

Cherished-Chosen-Challenged – December 26, 2010

Who Is In Charge?

And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:1-7

Nobody likes anyone meddling in their business or dictating to them what or what not they are to do. We get especially disgruntled when the offending party is the government requiring of us those things which we believe are ridiculous, counterproductive, inconvenient, and a general waste of our time and treasure. No doubt some of that sentiment existed for the multitudes of Hebrew people shuffling from place to place to be counted by the Romans. What was the purpose anyway? Registering the whole world seemed a bit excessive. Was it necessary for Rome to assess their social responsibilities to all these people, or was it just a way of making sure they had enough “soldier power” to maintain their ruling posture over the known world. Historians could surely make an argument for both cases. In any case, from the perspective of many inconvenienced individuals there was little doubt that Rome was in charge...or were they?

God has a way of turning human bravado into servitude of His will and purpose. No doubt Rome had a strategy for what was taking place, but God had a different plan, the scope of which finite individuals could not comprehend. Throughout the history of the Old Testament, the prophecies of the Mesisah’s birth, ministry, and saving work were precisely detailed. Rome’s portion in the fulfillment was just a “bit” part. It was God who was, as always, completely in control. The time was right. His plan was now

unfolding and the salvation of the world was taking place just as foretold. Shepherds would hear the angelic pronouncement. Sages from afar would see His sign in the holy star and sinful men like King Herod would still believe that they were in control of their own destiny oblivious to all that God was doing in spite of men's arrogance.

It was good that Joseph and Mary followed the Word of God and were subject to those in authority over them. God's plan included such obedience by humble and believing people and from such service God brought blessings, for them and for others. We can't see the future, but we have a God who knows it all. He worked within the framework of human frailty to bring us salvation through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His Son. Our calendar year is coming to a close. We can rehearse the events of the past year, but we have no ability to control the future. We are not afraid though, for our God is Ruler over all and even in the midst of human chaos He has us safely in His grasp. We are indeed Cherished-Chosen-and Challenged in the Gospel of our Savior. Let us never forget these things and if the Lord wills, let us strive forward to share and proclaim the Good News of Salvation under the new banner in a new year: "Blessed to Be a Blessing." For we are the people of God, bought with the price of His life blood and as His people we shall count our blessings and live out in our lives the love and mercy of our King; that in word and deed, like Mary and Joseph, no matter the earthly circumstances, we may be used as a blessing to others in order that they too may know what it is like to be: Cherished, Chosen, and Challenged in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Pastor Jacobs

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