

SIX SCENES FROM THE TRUE CHRISTMAS:

Scene #3: God Guides the Circumstances for Jesus' Birth (Luke 2:1-5)

OBSERVATIONS:

1. SOVEREIGNTY – God Controls Circumstances

- a. **Prov 21:1** The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord, *Like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.
- b. **Dan 4:25** They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.
- c. **Dan 4:35** All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

2. GOVERNMENT – God Uses Government to Accomplish His Work

- a. **Gen 9:6** "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.
- b. **Pharaoh & Joseph – Gen 41:28** This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do. **Gen 45:7-8** ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. ⁸ So now *it was* not you *who* sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.
- c. **Daniel & Cyrus – Isa 44:28** Who says of Cyrus, '*He is* My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." '
- d. **Rom 13:1** Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

3. DIFFICULTY – God Allows Difficulty in Our Lives to Accomplish His Work

- a. **Scorn** – A lifetime in the midst of supposed scandal (did Joseph relocate to lessen this?)
- b. **Travel** – 85-90 miles of travel, without a car, while pregnant (15 miles/day = 5-6 days to a month!)

4. PROPHECY/CERTAINTY – God Insured that Prophecy Was Fulfilled Regarding Jesus

- a. **Micah 5:2** – "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah, *Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth *are* from of old, From everlasting."
- b. **Jeremiah 31:15** Thus says the Lord: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation *and* bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they *are* no more."
- c. **Ruth 4:11** And all the people who *were* at the gate, and the elders, said, "*We are* witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.
- d. **1 Sam 17:12** Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name *was* Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced *in years*, in the days of Saul.
- e. **1 Sam 17:15** But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.
- f. **Matthew 2:4-6** ⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ⁶ '*But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.*' "
- g. **John 7:42** Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"



Verse	Scene	Commentary
¹ And it came to pass in those days	Real time God fore-seeing God guiding circumstances	
that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus	Life happens in a context Government is part of that context	Augustus? No later than 4 B.C. (Herod died that year.)
that all the world should be registered.	Everyone else didn't have it easier... Things happen – hassles happen	
² This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.		Significance? Timing?
³ So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.	Power of government Requirement to obey government (Rom 13:1-7)	Major event for all?
⁴ Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea,	Obedience Distance Nuisance	J&M didn't have life easy... • “up” going south? – traveling uphill from Nazareth (1830 ft above sea level) to Bethlehem (2564 ft above sea level) • Nazareth to Bethlehem – 85-90 miles!
to the city of David,	Jerusalem was the city of David as his ruling city (2 Sam 5:7, 9; 6:10, 12, 16; 2 Kings 9:28; 12:21) Bethlehem was the city of David as his ancestral city (1 Sam 16:1ff.; 17:12, 15, 58; Ps 78:70; Luke 2:11)	
which is called Bethlehem,	Prophecy (Micah 5:2) “Rachel weeping for her children” Other significance Joseph & Mary were aware of the prophecy. Would that have made the trip easier?	
because he was of the house and lineage of David,	Prophecy (David's kingdom... with what the angel told Mary) [Genealogy]	
⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife,	Marriage vs. Betrothal Headship	Matt 1:24-25 ²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.
who was with child.	Travel during pregnancy Per angel's words	Most readers assume that the couple arrived in Bethlehem just before Jesus' birth. However the text does not require nor rule out this reading. They may have been there for some time before Mary went into labor. ¹

Quirinius served as governor of the Roman province of Syria twice (3-2 B.C. and 6–7 A.D.). However, Herod the Great was still alive when Augustus issued his decree (Matt. 2), and Herod died in 4 B.C. This incongruity has cast doubt on Luke's reliability as a historian. There is evidence that Augustus issued the type of decree that Luke described in 6 A.D. However there is presently no evidence that he did so earlier.

One solution to this problem is that the decree went out in 3 or 2 B.C., but we have no other record of it. This solves the problem of a census occurring during the governorship of Quirinius, but it does not solve the problem of Herod being alive then. Another possibility is that the word “first” (v. 2, Gr. *prote*) means “prior” or “former” here (cf. John 15:18). Luke's meaning would then be that the census that took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem was the one Augustus made prior to the one he took when Quirinius was governor of Syria (in 6 A.D.). This seems to be the best solution. All the evidence points to the birth of Jesus in late 5 or early 4 B.C.²

¹ Tom Constable. (2003; 2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Lk 2:4). Galaxie Software.

² Tom Constable. (2003; 2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Lk 2:1). Galaxie Software.