

## The King's Arrival Caesar Plays into God's Hand Luke 2:1-7

Intro: The government is going to take a census. A census is very important to the government as the current discussion about the upcoming census indicates for our own city, state, and nation. Many sensitive matters pivot on the outcome of the census and how people are counted.

Everyone in Israel returned to their hometown to be counted and taxed. This required for Joseph and Mary a four-day journey across rugged terrain—and she was nearly full term!

God used Mary and Joseph to be part of the story of salvation for people in all generations.

He also wants to change the world through you. He has an eternal plan established before the foundation of earth to bring about individual and planetary transformation through his own involvement in human affairs.

You can be part of this great movement, the Kingdom of God, if you will live in Christ, allow Christ to live through you, and approach each day with faith in an all-sufficient God.

Here is how you do it:

**I. Expect the Activity of God Imbedded in the Affairs of State.** *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world (Luke 2:1).*

A. This was the situation in the birth of Jesus.

1. The wheels of state are pushed into motion. Caesar has his agenda that he is seeking to promote—counting the people and taxing them.

2. We might assume that the Creator God is not concerned or even paying attention. That would be a false assumption though it is often made. God was at work in and through the decisions of government.

B. The activity of God is just as pervasive as political activity. God was active in that fateful year of Our Lord. The prophet said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The census was the instrument which brought Mary to that little hamlet not far from Jerusalem, and there she gave birth to her son.

C. The activity of God within earthly kingdoms is both personal and historical.

1. God is at work in the lives of Mary and Joseph. He is accomplishing his purpose for this couple even through the difficulties of travel and census-taking.

2. God is at work in history through this decree of Caesar. The promised king, the Messiah, will be born in Bethlehem because of the imperial decree. His birth in Bethlehem will further validate that he is the Promised One.

D. These same dual tracks run through your life. Life as a citizen goes on. Your life goes on. Is God aware of your tax burden? The boy who was born at Bethlehem says yes. God knows the flight of the sparrow, and he follows your ups and downs with great interest and tender care. He is working above and beyond all immediate circumstances to bring about his purpose in your life and for this planet.

**II. Expect to Succeed with Your Divine Assignment** *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1:6)*

A. Joseph and Mary and Jesus are caught in the incoming tide of history. They are on the very crest of the wave. All around them is white water, and tomorrow is a mystery. They do not worry over retirement. They wonder about the next day's bread. They have no medical insurance, no home mortgage, and no installment loans. They live close to the earth, the crops and the cattle. They make their bread and make their clothes and build their little homes themselves.

B. This couple--Mary and Joseph--are doing it on their own. They are young. They are inexperienced. They have a long trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem facing them, and a pregnancy to think about. And they do it themselves. They are independent-minded. They expect to be able to cope with whatever they encounter along the way.

C. Their confidence comes from God in two ways:

1. They know their Bible. They are fully aware that God is at work continually in human history to bring about his purposes in the earth. They believe in the Promised One, the Messiah, and they hold strongly to the faith of Abraham who believed God and lived in that promise.

2. They have heard from angels and are convinced that God has interrupted their lives to accomplish his saving work in part through them.

D. Your confidence to succeed will come from these twin sources of faith:

1. Faith in God's activity in your world from the first day until now. Faith in the divine plan for humankind, and God's amazing rescue through his Promised One, the Messiah.
2. Faith in God's activity in your life right up this present hour. Faith that "he who began a good work in you" when you believed and began your journey of faith in Christ, "will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

**III. Receive the Trust of God** *Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God...For nothing is impossible with God* (Luke 1:30, 37).

A. With a world full of experts and professionals, the Creator of the Universe has committed to this young couple, Mary and Joe, the daily care his only Son. From obstetrics to pediatrics to nutrition and education--the Creator trusts them.

B. We do well to remember this particular revelation about God in the Christmas story--he trusts people. God committed the nation of Israel to a shepherd boy named David who proved himself very capable. Joseph and Mary are descended from David, not only in blood line, but also in determination, courage, self-discipline, and devotion.

C. God commits to our care very weighty matters. We are charged with just and equitable management of people and property. He commits to us children and trusts us to teach them the truth, to love them unconditionally, to rear them with kindness and wisdom. He commits to us the good news about His love. He trusts us to tell our neighbors and our community and our world. He is a trusting God.

D. Prepare to receive such great responsibilities, and to shoulder them with joy and faithfulness. Let me speak to you a Christmas admonition: It is time for you to be serving. That may mean teaching God's Word or helping care for the people in your class or department. It may mean directing a children's department or taking responsibility for outreach and evangelism. It could involve visiting the sick and bereaved. Whatever the specifics, God's Christmas message seems clear: We are saved to serve.

**IV. Extend that Trust to Others.**

A. We must learn to trust as God does. We must learn God's pattern of entrusting valuable assets to people. Too often we are suspicious and distrustful as an attitude of spirit. Yes, some people betray our trust. But a suspicious spirit is both ungodly and unproductive. The only way that we can multiply our productivity in business and industry is through the recruitment of helpers and the genuine delegation of duties.

B. This is true also in the church of Jesus Christ. We must be continually doing what Jesus did--recruiting leaders, training them, and unleashing them to serve in this important work. Relocation requires just such an effort on our part. You may not feel capable, but God may be ready to entrust you with more responsibility than you have been willing to shoulder.

\*\*\*Think of the awesome assignment that Mary and Joseph are given. Have they been parents before? No. Do they have experience rearing infants? We have no reason to think so. Yet the Eternal God speaks to them and gives them an incredible responsibility.

C. This trust is especially important with our children, the future generations.

1. We must entrust them with faith in Christ, the power of the promise of God.
2. We must trust them to carry it forward through the power of the Spirit in their own lives.

\*\*\*The angel told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). Only through the power of the Spirit can we accomplish the divine assignment of carrying the love of Christ and the transforming power of the gospel to our generation and those to come.