

Luke 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

Analysis

All went to be taxed, every one into his own city (ἐπορεύοντο πάντες ἀπογράφεσθαι, ἔκαστος εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πόλιν, eporeuonto pantes apographesthai, hekastos eis tēn heautou polin)—The Greek apographesthai means 'to be registered' or 'enrolled,' indicating a census for taxation purposes. Roman administrative efficiency required travel to ancestral cities, unwittingly fulfilling Micah 5:2's prophecy that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

God's sovereignty uses pagan empire bureaucracy to accomplish prophetic precision—Caesar Augustus's decree becomes the instrument of divine providence. The massive population movement demonstrated Rome's absolute authority while simultaneously positioning Mary and Joseph exactly where Scripture required for the birth of David's greater Son.

Historical Context

Augustus's empire-wide census (8-6 BC) aimed to assess taxable resources. The Jewish custom of registering by tribal ancestry rather than current residence explains Joseph's Bethlehem journey. Roman census records from Egypt confirm similar registration practices requiring travel to family origins.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of Caesar's decree demonstrate His sovereignty over earthly powers to fulfill His purposes?
2. What does this census reveal about God's attention to prophetic detail in orchestrating Christ's birth location?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐπορεύοντο πάντες ἀπογράφεσθαι ἐκαστος εἰς τὴν

And **went** **all** **to be taxed** **every one** **into** G3588
G2532 G4198 G3956 G583 G1538 G1519

ἰδίαν πόλιν

his own **city**
G2398 G4172

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