



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #015
Jesus' 30 Years of Preparation for Ministry
Jesus' Birth and Growth into Maturity

The Details of Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem
LK 2.1-7; MT 1.25B

¹ In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that the entire Roman world must register for a census. ² (This was the first census to take place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ Everyone was traveling for registration, each to his or her own town.

⁴ Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, to whom he was engaged to be married, and she was expecting a child.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in baby cloths and laid him down in a manger because there was no place available for them in the guest room. ^{MT} And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Bethlehem in Judea
Time	Jesus' Birth
Jesus' Life Context	Jesus' 30 Years of Preparation for Ministry
	Jesus' Conception and Nativity from Joseph's Perspective
Title	The Details of Jesus' Birth in Bethlehem

Luke's description of Jesus' birth is written in a plain, simple style--just the facts. Like what Jesus accomplished in his death, only the Trinity fully understands the enormity and reality of what happened in Jesus' incarnation. In one sense, just another baby was born that night in Bethlehem. This is true because Jesus' humanity is real. He is another baby like every other--therefore he can identify with us and understand us fully by going through the same experiences we do.

On the other hand, the eternal Son of God stepped out of heaven and eternity into human flesh when Jesus was born. Just as he was fully human, Jesus remained Divine in his incarnation. This is the mystery that we cannot conceive. This is what the Trinity understood, and deemed to be necessary for their purpose for the human race to be fulfilled. The incarnation was the eternal plan of the Trinity.

Only the Trinity knew and appreciated what had happened in the birth that was just like every other, and yet like none other. This is the way God works. God does not have an ego that needs to be fed by constantly drawing attention to himself. God says and does what is love--whatever that requires--because God the Trinity is love. God's greatest work is done apart from human eyes, absent of our comprehension, without our approval, and usually in spite of our puny opposition. Yet God's work is love, therefore it always accomplishes what is to our ultimate benefit. So was the incarnation.

Luke did not mention that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was necessary in order to fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5.2. As the descendant of King David, Jesus was born as the eternal King that will reign forever (LK 1.30-33), just as God promised David so many years ago (II Samuel 7.12-16). So, it was appropriate for Him to be born in David's hometown, Bethlehem. What is amazing is the way God accomplished this fulfillment.

Rather than speaking to Joseph directly, and commanding him to go to Bethlehem, as He did for the escape to Egypt later on, God used the ambitions of Augustus Caesar in far away Rome to accomplish this prophetic fulfillment. Augustus was a great administrator and leader, and was the first Roman emperor to receive worship as a divine being. God chose to use this pagan man in a pagan land to accomplish his purpose.

God, the only TRUE Lord and King over all the earth, moved the entire Roman empire around through this census registration, for the purpose of getting His one and only true Son to Bethlehem at just the right time for Jesus to be born there. This demonstrated the sovereignty of our mighty God over all things, and unveiled the emptiness of the "god" Augustus. The Emperor was a mere unwitting pawn in the hands of the true God, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. Yea God!

By obeying the census registration decree, Joseph was actually being led by God to a strategic location, at just the right time...even though he was not aware of what God was doing. God's leadership and timing in guiding us is usually like that--beyond our conscious awareness at the time. It is only in hindsight that our Master's plan begins to be seen in all of His wisdom and matchless grace. So it was for the birth of Jesus.

APPLICATION:

God has established the authorities that exist in this world. Like Augustus, He uses them to fulfill His own loving purposes in our world. We should honor, obey, and pray for all those in authority. See I Timothy 2.1-3.

What is your plan and practice for praying for those in authority, and obeying them?

How can you improve in this area of obedience to God's will?

Is your obedience to authority like Joseph's? Can God count on you to obey the authority he has established for his own reasons?