, and levied on all persons (bond or free) up to the age of sixty-five – women being liable from the age of twelve and men from the age of fourteen. Landed property was subject to a tax of one-tenth of all grain, and one-fifth of the wine and fruit grown, partly paid in product and partly commuted into money. Besides these, there was tax and duty on all imports and exports, levied on the great public highways and in the seaports. Then there was bridge-money and road-money, and duty on all that was bought and sold in towns. These, which may be called the regular taxes, were irrespective of any forced contributions, and of the support which had to be furnished to the Roman procurator and his household and his court at Caesarea. To avoid all possible loss to the treasury, the proconsul of Syria, Quirinus (Cyrenius), had taken a regular census to show the number of the population and their means."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, Pages 52-53).

One author estimated the tax burden of Judaea under Roman Rule at 40%, **"Roman tribute was superimposed on the tithes and other taxes. The Jewish agriculture producers were now subject to a double taxation, probably amounting to well over 40 per cent of their production"** (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Pages 158-159 [Sanders is quoting Richard Horsley]). Another author places the Roman tax burden at 35%, **"...the various tithes added up to slightly over 20 per cent per year. Then Rome added its taxes: 'the land tax (1 per cent of its value) and crop tax (12.5 per cent of the produce)'. 'There were other Roman taxes as well (customs, toll, and tribute): but even without them, the combined total of Jewish and Roman taxes on farmers amounted to about 35 per cent. This was a crushing amount, and would be even today."** (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Pages 158-159 [Sanders is quoting Marcus Borg]). Another author takes a different view, **"The amount of the Roman produce tax, as levied by Caesar, is uncertain. About Roman tribute in subsequent periods we are entirely ignorant. Stern's guess that Caesar required 12.5 per cent is not unreasonable, but Stern also wrote that 'we have no information on the total sum collected [by Rome] in taxes in Judaea, or whether the Roman government of the province enjoyed a surplus of revenue over expenditure."** (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Page 166 [Sanders is quoting Stern]).

Whether the tax burden of Judaea under Rome at the time of Christ was 40%, 35%, or something much lower, evidence shows that the people suffered under tax burden. But then again, people suffer under most tax burdens. It might just be a matter of perspective. **"Financial hardship has more often than not been the fate of small farmers. In our own time, we have seen the widespread impoverishment of farmers in Mexico and, more recently, in parts of the United States. Small farmers in the Judean hills today do little more than eke out a living. The lot of first-century Palestinian farmers was doubtless difficult, but they had enough money to attend the festivals, and most seem to have been able to survive the sabbatical years. Things could have been worse, and in some places they were."** (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Page 168).

To complicate things even further, Judaea had something that the other Roman provinces didn't have. They had King Herod the Great. As a repayment of loyalty, Caesar granted Herod a subservient role as King of Judaea, with the right to tax the province for his own needs, so long as Herod collected the Roman Tribute and sent it Rome's way. Herod's taxes would be in addition to any Roman taxes, tithes or offerings. History also records that around the time of the birth of Jesus, Judaea was being taxed highly under Herod the Great. After Herod died, Josephus recorded, **"Archelaus grieved over the death of his father for several days and then . . . from his throne of gold, he gave a speech to the crowd . . . pleased by his words, the people immediately began to test his sincerity by requesting certain favors from him. Some pleaded for their yearly taxes to be reduced . . . while others asked that he would only take away the excessive sales taxes that were being levied on goods being brought or sold."** (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 17). Josephus also recorded that the common people hated Herod for taxing them so much. He states: **"The amount of people, to whom he lavished his money, were very numerous. And because of this, he was forced to collect it through unjust means. Because he was aware that his subjects hated him for these crimes he committed against them, he did not think it would make any difference to treat them kindly, for it might harm his revenue; he therefore, knowing that his subjects feared him because of his harshness, continued on in pursuit of financial gain."** (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 16).

"Between 37 and 4 BCE, 'the combination of Roman tribute and Herodian taxation, with religious dues, would have been extremely oppressive'. Applebaum further states that Herod's annual revenue of 900 talents would have required 'an average yearly payment per head of 3.3 drachmae, not counting religious dues' (on the optimistic assumption of a population of three million). A per capita tax of that amount (had it been levied) would have been a substantial tax on a family. Further, the Jewish population was much smaller than three million, probably less than one million; the hypothetical per capita tax would thus have been much greater." (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Page 158).

Many suppose that the census referred to in Luke took place after Herod's death. This poses problems in many other ways, as discussed in the commentary portion of this chapter. Even so, it would explain why a Roman governor from Syria might be involved in a census that would typically fall under the jurisdiction of Herod. **"In the year that Archelaus was deposed, Rome sent its first prefect to govern directly, and there was a census for tax purposes. The Jews had been accustomed to pay taxes indirectly to Rome, since Rome levied tribute on Herod and his descendants. Judas the Galilean and his followers chose to fight to resist the significant further imposition of foreign rule that direct taxation represented."** (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Page 280-281).

Given all of the above, it is easy to see why the ancient Jews viewed taxes as such a sinful act; **"Indeed, it was held lawful to make false returns, to speak untruth, or almost to use any means to avoid paying taxes."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 56).

- 8 - **taxing** - Roman taxes, at least the direct taxation, proceeded a census. After Judaea was annexed to the Roman Empire, the high priest was given responsibility to pay tribute to Rome. Josephus estimates that the revenue from Herod's kingdom was between 600 and 800 talents per year (War of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, 2:6:3, and Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus 17:11:4). This is equivalent to 4.8 million drachmae (a drachma was a day's wages for a laborer). If the population of working males was around 250,000, then each man effectively worked for about three weeks every year for the Roman state. We speak of the heavy burden of Roman taxation; however, it appears far less than many modern countries today. The land tax and head tax were collected by Jewish leaders and their representatives annually. The collectors of these direct taxes were despised for their collusion with Rome, they were seen as traitors. Taxation was seen as a symbol of them being a conquered nation.

The Roman income tax, might seem like Roman taxes were reasonable, however, the Romans used income taxes as only one piece of the tax puzzle. The charged property tax, sales tax, poll tax, census tax, travel tax, and many other forms of taxation. It pushed the tax level to arguably 30-40%.



9 - was - The word 'was' is translated from the Greek word "γίνομαι". The English spelling for the Greek word is "ginomai". It has several meanings and usages as follows;

- 1) to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being
- 2) to become, i.e. to come to pass, happen
 - a) of events
- 3) to arise, appear in history, come upon the stage
 - a) of men appearing in public
- 4) to be made, finished
 - a) of miracles, to be performed, wrought
- 5) to become, be made

It seems odd for a footnote to concern itself with the word 'was'; however, it has significant implication with regards to a problem Luke has created for modern scholars. Luke has placed the famed census "when this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria". Since Cyrenius was not recorded as governor until long after the Birth of Christ, scholars have scratched their proverbial heads. One possible solution offered by the scholars, lies in what the term "was first made" really means. The theory is that 'was first made' is better translated as 'before the first occurred'. This appears a difficult solutions since I do not see the definition yielding this translation.

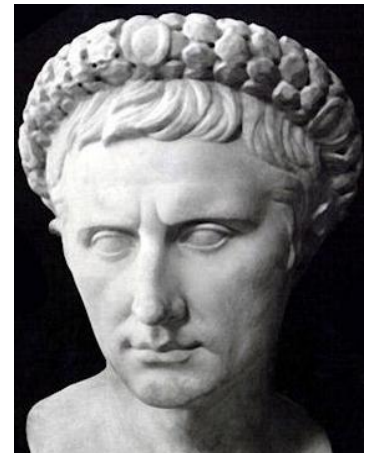
10 - first - The word 'first' is translated from the Greek word "πρῶτος". The English spelling for the Greek word is "prōtos". It has several meanings and usages as follows;

- 1) first in time or place
 - a) in any succession of things or persons
- 2) first in rank
 - a) influence, honour
 - b) chief
 - c) principal
- 3) first, at the first

As stated in footnote #9, there is a timeline problem between Cyrenius, the census, and the birth of Jesus. One possible key to solving this alleged puzzle, is in the phrase "first made" in the reframed sentence, "This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governing Syria." What does Luke mean by a first census? One theory offered is that the Greek word for "first" (prote) is sometimes translated "prior to" or "before." This is a viable solution because the Greek text of Luke 2:2 can indeed be translated, "This census was before Quirinius was governing Syria." Unfortunately, Strong's Concordance of the Bible does not appear to define "first" with the words "prior to" or "before". Even so, many scholars hold that "Prote, first, is sometimes used in Hellenistic and NT Greek in the sense of protera, the comparative, "former, prior", since the use of the comparative degree was on the wane, and other means were taken to express it. Understood thus, prote govern the following gen. and be translated, "this registration took place before Quirinius was governor of Syria." (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 401). If they are right, it does nicely solve the problem.

11 - made - Interestingly, the word "made" is translated from the same Greek word as "was" in footnote # 9.

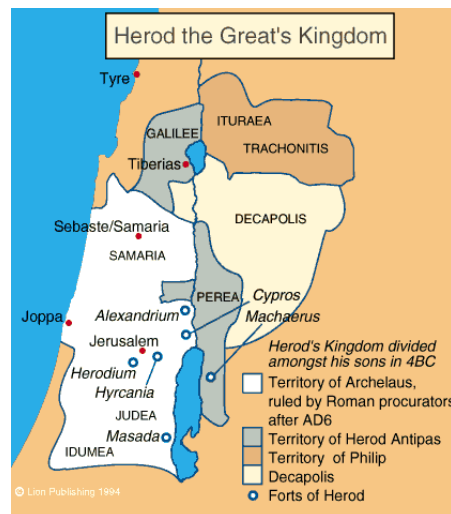
12 - Cyrenius - The name "Cyrenius" is a form of the last name of the Roman governor "Publius Sulpicius Quirinus". Quirinus was not your typical aristocrat. He was not the son of a senator, nor was he born to given titles. He started his career as a soldier. "He was a native of the municipality of Lanuvium in the Alban Hills of southern Latium..." (The Gospel According to Luke: I-X, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 402).



Bust of Publius Sulpicius Quirinus

Quirinus earned a name for himself by success in the battlefield. "Tacitus describes him as an intrepid soldier and assiduous official who successfully campaigned against the Homonadensian bandits in Cilicia, south of the Roman province of Galatia, and was therefore granted a public triumph for it. Strabo tells how he starved them out, captured and deported four thousand of them alive, settled them in neighboring regions, but left the country destitute of men in the prime of life." (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 402). Caesar Augustus was so impressed with Quirinus that he appointed him to be an adviser or rector to his adopted son Caius Caesar. "The son was eventually given proconsular powers and made vice-regent of the eastern provinces, including Syria, between 1 B.C. and A.D. 4. Quirinus was his advisor especially during his command of Armenia." (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 402).

His work as advisor ended when Caius was wounded in 3CE and later died in 4CE. Quirinus must have performed admirably as "the Roman emperor spoke of Quirinus' service before the entire Senate, and praised Quirinus for his excellent service, while he criticized Marcus Lollius, whom he blamed for teaching Caius Caesar the traits of being disobedient and divisive." (Tacitus Annals- Book Two)



So how does Quirinus get into Jewish history? Herod the Great might have been a failure in the eyes of many of the Jews, but he knew what side his bread was buttered on. Herod took care of his Roman obligations. Under Herod's rule, Judaea was of little problem for Rome, and Herod consequently found favor with Caesar. In the year of Herod's death, either 4BCE or 1BCE, his will left the province to be governed by three of his children. That might have been a little presumptive on his part, as Rome ultimately called those shots. Nevertheless, because of Herod's favor with Rome, his wishes were somewhat honored. Archelaus inherited the governance of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. He was titled Ethnarch. His brother Antipas was made Ethnarch of Galilee and Perea, while the Philip was made Ethnarch of Ituraea. Caesar didn't legitimize Herod's will and grant Kingship to his sons, but nevertheless, the sons were honored with a level of governance the will called out. That is as long as they pleased Rome. This ended in 6CE for Archelaus. The people were so displeased with him that they petitioned Rome for direct governance. Rome conceded and removed him



Coin with Herod Archelaus

from rule. Caesar turned to a new Governor, one that the empire trusted. He had recently been made governor or proconsul to the Province of Syria and would now oversee Archelaus' province. His name was none other than Cyrenius or Quirinus. "So Archelaus's country was laid to the province of Syria; and Cyrenius, one that had been consul, was sent by Caesar to take account of people's effects in Syria. Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance." (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 18)

Evidently, Quirinus' promotion was popular in Rome. The earliest historical account we have of Quirinius comes from an inscription found in Pisidian Antioch (Syria) known as Res Gestae - 'The Deeds of Augustus Caesar by Augustus'. The inscription places him as consul in 12BCE, long before anyone has theorized the birth year of Jesus to be. The position was attained by only two prominent Romans every year and they governed as the Roman heads of state. It was like being a prime minister of sorts. The inscription reads as follows: **"A great crowd of people came together from all over Italy to my election, more than had ever gathered before in Rome, when Publius Sulpicius (Quirinius) and Gaius Valgius were consuls."** (Res Gestae 10).

Quirinus was by no means a small figure in Roman politics or in his association with Augustus, Tiberius and Caius Caesar. He was a big deal. He was popular. He was connected and he was empowered with positions of authority. So respected was Quirinus to the Caesar's that upon his death in 22CE, Tiberius honored him before the entire Senate. The following is his tribute as recorded by the Roman historian Tacitus:

"Around this time, he (Tiberius Caesar) requested that the Senate pay tribute to the death of Sulpicius Quirinus with a public funeral. . . . A tireless soldier, who had by his faithful services become consul during the reign of Augustus, and later was honored for his victory concerning his assault on the fortresses of the Homonadenses in Cilicia (The province of Cilicia is located just northwest of neighboring Syria.)" (Tacitus)

This account of Tacitus, not only shows how revered Quirinus was, but it also proves that Quirinus was governing militarily in the area of Syria well before becoming the civilian governor of Syria and taking a second census of Judea in 6CE as recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus. Two other inscriptions were found in the early 1900's in Pisidian Antioch which served as a military command center and eastern outpost for the Roman Empire. The two inscriptions read as follows:

"To C. Caristianus Fronto Caesianus Iulius, son of Gaius, from the tribe of Sergia, prefect of civil engineers, military tribune of the twelfth legion, prefect of the Bosporan cohort, priest, prefect of P. Sulpicius Quirinius, duumvir, prefect of Marcus Servilius, prefect . . ." (Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae #9503)

"C. Caristianus C F Sergius Fronto Caesius Iulius, prefect of civil engineers, priest, prefect of P. Sulpicius Quirinius the Duumvir, Perfect of M. Servilius, from this man and with a public edict, a statue was erected with the blessings of the council." (Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae #9502)

**Stone mentioning Quirinius.
ILS 9502**



Many have questioned the timing of Quirinus as Governor and the Judean Census. The fact is, Quirinus occupied positions to order census over a broad spectrum of time. Luke might have referred to him as the governor, because that is the title for which he knew him. Even so, he might have ordered it as consul, or while filling other positions. Another inscription, which surfaced in the late 1600's, known as the Aemilius Secundus inscription also mentions Quirinus governing in Syria as well as ordering a census. The inscription reads as follows:

"Quintus Aemilius Secundus, from Palatine, with honors he was decorated in the camp of Divine Augustus under Publius Sulpicius Quirinius legate of Caesar in Syria, prefect of the first Augustan cohort, prefect of the navy's second cohort. Commanded by Quirinius to conduct a census of the district of Apamea's 117,000 citizens; He was also sent by Quirinius to capture the fortresses of the Itureans in the mountains of Lebanon. (Iturea borders Syria and is just north of Galilee.) Before being involved in the militia he was prefect of engineers, appointed by the two consuls as treasurer, quaestor of his colony, served twice as aedile and duumvir and was as a priest. Buried in this place are his son, Quintus Aemilius Secundus." (Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae #2683)

Quirinus was the fair haired underling to Caesar and the Roman senate. This wasn't unwarranted or undeserving. He was not only a war hero, but he had proven himself capable and loyal. As he promoted to Governor (proconsul) he seriously looked after Roman interest. The main Roman interests for such a position would have been tax collection and peace within the province. **"To avoid all possible loss to the treasury, the proconsul of Syria, Quirinus (Cyrenius), had taken a regular census to show the number of the population and their means. This was a terrible crime in the eyes of the Rabbis, who remembered that, if numbering the people had been reckoned such great sin of old, the evil must be an hundredfold increased, if done by heathens and for their own purposes. Another offence lay in the thought, that tribute, hitherto only given to Jehovah, was now to be paid to a heathen emperor."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 53). There is no doubt that Quirinus would have ordered many census during his Roman service. The question is not if he ordered a census, but rather what were the dates.

An argument made by many opponents of the accuracy of the Bible is that Rome was not taxing or conducting a census in Israel before becoming a province in 6CE. But Josephus records that the Jews were being taxed by the Romans with commands coming from Syria as early as 44BCE. Roman leaders may have ordered the census for the purpose of taxation; however, the task of raising the funds fell upon the Jewish rulers in power at the time because it was not an official province. Even so, territories were still taxed. For example, Josephus records: **"Cassius rode into Syria in order to take command of the army stationed there, and on the Jews he placed a tax of 700 silver talents. Antipater gave the job of collecting this tax to his sons . . ."** (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, Book 14). This continued until the Romans lost faith in the ability of the Jewish leaders to do the job. After Herod the Great fell, his sons took over the ruling of the Jews. That, however, was short lived. Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, was not the leader his father was. **"After Herod's death, his kingdom was divided, and Judaea (as well as Idumaea and Samaria) fell to Archelaus. Ten years later, however, Archelaus was deposed and exiled, and Rome began to govern Judaea directly. One of the first steps was to take a census, a task that fell to Quirinius, the Legate of Syria (6 CE). An insurgency was led by Judas the Galilean. According to the first account, he was a teacher or 'doctor'..."** (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Page 385). **"In 6 CE, however, Archelaus reappointed Joazar. Archelaus himself was then deposed, and Quirinius, legate of Syria, was sent to take a census of Judaea. There was naturally opposition to registration of property for tax purposes, but Joazar persuaded many people to comply with Roman wishes. Despite his efforts, however, there were uprisings, and Quirinius deposed Joazar because he had been 'overpowered by a popular faction'"** (Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE, E.P. Sanders, Page 322).

So here is the Biblical problem: How do we reconcile the birth year of Jesus with the rule of Herod and the governorship of Quirinus. Jesus was supposedly born during the reign of Herod the Great. Likewise, he was supposed to have been born during a census ordered by Quirinus while he was Governor of Syria. **"To put Quirinius' legateship in between 4 and 1 B.C. would solve nothing, since Herod died early in 4 B.C."** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 403). One solution would be that the Herod referred to in the scriptures was Herod Archelaus, and not Herod the Great, though this does not seem likely. It could also be that Quirinus order the census while serving in a different position. I suppose one could theorize and speculate for hours. Another interesting solution to the dating problem between the governorship of Quirinus, the Death of Herod, the Roman Census, and the Birth of Jesus might be as simple as the 8th article of Faith. **"We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God."** The reason these items do not correlate might be as simple as a translation problem. We can surely rely on modern revelation, and take the rest on faith.

13 - governor - The word 'governor' is translated from the Greek word "ἡγεμονεύω". The English spelling of the word is "hēgemoneuō". It carries the following meanings:

- 1) to be leader, to lead the way
- 2) to rule, command
 - a) of a province, to be governor of a province
 - b) said of a proconsul, of a procurator

A Roman governor was an official either elected or appointed to be the chief administrator of Roman law throughout one or more of the many provinces constituting the Roman Empire. A Roman governor is also known as a propraetor or proconsul. The generic term in Roman legal language was *Rector provinciae*, regardless of the specific titles, which also reflect the province's intrinsic and strategic status, and corresponding differences in authority. By the time of the early empire, there were two types of provinces — senatorial and imperial — and several types of governor would emerge. Only proconsuls and propraetors fell under the classification of promagistrate.

The governor of any Roman province had many tasks to carry out during his administration.

First, he was responsible for taxation and financial management. Depending on the basis of his appointment, he was either the Emperor's personal agent, or the Roman Senate's financial agent, and had to supervise the local authorities, the private tax collectors, and levy taxes. A governor could mint coins and negotiate with wealthy institutions such as temples and private money-lenders that could advance money. The governor was also the province's chief accountant. He inspected the books of major cities and various operations as well as supervising large-scale building projects throughout the province. He would also need to keep the peace between provinces.

Aside from these financial duties, the governor was the province's chief judge. The governor had the sole right to impose capital punishment, and capital cases were normally tried before him. To appeal a governor's decision necessitated travelling to Rome and presenting one's case before either the Praetor Urbanus, or even the Emperor himself, an expensive, and thus rare, process. An appeal was unlikely to succeed anyway, as a governor wouldn't generally take the chance of convicting someone contrary to the Emperor's wishes. The governor was also supposed to travel across his province to administer justice in the major towns where his attention was required.

Finally, and most importantly, he commanded the military forces within the province. In the more important provinces, this could consist of legions, but elsewhere, there were only auxiliaries. As a part of his standing orders, the governor had the authority to use his legions to stamp out organized criminal gangs or rebels in the area without need for the Emperor's or Senate's approval.

Every governor had at his disposal a diversity of advisors and staff, who were known as his committees (Latin for "companions"); the number of these depended on the governor's social standing and rank. These committees would serve as the governor's executive council, with each supervising a different aspect of the province, and assisting the governor in decision making. In the provinces with a significant legionary presence, the governor's second-in-command was usually a quaestor, a man elected in Rome and sent to the province to serve a mainly financial role, but who could command the military with the governor's approval. In other provinces, governors themselves appointed non-magistrate prefects or procurators to govern a small part of the province and act as their second-in-command.

Roman historians Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius, as well as Jewish historian Josephus all wrote of him. His full name was Publius Sulpicius Quirinus (d. 21CE), who was what the Romans called a "new man." This means that he came to hold his political office on the basis of his own merits rather than by family tradition and inheritance. It was through his military conquests in Cilicia and elsewhere that Quirinius had been exalted by the emperor to the holding of governor in Syria in 6-7CE.

- 14- **Syria** - Syria was an early Roman province, annexed to the Roman Empire in 64BCE by Pompey, as a consequence of his military presence in the Levant, after pursuing victory in the Third Mithridatic War. Following the Jewish-Roman wars, Syria was merged with Judaea in 135CE, creating the larger province of Syria Palaestina. It remained under Roman, and subsequently Byzantine, rule for several centuries, until falling to the Islamic conquests. Population of Palestine has various estimates ranging from less than 1 million and more than 3 million at and around the time of Christ's birth. Below is a map showing the Syrian province.



15 - all - The word 'all' is translated from the Greek word "πᾶς". The English spelling for the word is "pas". It has the following meanings;

- 1) individually
 - a) each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything
- 2) collectively
 - a) some of all types

16 - own - The word 'own' is translated from the Greek word "ἴδιος". The English spelling for the word is "idios". The word is used pertaining to one's self, one's own, belonging to one's self. Interestingly, it is the root of the Greek word "Idiot". There may be a message here that a selfish person is an idiot.

17 - city - The word 'city' is translated from the Greek word "πόλις". The English spelling of the word is "polis". The following definitions are used for the word "polis";

- 1) a city
 - a) one's native city, the city in which one lives
 - b) the heavenly Jerusalem
 - 1) the abode of the blessed in heaven
 - 2) the visible capital in the heavenly kingdom, to come down to earth after the world is renewed by fire
 - c) the inhabitants of a city

18 - Joseph - The name 'Joseph' is translated from the Greek name "Ἰωσήφ". The English spelling for the name is "Yōsēph". The name literally means "let him add". The notable people in the Bible bearing the name Joseph are as follows;

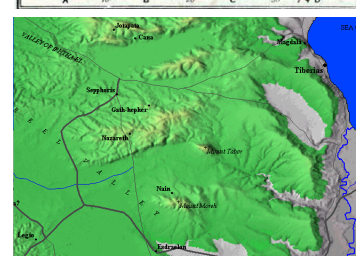
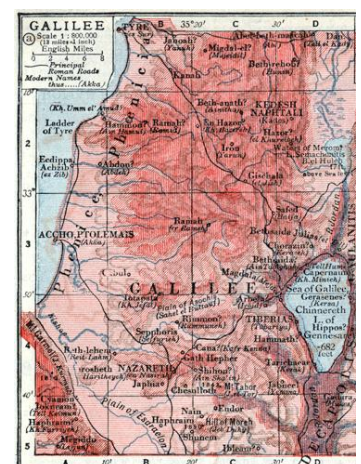
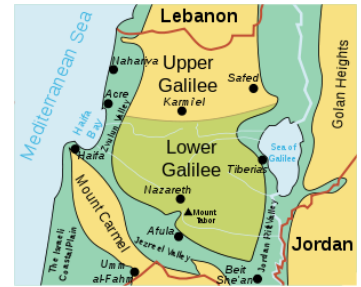
- 1) the patriarch, the eleventh son of Jacob
- 2) the son of Jonan or Jonam, one of the ancestors of Christ, (Luke 3:30)
- 3) the son of Judah [or Judas; better Joda] another ancestor of Jesus, (Luke 3:26)
- 4) the son of Mattathias, another ancestor of Christ, (Luke 3:24)
- 5) the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus
- 6) a half-brother of Jesus, (Matthew 13:55)
- 7) Joseph of Arimathaea, a member of the Sanhedrin, who favoured Jesus, (Matthew 27:57,59; Mark 15:43,45)
- 8) Joseph surnamed Barnabas, (Acts 4:36)
- 9) Joseph call Barsabas and surnamed Justus, (Acts 1:23)



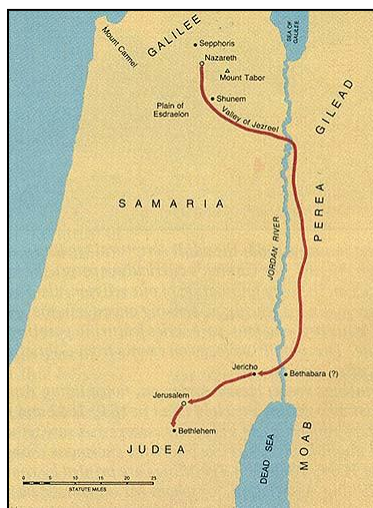
See also the commentary for Chapter 1, footnote #48, Chapter 3, footnote #11, and Chapter 4, footnote #6

19 - Galilee - 'Galilee' is the name of a region of northern Palestine, bounded on the north by Syria, on the west by Sidon, Tyre, Ptolemais and their territories and the promontory of Carmel, on the south by Samaria and on the east by the Jordan. It was divided into Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee. The name 'Galilee' in Greek is 'Γαλιλαία'. The English spelling of the Greek word is "Galilaea". It literally means "Circuit". See also commentary from Chapter 3, footnote #7.

Galilee was considered a hotspot for rebellion during the time of Jesus. It was isolated from the area of Jerusalem, which was much more apt to align itself with Rome for political reasons. Galilee was more conservative, and old school.



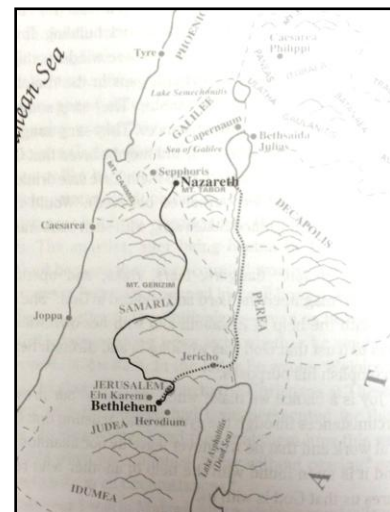
20 - Nazareth - The name of the city of "Nazareth", in Greek is "Ναζαρέτ". The direct English spelling is 'Nazara'. Nazareth is translated literally as "the guarded one". It is best known as the ordinary residence and home town of Jesus. See also the commentary for Chapter 3, footnote #8. Our focus for this footnote is not Nazareth itself, but rather what was the most probable travel route from Nazareth to Bethlehem. This is somewhat complicated by the fact that the ancient Jews had so much animosity for the Samaritans that they avoided contact with them at any cost. Many Jews would take much longer routes to avoid traveling through Samaria. We have no clues as to what route Mary and Joseph would have taken as they traveled to Bethlehem. That being said, there are a couple of routes that would have been likely routes for the holy couple. Below are three possibilities;



The avoid Samaria Route



Semi-avoid Samaria Route



Through Samaria Route

LDS Biblical Scholar, D. Kelly Ogden wrote, "They would probably have made the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem by one of two routes. One would have taken them south across the Jezreel Valley, then through the hills of Samaria into Judaea. This is the more direct route in straight-line distance—but there are two reasons it probably was not the way Joseph and Mary went: It is physically demanding, with constant ups and downs through the hills—and it took the traveler directly through Samaritan country, and "the Jews [had] no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). The other possible route is the one Joseph and Mary more likely traveled. It would have taken them southeast across the Jezreel Valley, connecting with the Jordan Valley, then level or slightly down in elevation all the way to Jericho, then up through the Judaeen Desert to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. To discover for myself what each of the routes would have been like, I recently walked both of them. Both routes are about ninety-two miles long. Normal walking pace, even with a camel or donkey, is three miles per hour. So a traveler can usually walk between seventeen and twenty-four miles each day. Each route took me about thirty hours to walk—seventeen to twenty miles a day for five days. At that rate, the journey would have taken Joseph and Mary at least four to five days. We wonder where they stayed each night, where and with whom they camped along the way. It would have been a wearying journey for anyone, but especially for a pregnant woman soon to give birth. It was early spring, which could still be very chilly at night in the hill country. But in the Jordan Valley—which is below sea level—the temperatures would have been mild and pleasant. The last leg of the journey was hardest of all. Jericho is the lowest city on the globe, and Jerusalem and Bethlehem are situated right in the top of the hills. From Jericho through the desert to Bethlehem is an uphill hike of 3,500 feet." ("The Road to Bethlehem", Liahona Magazine, D. Kelly Ogden, December 1993, page 34).



21 - Judaea - The word "Judaea" in Hebrew is "יהודה". The modern form of the word is "Yehuda". The Tiberian word is "Yehūdāh", while the Greek word is "Ἰουδαία". The Latin form of the word is "IVDÆA", sometimes spelled in its original Latin forms of "Judaea" or "Iudaea" to distinguish it from Judea proper. It is a term used by historians to refer to the Roman province that incorporated the geographical regions of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, and which extended over parts of the former regions of the Hasmonean and Herodian kingdoms of Israel. Judaea was later reduced after Herod Archelaus's Tetrarchy of Judaea. The name was derived from the Kingdom of Judah of the 6th century BCE.

22 - David - King David was not only the symbol for Jewish royalty, it was prophesied that the Messiah would come from his line. The prophet Isaiah prophesied, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). The Davidic line (also referred to as the House of David) (known in Hebrew as Malkhut Beit David (מלכות בית מלכות) — "Royal House of David") refers to the tracing of lineage to the King David referred to in the Hebrew Bible, as well as the New Testament. Not only was the Messiah to come through the line of David, he was to be born in the town of David. "Usually in the Old Testament the phrase, "the town of David" is used of the citadel of Zion or the former Jebusite fortress that David took over and made into Jerusalem. Yet David himself is known in the Old Testament as the son of "an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah" or as the son of "Jesse the Bethlehemite". (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 406).

23 - Bethlehem - The town of Bethlehem was the prophesied to be the birth place - of the Messiah. The Old Testament prophet Micah wrote, "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2) The Jews have long since looked to Bethlehem for the Messiah. The problem is, the promised Messiah wasn't what they expected.

Mary and Joseph made the relatively long journey to Bethlehem. Being pregnant would have complicated the travel. **"Since Bethlehem was about 2,564 feet above sea level, the reference to an ascent from Galilee in the north is understandable, Nazareth being about 1,830 feet above sea level....Customarily, one went "up" to Jerusalem and its vicinity."** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 405). It meant that they traveled uphill for a good portion of the trip. The terrain is rocky. The roads were rough, and the highways were dangerous.



Most Biblical commentaries explain that the word "Bethlehem" comes from the Hebrew "Bet Lechem" meaning "House of Bread or Meat". This brings some interesting symbolic correlations. The Savior of mankind is often referred to as the "Bread of Life". Bethlehem is the home of the Hebrew Royal Family, the house of David. From David the Messiah was promised. Hence, the house of Bread. Not every scholar agrees with this interpretation of the word. One scholar writes, **"Bethlehem in/of Judah was a small town ca. five miles S/SW of Jerusalem. in John 7:42 it is called a kome, "village." It was a town with a long history, being originally a Canaanite town mentioned in the Amarna letters as Bit-Lahmi ("house of [the god] Lahma," and not, pace Plummer, "house of bread"). It was the home of David and the place of his anointing. The specification of it as Bethlehem of Judah served to distinguish it from Bethlehem in Zebulun."** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 406). In rebuttal, the Jews named another town Bethlehem that was not of Canaanite origin. The Jewish origin might very well be an appropriate replacement for a heathen name. Regardless, it doesn't change the fact that Bethlehem was the town of David

24 - house - The word **'house'** is translated from the Greek word "oikos". The English spelling for the word is "oikos". It has multiple uses and meanings as follows;

- 1) a house
 - a) an inhabited house, home
 - b) any building whatever
 - 1) of a palace
 - 2) the house of God, the tabernacle
 - c) any dwelling place
 - 1) of the human body as the abode of demons that possess it
 - 2) of tents, and huts, and later, of the nests, stalls, lairs, of animals
 - 3) the place where one has fixed his residence, one's settled abode, domicile
- 2) the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household
 - a) the family of God, of the Christian Church, of the church of the Old and New Testaments
- 3) stock, family, descendants of one

See the commentary for the term "house" in Chapter 2, footnote #12; Chapter 3, footnote #12; Chapter 5, footnote #7; and Chapter 8, footnote #14.

25 - lineage - The word **'lineage'** is translated from the Greek word "πατριά". The English spelling for this word is "patria". It can be used to refer to one's lineage running back to some progenitor ancestry. It can also be used to refer to a nation or tribe, specifically a group of families, all of whom lay claim to a common origin. From a Jewish perspective, it would refer to the Israelites which distributed into twelve tribes, descended from the twelve sons of Jacob. These were divided into families, which were divided into houses. In this sense, it also refers to the family, in a wider sense, nation, and or people.

26 - Mary - See the commentary for Chapter 1, footnote #49; Chapter 3, footnote #14; and Chapter 5, footnote #1.

27 - espoused - 'Espoused' is synonymous with betrothed, or engaged. It is translated from the Greek word, "μνηστεύω" meaning, "1) to woo her and ask her in marriage, 2) to be promised in marriage, be betrothed". Mary was an engaged wife. She was absolutely more than a fiancé, however, the final culmination of the marriage had not transpired. See the commentary for Chapter 3, footnote #10; and Chapter 4, footnote #5.

28 - wife - The word **'wife'**, by itself, is translated from the Greek word "γυνή". The English spelling of the word is "gynē". We are familiar with this Greek word and use it in modern English words like "gynecology". It is not a word that specifically make reference to a wife. Rather, it refers to a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow. It can be used in reference to a wife or a betrothed woman, but it is not exclusive. In the case of its usage in this verse, one must combine it with the preceding word "espoused". Espoused wife, or "emnesteumene auto gynaike" might better be translated as "engaged wife".



How can one be engaged and be a wife at the same time? In the ancient Hebrew culture, marriage was a clearly defined as a two part process. The first part is the "betrothal". A betrothal is a promise of marriage. In the Hebrew sense, that promise was binding. The betrothal or formal engagement was a

marriage contract made in the presence of witnesses. Once engaged, the marriage contract was binding and in full force, yet not completed. One was considered married. It required a bill of divorce to dissolve it. It made the woman a wife, and yet the marriage was not whole. The woman was an espoused wife. The final stage required the groom to present the marriage gift. The space between the two stage was often a year or longer. Once the marriage gift or dowry was paid, the engaged or espoused wife would be allowed to go with the man. Until that time, the two were apart. The one year period was to prove fidelity and purity. Mary was an espoused wife. This conveys the idea that Joseph had not yet taken her unto himself. They were married, but the marriage was not complete. They knew not each other in an intimate sense.

See the commentary for Chapter 2, footnote #9; and Chapter 4, footnote #28.

- 29 - **child** - The phrase '**great with child**' is translated from the single Greek word "ἔγκυος". Its English spelling would be "egkyos" meaning "big with child, pregnant". The term doesn't necessarily convey the length of one's pregnancy; however, it does carry the connotation that one was showing visible signs of pregnancy. Given the fact she delivers shortly after arriving in Bethlehem, we know that Mary was near delivery.