

I. *Jesus Is Born (vv. 1-7)*

2 At that time Emperor Augustus ^a ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. ² When this first census ^b took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. ^c ³ Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own home town. ^d

⁴ Joseph went from the town of Nazareth ^e in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem ^f in Judea, ^g the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. ⁵ He went to register with Mary, ^h who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, ⁶ and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for

her to have her baby. ⁷ She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths ⁱ and laid him in a manger ^j – there was no room for them to stay in the inn. ^k

II. *The Angels Appear to the Shepherds (vv. 8-20)*

⁸ There were some shepherds ^l in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. ^m ⁹ An angel of the Lord ⁿ appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, ¹⁰ but the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid! ^o I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. ^p ¹¹ This very



WOW! Interesting Stuff

^a Luke is the only Gospel writer who relates his story to the historical events that were taking place at that time. Caesar Augustus was the first and, according to many, greatest Roman emperor. He ruled from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14.

^b Censuses were taken for taxation purposes and to determine who were eligible for serving in the Roman army. Jews, however, were exempt from military service. This census probably took place around 4 B.C.

^c Judea, Samaria and Galilee were located in the Roman province of Syria.

^d This refers to one’s ancestral home. In Joseph’s case, because he was from David’s line, he had to return to Bethlehem, the city where David was born.

^e Nazareth was a town in lower Galilee. It was Joseph’s home town and this was where Jesus grew up (see 4:23).

^f Bethlehem means ‘the house of bread’. It was about 10 km (6 miles) south of Jerusalem. God used the census ordered by a pagan emperor to fulfil the prophecy of Mic 5:2 that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

^g Judea here refers to southernmost province in Palestine (see ‘Map of Palestine’, p. xxv).

^h Mary was also of the house of David and probably was required to enrol as well. In Syria, women 12 years of age and older were required to pay tax and therefore to register.

ⁱ Long strips of cloth were used to wrap snugly around the body of a newborn child for protection and warmth.

^j A manger is a long narrow container which is open at the top. Food is placed in it for animals to eat.

^k Bethlehem was most likely crowded with people who had gone there to be registered. The only available place for Mary and

Joseph was one usually occupied by animals. It might have been a cave, as tradition suggests, that was used as a stable. But it could also be some part of a house or inn. It was common for animals to be kept in the same building as the family quarters.



Questions (vv. 1-7):

- 1 Why did Joseph take Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem (vv. 1-5)?
- 2 Who was the emperor of the Roman Empire and the governor of Syria at that time (vv. 1-2)?
- 3 Where did Mary give birth to Jesus (v. 7)?

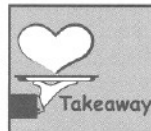
What did she do after she gave birth to him (v. 7)?



Hmmm...

Imagine the Son of God being born in a place occupied by animals rather than in a palace surrounded by important people! Born under humble circumstances, to poor humble folks, and witnessed by lowly shepherds – that was how God brought His Son into the world.

* What does this show you about how God looks at things and at people?



Even though you are so high above, you care for the lowly, and the proud cannot hide from you.

Psalm 138:6

WOW! Interesting Stuff

^l Shepherding was a lowly occupation and shepherds were much looked down upon. Their work kept them from observing the