

What Are You Doing in Bethlehem?

Luke 2:1-7 12 10 17

A first rule in understanding life is the interconnectedness of life. Events are never without context, backdrop and setting. If one does not read the context properly, it is difficult to respond in the wisest way. Decisions may be made as though isolated, unrelated.

The Christmas story is populated by persons, many of whom would not have known each other or had any reason for a connection except the event of the incarnation. The actions of Mary and Joseph are influenced by others. In the course of events they become inextricably linked when the narrative is told. Shepherds, angels, Magi, soldiers, Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Simeon, Hannah, a supposed innkeeper without a name, Herod the Great, Caesar Augustus – these are the bare minimum. If one keeps going, prophets like Isaiah or lesser prophets such as Micah and others are pulled in.

In considering the question, “Why Was Mary in Bethlehem?” perhaps one can discover some of the forces that guide our lives. All the way through the story many of the participants would take issue with the conclusions of scripture. That does not remove them from being influenced or influencing others.

1. Mary was in Bethlehem because of a series of natural events;
 - a. A decree by Caesar Augustus: Actions of others may take emotional toll in adjustment, but must not be allowed to debilitate.
 - i. Mary’s relationship to Joseph: the genealogy (Matt 1:6; Luke 3:31).
 - ii. Mary’s pregnancy: she must follow the perceived father of her baby;
 - b. Notice Mary is not seen as the primary party in consideration;
 - This can either strengthen one’s ability to accept the so-called inevitable, or leave on especially frustrated.

2. Mary was in Bethlehem by submission to the will of God: Submission to the will of God will take one where he or she never thought they would be.

Here is the work of Romans 8:28, “We know that all things work together for the good of (1) those who love God and (2) are called according to His purpose.

3. Mary was in Bethlehem according to the nature of the prophetic Word. Ps 138:2 (honored Word above name) The Jewish Bible says, “You have made your Word greater than the whole of your reputation.”
 - a. Conditional prophecy
 - b. Authoritative prophecy, Is 9:7; Matt 1:18-21

What forces have put you where you are. If you believe God had no place in it, then it may warrant your consideration how you have come this far and God not be involved. But perhaps, just perhaps, God has not only guided you in the past, he has a great future for you if you obey.