

Chapter 4

Hated From the Start

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Luke's Good News

Chapter 2, verses 1-7

Can God work where we are helpless, vulnerable and overlooked?

It just so happened that those were the days when Caesar Augustus desired a record of everyone in his domain (which was the whole Roman Empire). He decreed that everyone must be enrolled in a census. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was the Roman governor of Syria.

In other words, the Roman Empire took more than one census while Quirinius was governing Syria, and we are talking about the first one. The Savior was born at a specific time in our historical record, in a specific place in our world. He was born into specific conditions involving specific historic events. The history of our race is marked by His presence in the story.

This means that we're talking about history, not mythology. It means that God is interested in the lives of real people. And it means that men such as Caesar Augustus have purposes for what they do, while God has other purposes for what they do. When we begin things, we may have our own plans, but God may have other plans.

Caesar's plan was to tax everyone in an organized system. So each person had a home city in which to register, and many had to travel to get there. So Joseph had to travel from the town of Nazareth, in Galilee, up to Bethlehem, in Judea. Joseph still had family ties in Bethlehem. And one thousand years earlier, Bethlehem was also the home town of his ancestor, King David.

So Joseph took with him the pregnant Mary, who was pledged to be his wife. And they went to the town where the story of Israel's greatest king began. And it just so happened that while they were there, where the ancient king had been born, the times were fulfilled for Mary to give birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped the baby in strips of old cloth, and she laid him in an animal feed trough (which was a normal part of a commoner's house), because the guest room was occupied.

King David himself had not been born into luxury and power. He began as a forgotten shepherd boy in the fields outside of this same village of Bethlehem. (This story is in 1 Samuel 16.) He was the least worthy son of an obscure family. What mattered is that God had bigger plans for him. God foretold David's kingship many years before he would make David the king of Israel. Calling David a king did not make sense to anyone when David was merely a shepherd boy. But God had planned it, and that is what matters.

And calling Mary's baby the eternal King would seem like nonsense to anyone but Mary and Joseph--those to whom God had revealed it. What other people thought did not matter if God had planned it.

People who had David's story in their history already knew this about God. The true God does not reveal himself through human popularity or power. He usually makes himself known where people are helpless and vulnerable. He had been showing us this all along.

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