

Luke 2:1-3 and the Census under Quirinius

Josephus, Antiquities 17.342-344, 355

In the tenth year of **Archelaus'** rule the leading men among the Jews and Samaritans, finding his cruelty and tyranny intolerable, brought charges against him before Caesar the moment they learned that **Archelaus** had disobeyed his instructions to show moderation in dealing with them. Accordingly, when Caesar heard the charges, he became angry, and summoning the man who looked after **Archelaus'** affairs at Rome. . . , he said to him, "Go, sail at once and bring him here to us without delay." . . . And when **Archelaus** arrived, Caesar gave a hearing to some of his accusers, and also let him speak, and then sent him into exile. . .

Now the territory subject to **Archelaus** was added to (the province of) Syria, and **Quirinius**, a man of consular rank, was sent by Caesar to take a **census** of property in Syria and to sell the estate of **Archelaus**.

Josephus, Antiquities 18.1-4

Quirinius, a Roman senator who had proceeded through all the magistracies to the consulship and a man who was extremely distinguished in other respects, arrived in Syria, dispatched by Caesar to be governor of the nation and to make an assessment of their property. Coponius, a man of equestrian rank, was sent along with him to rule over the Jews with full authority. **Quirinius** also visited Judaea, which had been annexed to Syria, in order to make an **assessment of the property** of the Jews and to liquidate the estate of **Archelaus**. Although the Jews were at first shocked to hear of the **registration of property**, they gradually condescended, yielding to the arguments of the high priest Joazar, the son of Boethus, to go no further in opposition. So those who were convinced by him declared, without shilly-shallying, the value of their property. But a certain **Judas**, a Gaulanite from a city named Gamala, who had enlisted the aid of Saddok, a Pharisee, threw himself into the cause of rebellion. They said that the assessment carried with it a status amounting to downright slavery, no less, and appealed to the nation to make a bid for independence. . . .

Josephus, War 2.117-118

The territory of **Archelaus** was now reduced to a province, and Coponius, a Roman of the equestrian order, was sent out as procurator, entrusted by Augustus with full powers, including the infliction of capital punishment. Under his administration, a **Galilean named Judas** incited his countrymen to revolt, upbraiding them as cowards for consenting to **pay tribute** to the Romans and tolerating mortal masters, after having God for their lord. This man was a sophist who founded a sect of his own, having nothing in common with the others.

Acts 5:37

After him **Judas the Galilean** rose up at the time of the **census** and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered.

Luke 2:1-3: Lost in Translation?

KJV	NRSV	NASV	NLT	TNIV	Stephen Carlson (2004)
<p>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.</p> <p>2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)</p> <p>3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.</p>	<p>1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.</p> <p>2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.</p> <p>3 All went to their own towns to be registered.</p>	<p>1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.</p> <p>2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.</p> <p>3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.</p>	<p>1 At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire.</p> <p>2 (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.)</p> <p>3 All returned to their own towns to register for this census.</p>	<p>1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.</p> <p>2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)</p> <p>3 And everyone went to their own town to register.</p>	<p>1 Now it came to pass that in those days a decision issued from Caesar Augustus for the whole civilized world to be registered</p> <p>(2 this became a very important registration when Quirinius was governing Syria),</p> <p>3 and everybody would go to be registered, each to their own community.</p>

Zealot origins	Josephus links census to Judas and to origins of Zealots. Luke (Ac 5:37) refers to Judas but doesn't mention Zealots.
Scope of census	Josephus describes census <i>in Syria and Judea</i> . Luke seems to describe an <i>empire-wide</i> census (including Galilee). = a <i>local</i> census in line with <i>empire-wide</i> tax policy?
Client Kingdoms	Josephus indicates <i>direct</i> Roman rule of Judea did not begin until 6 CE. Luke seems to have a Roman tax census under Herod the Great.
Relocation	Josephus makes no mention of <i>dislocations</i> during censuses. Luke has Rome requiring families to return to their ancestral homes. = a <i>regional concession</i> to <i>Jewish</i> concerns about land?
Quirinius	Both Josephus and Luke describe a census under Quirinius, governor of Syria. Both associate the census with a historical turning point.
	Josephus: Quirinius' rule begins in ± 6 CE (<i>Ant.</i> 18.1) [Josephus doesn't mention any of his earlier assignments.] Luke (2:2) seems to imply Quirinius' rule, in some form, overlapped with Herod's (d. 4 BCE; Lk 1:5). Luke 3:1, 23 implies Jesus was born c. 4 BC. [Jesus c. 30 yrs old in 15 th year of Tiberius (27-28 CE)]
	What is Luke saying? - this census was the <i>first of two</i> < <i>prōtos</i> > during reign of Quirinius? - this census happened <i>before</i> Quirinius was governor? - the broad census <i>became politically significant</i> locally under Quirinius?