
QUIRINIUS AND THE CENSUS



For many years, critics of those who believe the Bible to be 100% accurate, used a passage found in the Bible to point out an apparent historical error.

Luke 2:1-2 states: "And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while **Quirinius was governing Syria.**"

Since the Bible states that Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great, who died around 1 B.C., critics claimed that the Bible was in error, since history records that Quirinius was not appointed governor of Syria until 6 A.D.

But recently, confirmation that Quirinius was governing in Syria around this time has been found.

First of all, let's look at a few early census accounts taken from history and see how they match up with the Bible.

The following is a record of a census taken in the year 104 A.D. which contains similar wording to that found in the Gospel: "From the Prefect of Egypt, Gaius Vibius Maximus. Being that the time has come for the house to house census, it is mandatory that

all men who are living outside of their districts return to their own homelands, that the census may be carried out."

Another census was uncovered from 48 A.D. which also records a return of the people to their native land for the census. It reads as follows:

"I Thermoutharion along with Apollonius, my guardian, pledge an oath to Tiberius Claudius Caesar that the preceding document gives an accurate account of those returning, who live in my household, and that there is no one else living with me, neither a foreigner, nor an Alexandrian, nor a freedman, nor a Roman citizen, nor an Egyptian. If I am telling the truth, may it be well with me, but if falsely, the reverse. In the ninth year of the reign of Tiberius Claudius Augustus Germanicus Emperor."

It is interesting to note that these two census accounts required a person to return to their homeland to be registered. The same is true of the Gospel account.

Two well-respected leaders from the early church, Justin and Tertullian, also believed that a record of the census, along with the registration of Joseph and Mary could be found in official documents from the reign of Augustus Caesar. In their writings they mention that if anyone were to question the Lord's virgin birth they should go and checkout the Roman state records for themselves.

And as for Quirinius being the governor of Syria during this census, it is worth noting that the Bible never calls him the governor, at least the New King James Version doesn't. It says he was **governing** in Syria. And we know that Quirinius was indeed governing in some capacity in this region at this time.

Records also indicate that Quirinius was no minor figure in Roman politics. His name is mentioned in "Res Gestae - The Deeds of Augustus by Augustus" placing him as consul as early as 12 B.C.

The Roman historian Tacitus also mentions that Quirinius was appointed by Augustus to be an advisor to his young son Caius Caesar in Armenia well before the second census of 6 A.D. - (Caius was sent to administer Syria in 1 A.D., and was wounded in nearby Armenia in 3 A.D.) Evidently, Augustus wanted someone who was experienced in previously administering the region to advise his son. Who better than Quirinius?

The Biblical census was probably implemented by Herod at the command of Rome to coincide with their decree that all peoples should take an oath of allegiance to Augustus which took place in history around 2 B.C.

This oath, forced upon everyone in Israel, is recorded by the first century historian Josephus.

Josephus also mentions that Quirinius became governor later on in 6 A.D., He wrote:

"Quirinius, a Roman senator who had gone through other magistracies and had passed through them all until he had become consul, was appointed governor of Syria by Caesar and was given the task of assessing property there and in Judea."

So who was in charge as the assessor of property in Judea during the first census? Just as the Bible had said all along, Quirinius.

THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH CAME TRUE DURING THE FIRST CENSUS

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name **JESUS**, for He will save His people from their sins."

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "**GOD with us.**" Matthew 1:21-23

Next Chapter >>