

## The Quirinius Census: 3 BC or AD 6?

It was mentioned that in *Ant.* 18:2:1/26-28, Josephus stated that Quirinius came to Syria in the 37th year of Octavius's victory at Actium, i.e. in AD 6. In other passages in *Antiquities* and in the *Jewish Wars*, Josephus associates several events with the census associated with the name of Quirinius. Among these are an uprising against the census and its taxation led by a certain Judas and the appointment and then removal of Joazar as high priest. Rhoads follows Schwarz, Lodder, and others in a literary analysis that demonstrates that Josephus, in these writings, used different sources, and either these sources did not agree among themselves, or Josephus misplaced them chronologically. Here are some of the problems encountered when trying to reconcile the various passages relating to the census:

1. In *Ant.* 17:6:2-3/149-163, Judas, son of Saripheus (or the Sepphorean=person from Sepphoris in Galilee), a celebrated interpreter of the Jewish law, gathers a group of young disciples and encourages them to die in a noble cause. They tear down the golden eagle that Herod had set up in the Temple. Herod then executes Judas and his followers.
2. In *Ant.* 17:10:5/271-272, Judas, from Sepphoris in Galilee, raises an insurrection during the last days of Herod.
3. In *Ant.* 18:1:1-2:1/4-23 and *Wars* 2:8:1/117-118, Judas the Galilean, a celebrated teacher of one of the four sects of the Jews, taught his followers to be willing to die for a noble cause. He leads an insurrection against the Roman taxation. This at the time that Quirinius came to Syria, which in this passage Josephus dates to the 37th year of Octavius's victory over Mark Anthony at Actium, i.e. to AD 6.

Rhoads shows that all three passages refer to the same Judas and the insurrection he led (see a mention of this Judas in Acts 5:37). If this is true, then Josephus has made a mistake in one or more of the passages. Either the revolt was in the last days of Herod (so passages 1 and 2), or it was in AD 6 (so passage 3). That it is the third passage that has the wrong date is shown by a consideration of the high priest Joazar, whose appointment and deposition are closely associated with events related to the insurrection under Judas the Galilean in the last days of Herod the Great.

1. In *Ant.* 17:6:4/167, Herod, only a few weeks before his death, installed Joazar as high priest in place of Matthias, because Joazar had persuaded the people to accept the Roman taxation.
2. In *Ant.* 17:13:1/339-341, Josephus relates that when Archelaus succeeded Herod, he removed Joazar from office. Not long after, Archelaus removed Eleazar and installed a certain Jeshua, son of Sie.
3. In *Ant.* 18:2:1/26, apparently derived from a different source, it is Quirinius, supposedly in AD 6, who deprived Joazar of the priesthood. Ascribing this act to both Quirinius, and at the same time to either Herod or Archelaus who acted under his authority, would be reasonable if Quirinius came to Judea just before the death of Herod. What is not reasonable, however, is the idea that Joazar was high priest in AD 6. Joazar's dismissal by Quirinius and/or Archelaus places the coming of Quirinius, and the taxation, in 4 or 3 BC.

Josephus's dating of the coming of Quirinius to AD 6 therefore contradicts information he had supplied elsewhere regarding the last days of Herod and the tax that was instrumental in provoking the revolt of Judas the Galilean. All of these events--the enrollment, the taxation, Judas's revolt, the deposition of Joazar, and the coming of Quirinius--took place in the timeframe of about 4 BC to early 2 BC, in agreement with Luke's statement that the

cause for Joseph and Mary coming to Bethlehem was an enrollment in the days when Quirinius exercised authority over (*hegemoneuontos*) Syria and Judea. There is much more that could be said. Fortunately it is said, in Rhoads' presentation.

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