

THE ABSURDITIES AND LIES ABOUT HOW JESUS CAME TO BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Matthew has Jesus being born when or before Herod died in 4BC. Luke thinks he was born in 6 AD,

Matthew speaks of Herod's plan to destroy the child. Luke does not for Luke does not think of Jesus being born in Herod's day. If they enrolled Luke and Matthew are in contradiction. If they did not enrol then it was not so important after all and they were able to get away with it. So this leaves Luke contradicting himself having them go to extreme trouble for nothing.

Luke has to account for why Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem in order for Jesus to be born there. Prophecy said Messiah would be born in that town.

Luke says it was because Joseph and Mary had to register in a census there. The rule was that you were not enrolled in your own town but the town of your ancestors. It is odd that if Joseph had to return to the town of his ancestors for which ancestors? If which ancestors then which town? Why Bethlehem?

And Luke's claim that Joseph had to bring his pregnant wife who was ready to fall into labour any minute with him to register is ludicrous. That is bad enough but to think she had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem when about to start her labour pains is worse. And it gets even worse again. She would have been a child of twelve when she was pregnant. She needed a team of midwives to get her through it and to help her survive a baby emerging from her undeveloped body. Where were they? Luke speaks as if she delivered the baby on her own. If pregnant women had to travel, she would certainly have been exempted.

It is only said they went to Bethlehem to enrol. It is not said they actually enrolled. If they did not exist there would have been a fear that the forms would turn up. Surely God would have arranged it that they got enrolled after the baby was born so that a record proving his birth in Bethlehem existed. And he would have inspired Luke to record it that they enrolled. If they had enrolled Herod could have got access to the records and there would have been no need for him to have all the babies slain to get rid of Jesus that we read about in Matthew.

A census was about your address so that if there was tax to be paid the collectors knew where to go. What else would a census be for? True a census facilitated taxation but it also helped identify you by linking you to your actual home address which proved useful to enumerators. Luke's assertion that Joseph was required to register in Bethlehem because it was where his ancestor King David, came from, is alarmingly stupid. Why would anybody care about that? If you were Emperor of Rome would you want the descendants of a king to go back to the town where that king was born? Rome destroyed bloodlines. It did not give them an excuse for a get-together. It is clear to us that the Roman census was about taxation and all they wanted to know was what your livelihood was and where you lived. They did not want anybody going back to the town of their ancestors. That would have been a total nightmare.

Only one person, the head of the house, needed to sign. Joseph didn't need to take Mary with him or leave his house in Nazareth. Surviving papyrus Roman tax censuses show that the head of the house could make the return for everybody under his roof (page 31, The Unauthorized Version).

The Emperor who allegedly commissioned the census would not want a migration over the whole world with all the trouble it creates for the soldiers and for peace and for attempts to keep crime down.

And how did Joseph know that he was descended from David? Did he have a document? If so, was it real? He probably did not have a document for Jesus never used or mentioned it and had to make do with dubious prophecies. Herod would have realised that if the baby were the Messiah king that Joseph had to be the lawful king of Israel for it was through his fatherhood - real or was he just a foster-father? - that the baby had to be the next king. Then why did Herod not kill the men of Bethlehem as well as the baby boys?

Matthew hints that Joseph was not a king. Herod would have believed that if he killed the Messiah the father could father another son who would then be the Messiah. So Herod then should have been after Joseph – the supposed father of Jesus - too but he wasn't. Luke contradicts the Matthew story of the massacre for he has Joseph and Jesus having freedom when Jesus was a toddler and the story that Jesus came into the world under Herod which incidentally is another reason for saying Luke thinks Jesus was born in 6AD and not Matthew's 4BC. We know this for Matthew has it that it was excessively dangerous for the child.

If Luke had thought that Joseph was from Bethlehem and had to go there for that reason he would not have presented him as having to sleep with horses.

If Luke is to be believed, Mary and Joseph must have had plenty of money when they determined to spend the night in the inn. How many inns did they stop at on the way there? – obviously a lot so they must have had a lot of cash with them. They were not allowed in because it was full. They must have expected this if all householders descended from David were there. Why were there no camps for when they had money with them they must have travelled with a big group to deter robbers? Why didn't they pay for their keep at a private house? Why did they have to go to a stable? Luke plainly made up the whole yarn. So there was no birth in the stable or angels crying, "Glory to God", in the fields.

If Luke made up the story then did he invent it when he said that Joseph left his home in Nazareth to come to Bethlehem? Why not simply say that Joseph was a resident of Bethlehem? Why invent more than you have to? Questions like this do not prove that Joseph really must have left Nazareth to come to Bethlehem for when the reason given for the journey is preposterous it is most likely that it never happened. Preposterous stories have preposterous and bizarre details – necessarily! Luke is saying that it is likely that Joseph went there for the reasons he says so if these reasons are impossible that means the journey was unlikely – get it? Memorise this line for it embodies a principle that shows you how to test many other things in the gospels. It indicates that Luke cannot be trusted for he was perfectly capable of making up mundane stories.

And how can you be sure that the baby born in Bethlehem was the same baby that became Jesus Christ? The gospels offer no evidence of any kind – they just assume it. Maybe that baby died and Mary adopted or even stole another baby?

The Case For Christ (pages 135-6) argues from the command of Gaius Vibius Maximus, the Egyptian Prefect, from 104 AD which instructed people to go home for the census that Joseph could have had to take Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. But commanding people to stay in the house until the count is done is totally different from what Joseph and Mary were said to have done.

It will be objected that a letter about a woman called Babata that was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls proves the journey Joseph and Mary made to Bethlehem over the census may have happened. In the late first century AD or a bit more Babata and her husband had to leave Makhoza to go to Rabbat for they had estates there and needed to enter a census though it was the middle of winter. The emperor commanded this. But it is said that the emperor commanded this but it is not said that the wealthy couple could not have got somebody else to fill in the form for them. Winter was no problem for wealthy families. And maybe they had to go to Rabbat anyway. There is just no comparison with Mary and Joseph for Babata was not pregnant, was rich, had land and was an important person and knew where her ancestors and her husbands came from as a rich people do. Luke says that Mary and Joseph only went back to Bethlehem because that was where their family had started centuries before not because they had land there and were very poor and had nothing there.

The search for evidence for a census journey is a waste of time. No evidence that a pregnant woman could be hauled all over the country to a town of an alleged ancestor randomly picked do any good.

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