

**Luke 2:1 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.**

**Luke 2:2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)**

As with the first chapter, this chapter begins with a time marker; Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Research indicates that there is conflict with Luke's information due to the historical record of the rule of Cyrenius.

A. T. Robertson notes that Cyrenius (Quirinius) served two terms as governor: "A series of inscriptions in Asia Minor show that Quirinius was governor of Syria in 10-7 B.C., and again in 6 A.D."

Burton Coffman supports Robertson's statement as follows: "Regarding some of the inscriptions mentioned by Robertson, these included those which were found in the autobiography of Augustus Caesar inscribed on the inner walls of the ruined temple of Augustus at Ankara. These were published in the New York Times in 1929; and these refer to the two censuses, even giving the numbers of those enrolled and naming Quirinius in both as governor of Syria."

I know that Luke is writing through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and has given accurate information; any error can only be due to translation.

Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, is ruling the empire at the time; and from the perspective of those living in Bible lands, this would seem to be the whole world.

**Luke 2:3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.**

**Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)**

**Luke 2:5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.**

The call for taxation necessitated a census and called for everyone to report to "his own city." One commentary noted that the census registered people according to their property. Jewish laws determined property ownership as inherited and according to the tribal allocations. Joseph was of the royal line of David and was required to go to Bethlehem, approximately 80 miles from Nazareth.

I think it would be worth noting the additional information provided by Matthew.

*Matthew 1:18–25 "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her*

*is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."*

Matthew emphasizes the truth that Mary was pregnant before having a sexual relationship with Joseph. While Joseph was trying to decide what to do in light of Mary's condition, he was visited in a dream by an angel of the Lord. The angel told him that Mary's story was true; her baby was conceived through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. The angel also told Joseph that the birth of the child was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.

*Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."*

By connecting the name of Jesus (Savior, Deliverer) with the prophecy in Isaiah and giving specific interpretation as to the name Immanuel, the angel was declaring to Joseph that the child would be God in flesh. The fact that the child would "save His people from their sins" was a declaration of the truth that He would be the long-awaited Messiah.

Matthew goes on to tell us that Joseph then took Mary as his wife, but he did not become sexually intimate with her until after the birth of Jesus. I think the reason that Luke referred to Mary as Joseph's espoused wife was because the marriage had not been consummated.

The fact that Mary was great with child indicates that she was probably in her last couple of months. Research shows differing opinions regarding whether Mary had to go with Joseph. The fact remains that she did go and that her going was in fulfillment of prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

*Micah 5:2 "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

**Luke 2:6** And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

**Luke 2:7** And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

As prophesied, Mary gave birth to Jesus while they were in Bethlehem. They had not been able to find temporary lodging, so had taken shelter in a cave or some other structure in which the animals were kept. Luke provides details of the baby being swaddled and laid in a manger, a feeding trough.

The fact that Jesus is identified as Mary's firstborn son implies that she subsequently gave birth to at least one more son. Matthew records that he had several brothers and sisters.

*Matthew 13:53–56 “And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?”*

**Luke 2:8 ¶ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.**

**Luke 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.**

**Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.**

**Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.**

**Luke 2:12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.**

**Luke 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,**

**Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.**

Luke now records some other details regarding witnesses to the circumstances of the birth of the child. In the outlying countryside around Bethlehem there were shepherds watching over their sheep. An angel of the Lord that is shining with the glory of God appears before the shepherds. This makes me think of how Moses' face shone after a prolonged time in the presence of the Lord.

The angel tells the shepherds that they have nothing to fear; he is bringing them good news that will bring joy to all people. The Savior, Christ the Lord, was born this very day in Bethlehem, the city of David. In fact, they could go and see the baby for themselves. They would find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; it was highly unlikely that there would be more than one newborn child that could be so characterized and was therefore identified as a sign. The angel is then joined by a multitude of angels giving praise to the glory of God and His desire for peace on earth and to show His favor toward man.

I couldn't help but think it interesting that the coming of the Good Shepherd was first announced to shepherds. The declaration of the angels as "Christ the Lord" was again a confirmation that Jesus was the foretold Messiah and was indeed the Son of God.

*John 10:11–14 “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep....I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”*

I also think it is significant that the announcement was made at night. In the dark of this evil world there had been born a baby that was to become the light of the world who would give life to fallen man and allow for man to be at one (from the Greek for *peace*) in fellowship with God again.

*John 8:12 "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."*

*John 12:44–46 "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."*

**Luke 2:15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.**

**Luke 2:16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.**

Point is made that the angels went away from the shepherds into heaven; they didn't just disappear. I think this was probably to emphasize that they had come from the presence of God; their message had been from God.

The shepherds didn't waste any time, they decided to go immediately to Bethlehem to see this wonderful child whose birth the angels of God had announced to them. The fact that Luke says they came with haste and found the baby and his parents indicates to me that this might have been the very place that these shepherds kept their flocks when not grazing them in the fields.

**Luke 2:17 And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.**

**Luke 2:18 And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.**

**Luke 2:19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.**

**Luke 2:20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.**

After seeing with their own eyes the confirmation of the message the angel had given them, they couldn't wait to spread the news. Research indicates that shepherds were not known to be trustworthy and were not allowed to testify in the courts. It seems, however, that their passion concerning what they had experienced was sufficient to cause those who heard their testimony to consider what they said with wonder and amazement.

Evidently, the shepherds first told their story to Mary and Joseph; and Luke tells us that Mary basically memorized what they had said and thoughtfully considered all they told her. I am sure that she was keeping a mental record at the least of all the miraculous events that surrounded the birth of her child. I am

sure they would serve to strengthen her as her Son began His ministry and as she watched Him suffer on the cross.

I liked the CJB translation of verse 20: *“Meanwhile, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen; it had been just as they had been told.”*

**Luke 2:21 ¶ And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.**

**Luke 2:22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord;**

**Luke 2:23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)**

**Luke 2:24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.**

When the baby was eight days old, as with John and every other Jewish baby boy, he was circumcised and named. They called Him Jesus, just as the angels had instructed both Mary and Joseph. Luke emphasizes that this name had been chosen and announced (to Mary) before His conception.

Jewish law declared the mother unclean for 40 days after giving birth.

*Leviticus 12:2–4 “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.”*

After that 40-day period, Mary and Joseph took the baby to the temple to make the sacrifice required by law and to have Mary declared clean. In their case, it was the sacrifice of the poor.

*Leviticus 12:6–8 “And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”*

The law also declared every firstborn male, beast or man, to belong to God; all firstborn sons were to be redeemed.

*Exodus 34:19–20 “All that openeth the matrix is mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male. But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with*

*a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty."*

I didn't think of it, but David Guzik reasonably pointed out that this had to be before the visit of the wise men, since they weren't afraid to go to Jerusalem and could not afford to offer more than two young pigeons.

**Luke 2:25 ¶ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.**

**Luke 2:26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.**

**Luke 2:27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,**

**Luke 2:28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,**

**Luke 2:29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:**

**Luke 2:30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,**

**Luke 2:31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;**

**Luke 2:32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.**

It was in going to the Temple to redeem Jesus as the firstborn son according to the law that they encountered Simeon. Simeon is described as a just and devout man who was looking for the Messiah and had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would get to see the Messiah before he died. I think he was probably one of those who understood the prophecy of Daniel 9 and knew that the time was near.

Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit led Simeon to the temple to encounter the young family. He was evidently given a word of knowledge to be able to identify the baby and boldly began to testify that he had seen God's salvation in the person of the baby, the prophesied Messiah. God's promise to him had been fulfilled; he had seen the Messiah and was now ready to die in peace. He also affirmed the words of Isaiah as he prophesied that the Messiah had come not only to provide salvation for the people of Israel, but also for the Gentiles.

*Isaiah 42:1–6 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles...."*

*Isaiah 49:1–6 "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name....And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the*

*tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."*

**Luke 2:33** And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

**Luke 2:34** And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

**Luke 2:35** (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

I am sure that Mary and Joseph were amazed at how a complete stranger could recognize their child as the prophesied Messiah. It had to be another confirmation of God's hand at work in the whole situation.

Simeon then blesses the family and tells Mary specifically that her child will cause the fall and rising again of many in Israel—the fall of those who refused to accept Him as the Messiah and the rising of those who chose to place their faith in Him as God's anointed.

"a sign which shall be spoken against" – I think this must be in reference to His virgin birth. Remember, the angel had declared that Jesus' birth was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah that signified the virgin birth as a sign as noted previously (see v5). John records how Jesus defended himself against the Pharisees when they alluded to His birth.

*John 8:41–42 "Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me."*

"a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" – I think this must be a prediction of the agony Mary would endure as she witnessed the crucifixion of her son that ended with the thrust of the sword into His heart to prove He was dead.

*John 19:33–37 "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."*

Jesus' death and resurrection certainly served to identify those who were true believers. The rapture will serve as the next such public revelation of true believers, and the judgment of the sheep and goats prior to entering the Messiah's Kingdom will follow seven years later. The final revelation will occur at the great White Throne judgment that precedes the eternal state.

**Luke 2:36** And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

**Luke 2:37** And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

**Luke 2:38** And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Simeon was not to be their only unexpected encounter at the temple. Luke now introduces Anna, a very old prophetess from the tribe of Asher. She is described as having lost her husband after seven years of marriage and had been a widow for 84 years. Her whole widowhood had been spent in serving God through daily fastings and prayers at the temple. She comes after Simeon has completed his prophecy and begins to thank the Lord for the child and declare Him to be the prophesied Redeemer of Israel.

**Luke 2:39** And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

**Luke 2:40** And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

As I read verse 39, I am reminded of Jesus' reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue and stopping at a comma. For some reason Luke chooses not to include the account of the visit of the wise men, the family's flight to Egypt or Herod's order to have all the baby boys 2 years old and under in Bethlehem killed as recorded by Matthew (2:1-23), which chronologically would have to occur after the first comma in verse 39.

Luke picks up the narrative after Joseph brings his family home from Egypt to settle in Nazareth. We are told that Jesus grew strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and exhibiting the grace of God. Again, this brings to mind the words of the prophet Isaiah.

*Isaiah 11:1–2 “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD....”*

There is no further record of Jesus' childhood until He reaches 12 years of age, and only Luke gives us this glimpse into His childhood.

**Luke 2:41** ¶ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

**Luke 2:42** And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

**Luke 2:43** And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*.

**Luke 2:44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.**

**Luke 2:45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.**

It was the custom of Jesus' family to go to Jerusalem every year to celebrate Passover. Luke has chosen to tell us about the trip that occurred when Jesus was 12. The family traveled in a large group of friends and relatives, so Mary and Joseph did not realize that Jesus was not with them once they headed home. In fact, they traveled for a whole day before they realized He was missing. In a panic I am sure, they headed back to Jerusalem to find Him.

**Luke 2:46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.**

**Luke 2:47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.**

**Luke 2:48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.**

**Luke 2:49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?**

**Luke 2:50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.**

After three days, the frantic parents finally found their son in the temple dialoguing with "the doctors," the master teachers. His knowledge and understanding (of the scriptures is implied by the context) amazed the teachers.

Mary and Joseph were amazed to find Him in such company and chastised their Son for causing them such worry. Jesus was perplexed. He thought that they would understand that He was about "His Father's" business. Luke then informs us that His parents did not understand.

I am reading a book called "The Seaboard Parish," by George MacDonald, and the Father is telling his children about this incident in the life of Jesus. One of the children was troubled because it sounded like Jesus was being disrespectful to His mother. I liked the Father's answer: "...I remember quite well that those words troubled me as they now trouble you. But when I read them over now, they seemed to me so lovely that I could hardly read them aloud. I can recall the fact that they troubled me, but the mode of the fact I can scarcely recall. I can hardly see now wherein lay the hurt or offence the words gave me. And why is that? Simply because I understand them now, and I did not understand them then. I took them as uttered with a tone of reproof; now I hear them as uttered with a tone of loving surprise...if Jesus was a real man, and no mere appearance of a man, is it any wonder that, with a heart full to the brim of the love of God, he should be for a moment surprised that his mother, whom he loved so dearly, the best human being he knew, should not have taken it as a matter of course that if he was not with her, he must be doing something his Father wanted him to do?"

**Luke 2:51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.**

**Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**

The narrative closes with Jesus going home with His family to Nazareth and remaining submissive to His parents. Luke notes again, however, that Mary made a memory of this in her heart. The rest of Jesus' childhood years are summed up by the words of verse 52. The boy Jesus was evidently well liked by his neighbors as He continued to mature in both mind and body.