
QUIRINIUS

Each year during Christmas, millions of believers in churches all around the world read of the birth of Jesus from the gospel account as recorded in Luke chapter two. And each year the man who governed in Syria at the time of the Lord's coming is also mentioned. His name is Quirinius, or if you have a King James Version, Cyrenius. History records much of the man who was lucky enough to be associated with the birth of our Savior.

The earliest historical account we have of Quirinius comes from an inscription found in Antioch Pisidia known as Res Gestae - 'The Deeds of Augustus Caesar by Augustus'. The inscription places him as council in 12 B.C. This position was attained by only two prominent Romans every year and they governed as the Roman heads of state. The inscription reads as follows:

"A great crowd of people came together from all over Italy to my election, more then had ever gathered before in Rome, when **Publius Sulpicius (Quirinius) and Gaius Valgius were consuls.**"

(Res Gestae 10)

Quirinius was by no means a small figure in Roman politics or in his association with Augustus, Tiberius and Caius Caesar. So respected was Quirinius to the Caesar's that upon his death in 22 A.D. 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 Quirinius 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 concern-**

ing his assault on the fortresses of the Homonadenses in Cilicia (The province of Cilicia is located just northwest of neighboring Syria.) **Later he was appointed to be an adviser to Caius Caesar in the government of Armenia** (Caius was consul and was sent to Syria in 1 A.D. and was wounded in nearby Armenia in 3 A.D. and later died in 4 A.D.) **as well as being an advisor to Tiberius, when he was at Rhodes** (the Island just off the coast of Asia somewhere between 6 B.C. and 2 A.D.) **The Roman emperor spoke of these things before the entire Senate, and praised Quirinius for his excellent service**, while he criticized Marcus Lollius, whom he blamed for teaching Caius Caesar the traits of being disobedient and divisive. But most of the citizens were not fond of the memory of **Quirinius, because of his involvement in the events surrounding Lepida, whose account I have previously mentioned, as well as the harsh and dangerous power he held during his last years in office.**" Tacitus Annals- Book III

This account of Tacitus proves that Quirinius was governing militarily in the area of Syria well before becoming the civilian governor of Syria and taking a second census of Judea in 6 A.D., as recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus.

Another inscription, which surfaced in the late 1600's, known as the Aemilius Secundus inscription, also mentions Quirinius 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.**

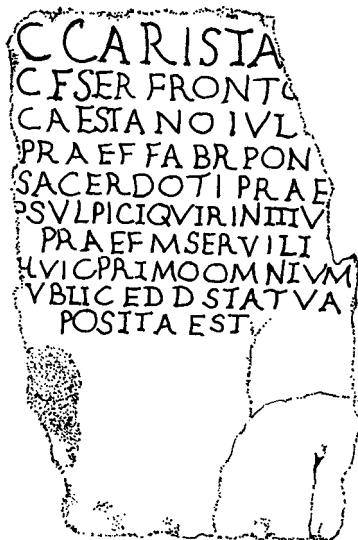
(Iturea borders Syria and is just north of Galilee.) Before being involved in the militia he was prefect of engineers, appointed by the two consuls as treasurer, quaestor of his colony, served twice as aedile and duumvir and was as a priest. Buried in this place are his son, Quintus Aemilius Secundus.

(Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae #2683)

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:

"C. Caristianus C F Sergius Fronto Caesius Iulius, prefect of civil engineers, priest, prefect of **P. Sulpicius Quirinius the Duumvir**, Prefect 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

The second inscription reads:

"To C. Caristianus Fronto Caesianus Iulius, son of Gaius, from the tribe of Sergia, prefect of civil engineers, military tribune of twelfth legion, prefect

of the Bosporan cohort, priest, prefect of **P. Sulpicius Quirinius**, duumvir, prefect of Marcus Servilius, prefect . . ."

(Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae #9503)

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 6 A.D.

But Josephus records that the Jews were being taxed by the Romans by commands from Syria as early as 44 B.C. And the task of raising the funds fell upon the Jewish rulers in power at the time. 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 . . ." Jewish Antiquities XIV 271

History also records that just before the birth of our Lord, Judea was being taxed highly under Herod the Great, who was appointed King of Judea by Caesar Augustus, and Herod was subservient to him. After he died, Josephus records the following: "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." Jewish Antiquities XVII 200

He also recorded that the common people hated Herod for taxing them so much: "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 because of these past crimes 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 XVI 150-170

To show how much he taxed the people, when he died he left ten million pieces of silver to Augustus Caesar and five million to Caesar's wife Julia and others. (Jewish Antiquities XVII 190)

We also know that Augustus Caesar ordered a Census in 8 B.C., this would have taken a good two to three years to implement and complete in all the provinces under direct and indirect control of Rome. The following is an account given by Augustus of the census:

"During my sixth term as consul (28 B.C.), I along with my comrade Marcus Agrippa, commanded a census be taken of the people. I directed a lustrum, the first in forty-one years, in which 4,063,000 Roman citizens were counted. **And once again, with imperial authority, I single handedly authorized a lustrum when the consuls of Rome were Gaius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius (8 B.C.),** during which time 4,233,000 Roman citizens were counted." (Res Gestae 8 - The Deeds of Augustus by Augustus)

And last but not least, the most accurate of all historians and the one that atheists and infidels refuse to believe, LUKE: **"I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good to me to write an orderly account for you . . . In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governing in Syria.)** Gospel of Luke

You see, Caesar, whom the Romans held as being Divine, though he was only a mere mortal man,

took a census to count all the people in his empire. And also to find out and document which ones were citizens of his kingdom and which ones were not.

And one day, the One who is not a mere mortal, but truly God, will hold His own registration. And each man and woman will appear before Him face to face. And He will open up the Book of Life to see if you are entitled to be called a citizen of His kingdom. A simple record of what you have done with the message of salvation? That message that the Lamb of God shed his blood on a cross, to die in your place.

Do you believe?

Are you registered in the Lamb's book of Life?

THE GREATEST STATEMENTS REGARDING CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him, He came to his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who do receive, to all who do believe in his name, he gave the right to be called **Children of God**.
John 1:10-12

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who set their mind on earthly things. **For our citizenship is in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.
Philippians 3:18-21

Next Chapter >>