

Dating the two Censuses of P. Sulpicius Quirinius

Abstract. According to Luke 2:1: Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census — the first — took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. The historian Paul Orosius precisely date the census of Augustus in the year 752 of Rome (Histories against the pagans VI:22:1; VII:3:4) or in 2 BCE. According to Josephus: Quirinius had now liquidated the estate of Archelaus; and by this time the registrations of property that took place in the 37th year after Caesar's defeat of Antony [= 6 CE] at Actium were complete (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:1-4, 26). The first registration under Herod the Great in 2 BCE, as the census of Apamea, was made to know the number of citizens and it is not to be confused with the one implemented in Judea by Quirinius when he came in 6 CE to ensure the liquidation of property of Herod Archelaus after his disgrace, and of which Josephus says it was followed by an evaluation of property. This two-step operation did not have the same nature, nor the same goal, or the same geographical scope as the previous one. It was conducted according to the principles of the Roman capitation and not according to Hebrew customs, and only covered the sole Judea, not Galilee. General censuses were performed every 5 years (= 1 lustre) as can be deduced from those reported by Cassius Dio. The census prior to the one of 4 CE, confined to Italy (Cassius Dio LV:13), was performed in 2 BCE. Two other topics linked to the first census of Quirinius are examined:

Dating the war of P. Quinctilius Varus. The intervention of Varus, after Herod's death, is described as a war by Flavius Josephus and also by the Seder Olam, yet the only war mentioned in the Roman archives in this region and at that time is the one conducted by Caius Caesar in 1 CE. The career of Caius Caesar, the grand-son of Augustus, was very brief, an inscription in a cenotaph of Pisa provides his *cursus honorum* and mentions as the only honorary remarkable action: after the consulship which he held with good fortune, waging a war beyond the farthest borders of the Roman people.

Dating the birth of Jesus. Clement of Alexandria (The Stromata I:21:145) place the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (31 December 192 CE) and Tertullian (Against the Jews VIII:11:75) place it in the 41st year of the reign of Augustus [which began from the second triumvirate of October 43 BCE] and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (29 August 30 BCE). By combining these data, the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE in a period between 1 September and 30 October.

According to Luke 2:1: *Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census — the first — took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.* Justin located this event 150 years before the time he was writing his book (Apology I:34:2; I:46:1) or at the very beginning of our common era since he wrote about 148-152. The historian Paul Orosius precisely date the census of Augustus in the year 752 of Rome (Histories against the pagans VI:22:1; VII:3:4) or in 2 BCE. According to Josephus: *Quirinius, a Roman senator who had proceeded through all the magistracies to the consulship and a man who was extremely distinguished in other respect, arrived in Syria, dispatched by Caesar to be governor of the nation and to make an assessment of their property. Coponius, a man of equestrian rank, was sent along with him to rule over the Jews with full authority. Quirinius also visited Judaea, which had been annexed to Syria, in order to make an assessment of the property of the Jews and to liquidate the estate of Archelaus. Although the Jews were at first shocked to hear the registration of property, they gradually condescended (...) but a certain Judas, a Gaulanite (...) threw himself into the cause of rebellion (...) Quirinius had now liquidated the estate of Archelaus; and by this time the registrations of property that took place in the 37th year after Caesar's defeat of Antony at Actium were complete* (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:1-4,26). Such registration of property (not people) does not correspond to the one performed at the birth of Jesus, for at least two reasons. Luke knew this record associated with a revolt and mentions it apart (Acts 5:37) specifying, as Josephus, that during this (second) registration "Judas the Galilean" rebelled (Jewish Antiquities XX:102)¹. He also noted that Jesus' birth occurred during the "first record", which implies the existence of a second (recounted in the Acts). In addition, he does not mention any revolt during the first census. The first registration (ἀπογραφή), as the census of Apamea, was made to know the number of citizens and it is not to be confused with the one implemented in Judea by Quirinius when he came to ensure the liquidation of property of Archelaus after his disgrace, and of which Josephus says it was followed by an "evaluation (ἀποτίμησις)" of property. This two-step operation did not have the same nature, nor the same goal, or the same geographical scope as the previous one. It was conducted according to the principles of the Roman capitation and not according to Hebrew customs, and only covered the sole Judea, not Galilee. General censuses were performed every 5 years (= 1 lustre) as can be deduced from those reported by Cassius Dio. From 18 BCE the census also extended to non-Romans, municipia or colonies of Roman law, as shown in the *lex Irnitana*².

The Roman censuses were quinquennial³ (every 5 years) as can be deduced from those reported by Dio Cassius (the part of his history covering the period from 6 BCE to 4 CE has unfortunately been lost). The census of 4 CE was confined to Italy⁴. According to the periodicity of 5 years, we see that the first census of Quirinius (in 2 BCE), the one mentioned by Luke, fits exactly in the list of general censuses, while the second one mentioned in the book of Acts and Flavius Josephus was a local census. The census of Luke is in agreement with Roman history⁵. Since the census of Quirinius in Apamea is about people and was carried out in Syria, while the one described by Josephus was a census of goods (to liquidate the possessions of Archelaus) carried out in Judea, they have nothing in common, either in purpose or by the area covered. It is noteworthy that the

¹ The magician named Theudas (Jewish Antiquities XX:97-98) who was executed in 44 CE is different from the seditious of the same name mentioned in Acts 5:36 because he was killed prior to Judas the Galilean in 6 CE, and he was not a magician (if he was a magician his function would have been mentioned as in the case of Simon in Acts 8:9).

² C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard p. 147.

³ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 133-157.

⁴ It started around June 4, when Augustus made Tiberius adopt his nephew Germanicus (Cassius Dio LV:13).

⁵ T. CORBISHLEY - Quirinius and the Census : a Re-study of the Evidence
in: *Klio* 29 (1936) pp. 90-92.

Latin word *census* written סנז is epigraphically attested (CIS II,1 n°198) in the Nabataean kingdom for the first time in 1 BCE⁶. The census of Apamea should be compared with the one of Luke. The registration of the knight Aemilius Secundus, visible on the *Titulus Venetus* (CIL III 6687, ILS 2683), describes a census of Quirinius in Syria. According to this text, knight Q. Aemilius Secundus fulfilled his service in Syria under the authority of Quirinius, legate of Caesar (governor) in Syria, who had himself received the insignia of triumph (*honorary distinctions*) after his campaign against the 'Homonadeis' in Galatia (from 5 to 4 BCE). According to the periodicity of 5 years, we see that the first census, the one mentioned by Luke, fits exactly in the list of censuses of Augustus⁷, while the second one mentioned by Josephus, and in the book of Acts, was only a local census in Judaea:

year	Cens	Characterisc of the census under Augustus	Reference
-28		Census with lustration performed by Augustus and Agrippa	<i>Res Gestae</i> §8
-27		(<i>census of Gaul and Spain</i>)	(<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIII:22)
-26			
-25			
-24			
-23		Census postponed to -22 due to the serious illness of Augustus	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:2
-22		(<i>performed by Paulus Aemilius Lepidus and L. Munatius Plancus</i>)	
-21			
-20			
-19			
-18		Census postponed, Augustus having refused to be censor.	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:10
-17			(<i>Lex Iulia</i>)
-16			
-15			
-14			
-13		The census lasted from -13 to -11.	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:25-30
-12		(<i>census of Gaul and Spain</i>)	(<i>Cassius Dio</i> LIV:32)
-11			
-10			
-9			
-8		Census with lustration performed by Augustus	<i>Res Gestae</i> §8
-7			(<i>Against Marcion</i> IV:19)
-6			
-5			
-4			
-3		Inventory of the world performed by Augustus	<i>Titulus Venetus</i> (<i>Res Gestae</i> §15)
-2		Census (registration) mentioned by Luke 2:1	(<i>Apology</i> I:34; 46)
-1			
1			
2			
3			
4		Census limited to Italy (<i>Lex Aelia Sentia</i>)	<i>Cassius Dio</i> LV:13
5			
6			
7		<i>Census of Quirinius in Judaea</i> mentioned in Acts 5:37	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> XVIII:1-4
8			
9		Census planned but suspended because of the disaster of Varus	(<i>Lex Papia Poppaea</i>)
10			<i>Cassius Dio</i> LVI:18
11			
12			
13			
14		Census with lustration performed by Augustus and Tiberius	<i>Res Gestae</i> §8
15			

Josephus states that Quirinius had been sent to Syria as: [*Supreme*] *Judge of people and censor of properties* (*Jewish Antiquities* XVIII:1), that is a powerful governor. This office, one of the highest magistracy granted to a consul, was usually entrusted to men chosen among the senatorial elite and close to the emperor⁸. Quirinius came to deal with financial affairs and civil courts, the military commander of Judea being entrusted to Coponius. The question therefore arises: Is there a trace of this first census? The inscription of knight

⁶ E. PALTIEL – Vassals and Rebels in the Roman Empire in: *Latomus* vol. 212, Bruxelles 1991, pp. 26-27.

⁷ The census of 3 BCE was delayed in 2 BCE for astrological reasons (see *Annals* III:22), because Augustus was exactly 60 years old (the age of retirement) on September 23, 3 BCE. Augustus was fond of speculation according to Seneca (*De Brevitate Vitae* IV:2-3).

⁸ J.P. MARTIN - Les provinces romaines d'Europe centrale et occidentale Paris 1990 Éd. Sedes p.150.

Aemilius Secundus visible on Titulus Venetus, Greek marble (0.45 m by 0.32 m) probably from Beirut, describes a census of Quirinius in Syria.

Fig. 1: Titulus Venetus (CIL III 6687; ILS 2683)

Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F	<i>Q[uintus] Aemilius Secundus s[on] of Q[uintus],</i>
PAL · SECVNDVS	<i>of the tribe Palatina, who served in</i>
CASTRIS · DIVI · AVG · Sub	<i>the camps of the divine Aug[ustus] under</i>
P · SVLPICIO · QVIRINIO · LEGATO	<i>P. Sulpicius Quirinius, legate of</i>
5 CAESARIS · SYRIAE · HONORI	<i>Caesar in Syria, decorated with honorary</i>
BVS · DECORATVS · PRAEFECT	<i>distinctions, prefect of the</i>
COHORT · AVG · I · PRAEFECT	<i>1st cohort Aug[usta], prefect of the</i>
COHORT · II · CLASSICAE · IDEM	<i>cohort II Classica. Besides,</i>
IVSSV · QVIRINI · CENSVM · EGI	<i>by order of Quirinius I made the census in</i>
10 APAMEIAE · CIVITATIS · MIL	<i>Apamea of citizens</i>
IVM · HOMIN · CIVIVM · CXXVII	<i>male 117 thousand.</i>
IDEM · MISSV · QVIRINI · ADVERSVS	<i>Besides, sent on mission by Quirinius, against</i>
ITVRAEOS · IN · LIBANO · MONTE ·	<i>the Itureans, on Mount Lebanon</i>
CASTELLVM · EORVM · CEPI · ET · ANTE	<i>I took their citadel. And prior</i>
15 MILITIEM · PRAEFECT · FABRVM ·	<i>military service, (I was) Prefect of the workers,</i>
DELATVS · A · DVOBVS · COS · AD · AE	<i>detached by two co[nsul]s at the 'aerarium</i>
RARIVM · ET · IN · COLONIA ·	<i>[The State Treasury]'. And in the colony,</i>
QVAESTOR · AEDIL · II · DVVMVIR · II	<i>quaestor, aedile twice, duumvir twice,</i>
PONTIFEX	<i>pontiff.</i>
20 IBI · POSITI · SVNT · Q · AEMILIVS · Q · F · PAL	<i>Here were deposited Q[uintus] Aemilius Secundus s[on] of Q[uintus], of the tribe</i>
SECVNDVS · F · ET · AEMILIA · CHIA · LIB	<i>Pal[atina], (my) s[on] and Aemilia Chia (my) freed.</i>
H · M · AMPLIVS · H · N · S ·	<i>This m[onument] is excluded from the inh[eritance].</i>

According to Tacitus, Quirinius was: *an indefatigable soldier, he had by his zealous services won the consulship under the Divine Augustus [in 12 BCE], and subsequently the honours of a triumph for having stormed some fortresses of the Homonadeises in Cilicia. He was also appointed adviser to Caius Caesar [from 2 to 4 CE] in the government of Armenia, and had likewise paid court to Tiberius, who was then at Rhodes (Annals III:48). In his cursus honorum the knight Secundus details his career. This type document describes the distinctions obtained in a chronological order. The inventory referred in the inscription, performed under the orders of Quirinius, is not the one made in year 6 CE which was due to the removal of King Archelaus and was confined in Judea, not Syria. Second, the census of the city of Apamea in Syria (which was a registration)⁹ is followed by the mission in Ituraea. Now the citadel of the Itureans was taken before (not after) Herod's death¹⁰, as indicated by Strabo and Josephus. Chalcis, the citadel of Itureans, was taken before the death of Herod as can be deduced from the possessions of Herod: *When Herod was engaged in such matters, and when he had already re-edified Sebaste he resolved to send his sons Alexander and Aristobulus to Rome, to enjoy the company of Caesar; who, when they came thither, lodged at the house of Pollio, who was very fond of Herod's friendship; and they had leave to lodge in Caesar's own palace, for he received these sons of Herod with all humanity, and gave Herod leave to give his kingdom to which of his sons he pleased; and besides all this, he bestowed on him Trachon, and Batanea, and Auranitis, which he gave him on the occasion following: One Zenodorus had hired what was called the house of Lysanias¹¹, who, as he was not satisfied with its revenues, became a partner with the robbers that inhabited the Trachonites, and so procured himself a larger income; for the inhabitants of those places lived in a mad way, and pillaged the country of the Damascenes, while Zenodorus did not restrain them, but partook of the prey they acquired. Now as the neighbouring people were hereby great sufferers, they complained to Varro, who was then governor [of Syria], and entreated him**

⁹ D. KENNEDY – Demography, 'The Population of Syria and the Census of Q. Aemilius Secundus in: *Levant* 38 (2006) pp. 109-124.

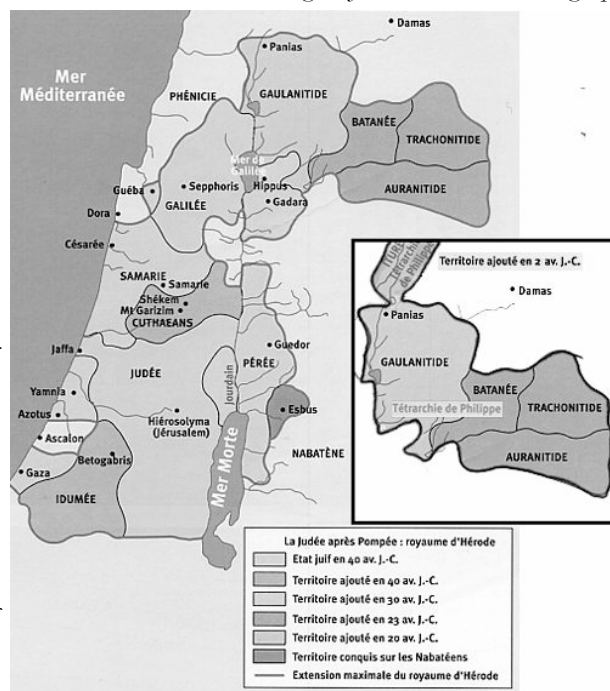
¹⁰ The text of Luke 3:1 confirms that Herod had actually Ituraea since his son Philip had inherited: *Herod [Antipas] was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis.*

¹¹ Lysanias was king of Itureans (Cassius Dio XLIX: 32; LIV: 9).

to write to Caesar about this injustice of Zenodorus. When these matters were laid before Caesar, he wrote back to Varro to destroy those nests of robbers, and to give the land to Herod, that so by his care the neighbouring countries might be no longer disturbed with these doings of the Trachonites (...) so Caesar bestowed his country, which was no small one, upon Herod [in 20 BCE]; it lay between Trachon and Galilee, and contained Ulatha, and Paneas, and the country round about. He also made him one of the procurators of Syria, and commanded that they should do every thing with his approbation; and, in short, he arrived at that pitch of felicity, that whereas there were but two men that governed the vast Roman empire, first Caesar, and then Agrippa, who was his principal favourite, Caesar preferred no one to Herod besides Agrippa, and Agrippa made no one his greater friend than Herod besides Caesar (Jewish Antiquities XV:342-364). According to Strabo: some mountainous parts, among which is Chalcis, the acropolis (...) Now all the mountainous parts are held by Ituraeans and Arabians, all of whom are robbers, but the people in the plains are farmers; and when the latter are harassed by the robbers at different times they require different kinds of help (...) But though Beirut was razed to the ground by Tryphon, it has now been restored by the Romans; and it received 2 legions, which were settled there by Agrippa, who also added to it much of the territory of Massyas, as far as the sources of the Orontes River (...) And then, towards the parts inhabited promiscuously by Arabians and Ituraeans, are mountains hard to pass, in which there are deep-mouthed caves, one of which can admit as many as 4,000 people in times of incursions, such as are made against the Damasceni from many places. For the most part, indeed, the barbarians have been robbing the merchants from Arabia Felix, but this is less the case now that the band of robbers under Zenodorus has been broken up through the good government established by the Romans and through the security established by the Roman soldiers that are kept in Syria (Geography XVI:2:18-20).

Fig. 2: Judea under Herod's kingship

In accordance with instructions of Augustus, governors of Syria regularly gave to Herod¹² areas controlled by the Itureans, after them been pacified. Shortly before his death, Herod received Ituraea since his son Herod Philip inherited¹³. According to Josephus: *Passed under the authority of Antipas: Perea and Galilee, with an income of 200 talents. Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitide and parts of Zenodorus area around Ina [village at the base of Mount Hermon in Ituraea], which provided an income of 100 talents, were placed under the authority of Philip* (Jewish War II:95). The text of Luke 3:1 confirms that Herod had actually Ituraea: *Herod [Antipas] was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the country was Ituraea and Trachonitis*. According to Josephus, the conquests of



Iturean countries conducted under the auspices of the governors of Syria took place during the reign of Herod the Great. Thus, the conquest of Chevalier Secundus (taking Chalcis, the capital of Ituraea) is to be placed at the end of his reign (2 BCE). Luke's text, as the

¹² M. STROTHMANN - Auguste Empereur et Père de l'oikouménè in: *Dossiers d'archéologie* N°279 déc.02-janv.03 pp. 98-101.

P.L. GATIER - La principauté d'Abila de Lysanias dans l'Antiliban in: *Dossiers d'archéologie* N°279 déc.02-janv.03 pp. 120-123.

¹³ K. BUTCHER - Roman Syria and the Near East London 2003 Ed. The British Museum Press pp. 94-95.

inscription of Apamea, parallels the Government of Quirinius in Syria and a recording of people: *This first recording took place Quirinius being governor of Syria* (Luke 2:2). The participle "being Governor" points out the Governor in title. A census of civilians could be used to assess the contingent of auxiliary troops.

The *Breviarium* of Augustus (in 2 BCE) was used to establish a new type of census to compile statistical data¹⁴ (*digestiones*) obtained, inter alia, "to show off the wealth of Rome." In his eulogy, the first version was publicly displayed in the temple of Mars Ultor on May 12, 2 BCE, Emperor Augustus announced the *breviarium totius imperii*¹⁵ that he should let at his death in 14 CE, which contained according to Tacitus: *a description of the resources of the State, of the number of citizens and allies under arms, of the fleets, subject kingdoms, provinces, taxes, direct and indirect, necessary expenses and customary bounties. All these details Augustus had written with his own hand* (Annals I:11,4). This inventory had no known antecedent. It is this latter aspect of *Breviarium* that has most struck the ancient writers: Tacitus speaks of a "picture of the public power," Cassius Dio (Roman History LVI:33:2) a "general assessment" and Suetonius (Augustus CI:6) a "state of affairs of the Empire".

Such an inventory had to concern "all the inhabited earth" at that time. Client Kings were treated essentially as Roman governors, according to Suetonius (Augustus LX). Thus, Judea, although it was a client kingdom, could hardly oppose the will of the emperor (in addition, Herod was Caesar's friend). In fact, it was placed under the supervision of the governor of Syria (Jewish Antiquities XIX:338-342). Herod had therefore to collaborate with Quirinius as did the city of Apamea. This census was ordered by the emperor (this census being decreed by the Emperor, it legally concerned only imperial provinces and not senatorial provinces, but Senators implicitly agreed to collaborate with the emperor), but its execution could not be done with the help of Herod. The Jewish kingdom listed the men "in the house of their fathers" (Numbers 1:18), that explains the movement of Joseph from Nazareth to his hometown of Bethlehem (Luke 2:3-4) to be registered¹⁶, because the Jewish administration listed men according to their patrimonial place (Leviticus 25:10).

This new conception of census is well described by Emperor Claudius, who writes: *The census had no other object than the official statement of our resources* (Table Claudienne de Lyon 78-80). We read in the Suda, a famous Byzantine encyclopedia dated 10th century: *Caesar Augustus, emperor, who chose twenty citizens distinguished by their morals and integrity, sent them to all parts of the world subject to the empire, to make the identification of people and goods*. The corpus of *agrimensores* even specifies: *According to the books of the surveyor Balbus, who at the time of Augustus, brought together in folders plans and measures, identified by him, of all the provinces*¹⁷. Ancient authors such as Isidore of Seville (Etymologiarum sive originum V:36.4) and Cassiodorus (Varia III:52,6-8) were struck by the statistical aspect of this census aimed to describe all the resources of the empire. This large census had to impress King Agrippa II who, in a speech (66 CE), enumerates lists of peoples, cities and figures: *What about the 500 cities of Asia? (...) Bithynia, Cappadocia, Pamphylians Nation, Lycians, Cilicians (...) the Gauls (..) and 305 cities (...) why this long list (...) Egypt extends to Ethiopia and Arabia Felix, it borders on India, it has a population of 7,500,000 inhabitants, not counting those of Alexandria, as it is possible to induce contributions from individuals* (Jewish War II:357-387). The census points out both Roman citizens and

¹⁴ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 60-61, 156-157, 190.

¹⁵ According to Suetonius (Augustus 28:1-29:3) and Cassius Dio (Roman History LIII :30-31), Augustus had already prepared a draft of the *Breviarium* after his serious illness in 23 BCE.

¹⁶ In the 1st century the "head tax" for the Temple is called *kenos* (census) in Matthew 17:25. Mary, who was the wife of Joseph for recently had to fear a possible accusation of adultery (Matthew 1:19) and for this reason was to accompany her husband on his journey (Luke 2:5), even though she was not directly affected by this census. The census of Apamea made at the same time proves that Quirinius registered people, not properties.

¹⁷ F. BLUME, K. LACHMANN, A. RUDORFF - Schriften der Römischen Feldmesser
Berlin 1848 p. 239 (cf. Suidae lexicon I. Lipsiae 1928 Ed. A. Adler p. 293).

inhabitants of provinces. The 'census of the world' was led by Augustus independently of the census of Roman citizens, and especially it was not related to the lustrum, which perhaps explains why Augustus did not speak of it (*Res Gestae* §8). But all these censuses had one thing in common: they were simple statistical statements (generally to fix a tax status) of people and goods¹⁸ recorded on lists.

The first registration of Quirinius was decreed by Caesar Augustus when it was declared 'Father of the Country' on February 5, 2 BCE and then inscribed (*Breviarium*)¹⁹ on the Forum of Augustus (*Res Gestae* §35). According to Velleius Paterculus: *other countries whose names adorn his Forum* (*The Roman History* II:39:2). This special registration which took place at the time of Jesus' birth, unique in all the Roman annals (an inventory of the whole world!), had been announced in the biblical text: *In his place will rise a king who will send an exactor [census taker] in the most beautiful part of the world [Palestine]* (Daniel 11:20, Zadoc Kahn). Jesus' birth has been associated with an important event, easy to identify and date. The testimonies of the historians of the first six centuries²⁰ are also unanimous in dating the birth of Jesus around 2 BCE. Clement of Alexandria (*The Stromata* I:21:145) place the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (December 31, 192 CE) and Tertullian (*Against the Jews* VIII:11:75) place it in the 41st year of the reign of Augustus²¹ [which began from the second triumvirate of October 43 BCE, made official a few weeks later, according to Appian (*Civil Wars* IV:5-7), by the law *lex Titia* on November 27, 43 BCE] and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (August 29, 30 BCE)²². By combining these data, the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE in a period between September 1 and October 30²³. Jesus is born about 4 months before the death of Herod the Great.

The list of Roman consuls²⁴ appointed governors of Syria during the period from 23 BCE to 32 CE comes from a compilation of historical accounts and official inscriptions (however many homonyms and evolution of administrative titles have sometimes caused errors in ancient authors²⁵). Tiberius retired to Rhodes and Quirinius stayed in Armenia as rector of Gaius Caesar between 2 and 4 of our era. They played no role in the West and it is for this reason that Josephus did not mention them. Taking into account information from the registration of Apamea linked with Luke's account we obtain the following diagram (with a double legation in Syria for Quirinius)²⁶:

¹⁸ G. PIERI - *L'histoire du cens jusqu'à la fin de la république romaine*
Paris 1968 Éd. Sirey Publications de l'Institut de droit romain p. 193.

¹⁹ C. NICOLET - *L'inventaire du monde*
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 33, 231.

²⁰ Around 148-152, Justin fixed Jesus' birth 150 years earlier (*Apology* I:46:1).

Around 170-180, Irenaeus of Lyons situated it in the 41st year of the reign of Octavian (*Against Heresies* III: 21:3).

In 204, Hippolytus of Rome dated Jesus' birth on December 25 in the 42nd year of the reign of Augustus (*Commentary on Daniel* IV:23).

In 231, Origen dates it in the 41st year of Augustus' reign 15 years before his death (*Homilies on Luke* 3:1).

In 325, Eusebius fixes it in the 42nd year of Augustus' reign and 28 years after Cleopatra's death in 30 BCE (*Ecclesiastical History* I:5:2).

In 357, Epiphanius dates it in the year when Augustus XIII and Silvanus were consuls (*Panarion* II:22:3).

In 418, Paul Orosius dates it in the year 752 of the founding of Rome (*Histories against the pagans* VI:22:1).

²¹ Ancient writers reckoned the reign of Augustus not from January 27 BCE, but from October 43 BCE when Octavian, later Augustus, formed the second triumvirate. The 42nd year of Augustus began (at the end of his 41st year), so in October 2 BCE.

²² G. GOYAU - *Chronologie de l'Empire romain*
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 7.

²³ According to Luke 1:5-8, John the Baptist was conceived in Abijah's section, 8th out 24 (1 Chronicles 24:7-8). Passover in 3 BCE took place on April 29; the 1st section (Jehoiarib) began on Saturday 11, May, 3 BCE; the 8th section began on Saturday 29, 3 BCE, June; Jesus was conceived 6 months after John the Baptist (Luke 1:36) on Monday 30, December 3 BCE and was born 273 days later on Monday 29, September 2 BCE.

²⁴ E. SCHÜRER - *The History of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ*
Edinburg 1987 Ed. T & T Clark Ltd pp. 256-260.

Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft - Quirinius; Varus
1931 pp. 819-843; 1963 pp. 907-975.

²⁵ C. SAULNIER - *Histoire d'Israël*
Paris 1985 Éd. Cerf pp. 235-236.

²⁶ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - *Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne II*
Paris 1972 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines pp. 220, 529-530.

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO AN ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
THROUGH SYNCHRONISMS DATED BY ASTRONOMY

Imperial legate of the East	Governor of Crete & Cyrenaica	Governor of Syria	Procurator (Prefect) of Judea	Period
M. Vipsanius Agrippa	(M. V. Agrippa)	(M. V. Agrippa)	[Herod]	[-23 -21]
M. Vipsanius Agrippa	P. Sulpicius Quirinius	Potitus Valerius Messala	[Herod]	[-21 -17]
M. Vipsanius Agrippa	(M. V. Agrippa)	(M. V. Agrippa)	[Herod]	[-17 -13]
	Q. Lucanius Proculus	Marcus Titius	[Herod]	[-12 -9]
	Marcus Titius	Caius Sentius Saturninus	[Herod]	[-9 -6]
(Tiberius)		Publius Quinctilius Varus	[Herod]	[-6 -3]
(Tiberius)		Publius Sulpicius Quirinius	[Herod]	[-3 -1]
Caius Caesar	(Caius Caesar)	Publius Quinctilius Varus	[Herod Archelaus]	[-1 2]
Caius Caesar	(Caius Caesar)	(Caius Caesar)	[Herod Archelaus]	[2 4]
		Lucius Volusius Saturninus	[Herod Archelaus]	[4 6]
		Publius Sulpicius Quirinius	Coponius	[6 9]
		Publius Sulpicius Quirinius?	Marcus Ambibulus	[9 12]
		Q. Caecilius Metellus Silanus	Annus Rufus	[12 15]
		Q. Caecilius Metellus Silanus	Valerius Gratus	[15 17]
Germanicus Caesar	(Germanicus Caesar)	Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso	Valerius Gratus	[17 19]
		Cnaeus Sentius Saturninus	Valerius Gratus	[19 21]
		[L. Aelius Lamia]/ Pacuvius	Valerius Gratus	[21 26]
(L. Aelius Sejanus)		[L. Aelius Lamia]/ Pacuvius	Pontius Pilatus	[26 32]
		L. Pomponius Flaccus	Pontius Pilatus	[32 35]

Varus appears before the death of Herod as governor of Syria, from 6 to 4 BCE, and then as commander of legions (under the auspices of Gaius Caesar) from 1 BCE to 2 CE. He has have held two successive legations. The fact that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice is confirmed²⁷ by an inscription (Titulus Tiburtinus). Renewed legations of Governors at the head of the same province were not rare under the principate of Augustus and are well documented: 7 cases registered²⁸ in addition of Agrippa's.



Fig. 3: Inscription of Tibur CIL XIV 3613 = ILS 918

[PUBLIUS²⁹ SON, P. SULPICIUS QUIRINIUS; CONSUL; PRAETOR; PROCONSUL]
[OF THE PROVINCE OF CRETE & CYRENEA HE HELD; AS LEGATE]
[PROPRÆTOR OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS OF GALATIA HE WAGED WAR ON GESSIT]
[WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE HOMONADEIS WHO HAD KILLED AMYNTAS THE]
[K]ING, WHICH* HAVING BEEN BROUGHT INTO THE POW[ER OF IMPERATOR CAESAR]
AUGUSTUS AND THE ROMAN PEOPLE, THE SENAT[E DECREED TO THE IMMORTAL GODS]
TWO THANKSGIVINGS FOR SUCCESS[FUL ACHIEVEMENTS]
LIKEWISE BY TRIUMPHAL ORNAMENTS [ANOTHER TIME AWARDED];
AS PROCONSUL OF THE PROVINCE OF ASIA HE HE[LD]; AS LEGATE PROPRÆTOR]
OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS ONCE MORE SYRIA AND PH[OENICIA HE HELD];

*(aforementioned tribe)

²⁷ G. FIRPO - Il problema cronologico della nascita di Gesù
Brescia 1983 Ed. Paideia pp. 238-243.

²⁸ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne I
Paris 1972 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines pp. 306-311.

²⁹ Not the censor Publius of 42 BCE supposed by T. Mommsen but an anonym because of Tacitus's remark in Annals III:48.

The very name of Quirinius does not appear in the inscription, but it is the only character to match all indications. The first line refers to a kingdom brought back under the imperial authority. Strabo (-65+20) relates the submission of Homonadeis by Quirinius (Geography XII:6:5) and he states that they had killed their king Amyntas, signifying that Quirinius had avenged this king. The third line refers to a double day of thanksgiving dedicated to triumphs (fourth line). According to Tacitus (55-120), Quirinius had actually received it for his victory against the Homonadeis (the double day commemorates first the victory in the Taurus and then against the Itureans in Lebanon). The fifth line quotes a proconsulship of Asia. Quirinius was proconsul of Crete and Cyrenaica in -21/-20, then proconsul of Asia around -1/1. He probably got it as a result of his wedding with Claudia, daughter of the consul Claudius Pulcher³⁰. In 1 CE, Tiberius no longer in semi-disgrace (Augustus allowed him returning to Rome), Quirinius was able to honor him during his visit to Rhodes thanks to his proconsulship, as mentions Tacitus (Annals III:48).

According to epigraphy the word *iterum* "again" means the renewal of a same term of office in the same place³¹. For example: *duumvir iterum* in Pompeii (AE 1898 p. 143), or: *optinuit ... procos. iterum* designating Publius Paquius Scaeva as "again" proconsul of Cyprus. When it means a second term of office at a different location, not a renewal at the same place, inscriptions include "II" or "bis". For example, Q. Varius Geminus, who was legate twice, has stated it under the form: *leg. divi Aug. II* and Q. Caerellius, who was three times legate wrote it as: *legato pro pr. ter.* This detail eliminates Governor Gaius Saturninus Sentius because, assuming a second legation in Syria between 4 and 1 BCE, the double legation would be after his proconsulship of Asia, while the inscription of Tibur explicitly shows that the proconsulship of Asia was framed by the double legation in Syria³². In addition, it is not Saturninus who fought king Maroboduus, but Tiberius, according to Tacitus (Annals II:63). The title "Divine Augustus" in the inscription involves a publishing after 14 CE because Augustus was divinized only after his death. The character mentioned in the inscription therefore died after that date, which is not the case of Saturninus and Varus. Despite the good agreement between the inscription and what is known of Quirinius's life, some historians have sought to identify the character of the inscription to another legate as Lucius Piso Calpurnius Pontifex, but the inscription identifies the unknown to Quirinius, a conclusion already reached very early by the great scholar Mommsen, a conclusion reinforced by recent researchs (# indicates a fault):

Indices	C.S. Saturninus	P.Q. Varus	P.S. Quirinius	L.C. Piso Pontifex
consul in:	19 BCE	13 BCE	12 BCE	15 BCE
<i>ornamenta triumphalia</i>	attested	#	attested	attested
<i>supplicatione 1</i>	inferred	#	inferred	attested
<i>supplicatione 2</i>	supposed	#	supposed	supposed #
king	(Maroboduus) #	(Herod) #	Amyntas	(Rhescuporis) #
tribe subjugated then	Cherusci and others	(Jews) #	Homonadeis	Bessi
integrated to Rome	(simple truce) #	#	attested	#
Legate of Syria 1	attested [9-6]	attested [6-3]	attested [3-1]	supposed [3-1] #
Proconsul of Asia	supposed [?]	supposed [?]	inferred [-1/1]	supposed #
Legate of Syria 2	supposed [3-1]	attested [-1+1]	attested [6-10]	#
Last legation	Governor of Syria	Gov. of Germania #	Governor of Syria	Prefect of Rome #
Death (after 14 CE)	7 CE #	9 CE #	21 CE	32 CE

³⁰ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines Tome I pp. 177,314; T. II p. 248.

³¹ J.-M. LASSERE – Manuel d'épigraphie romaine Paris 2007 Éd. Picard Tome ** p. 754.

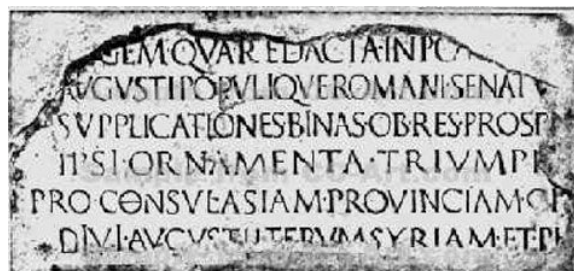
³² C. EILERS - C. Sentius Saturninus, Piso Pontifex, and the Titulus Tiburninus: a Reply in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 110 (1996) pp. 207-226.

Four points identify Quirinius as the unknown of the inscription:

1. The king who was avenged is identifiable (Amyntas).
2. The people reinstated to Rome is identifiable (Homonadeis).
3. Quirinius died after 14 CE (in 21).
4. The last legation of Quirinius (the most prestigious) is his governorate of Syria.

Piso Pontifex can it be the unknown of the inscription?

- Those who prefer to translate *iterum* by "second" instead of "again" to apply it to Piso Pontifex must assume that this legate could not count correctly. In fact, he was governor of Pamphylia (attached to Galatia) from 14 to 12 BCE, then governor of Moesia from 12 to 10 BCE and, finally, he would have been governor of Syria from 4 to 1 BCE, which would be a total of three legations, not two.
- The inscription of Hierapolis Castabala quoted to prove a first legation³³, mentions only L. Calpurnius Piso. According to the spelling it could be L. Calpurnius Piso (*Augur*) consul in 1 BCE then proconsul of Asia, rather than L. Calpurnius Piso *Pontifex* usually quoted under the name of L. Calpurnius Piso *Frugi* to distinguish it from its namesake. Even if one associates this inscription to Piso Pontifex the difficulty remains. Indeed, it refers to former Calpurnius Piso as a former antistrategos, with a rank of praetor legate, which differentiated him from a consular legate. Greek title identifies the rank while that the Latin title corresponding to *legatus pro praetore* meant both. Although appointed consul in 15 BCE Piso Pontifex was assigned then 14/13 BCE as legate of the praetorian province of Pamphylia. The inscription of Hierapolis Castabala can only confirm the legation of Piso Pontifex in Galatia (not Syria).
- Rhescuporis was only the legitimate pretender to the throne but nothing indicates that he had time to receive the crown which would eventually return to his uncle Rhometalces who, hitherto, had been regent on his behalf, according to Tacitus (*Annals* II:64.2). At his death in 12 CE, Augustus divided the country between his two sons before Tiberius entrusts one part to a procurator. Reunified, the Thrace became a Roman province only in 46 CE. Thus Thrace remained an autonomous kingdom still and long afterwards the passage of Piso. Even if Piso put order in Thrace there was not a reinstating to Rome neither a tribe (Bessi) or a territory (Thrace) as indicated explicitly on the inscription of Tibur.
- The *cursus honorum* of the unknown ends with a proconsulship of Asia (the 6th line of the inscription is the last, see photo below). The hypothesis to make Piso Pontifex a proconsul of Asia in 9/8 BCE still faces another difficulty. Indeed, Piso Pontifex was attached to the post of prefect of the city of Rome from 13 until his death at 32 CE. The inscription would have forgot to mention it, that would be absolutely inconceivable for a title so prestigious, because according to Tacitus the main claim to fame of Piso was to be Prefect of the City (*Annals* VI:10).



³³ E. DABROWA - The Governors of Roman Syria from Augustus to Septimius Severus
Bonn 1998 Ed. Rudolf Habelt GMBH pp. 24-26.

- Finally, the second legation in Syria on the inscription of Tibur eliminates the choice of Piso Pontifex whom any historical or archaeological documents mention any legation in Syria. In addition, although he has received triumphal decorations for repressing twice an uprising in Thrace, he benefited only of one day of thanksgiving and not two as explicitly mentions the inscription³⁴.

The reconstruction of the career of Quirinius implies his presence in Isauria during Homonadeis's war. This event is to be dated between 6 and 1 BCE, but the province of his governorship assignment is not known (Galatia or Syria). Dating Homonadeis's war, prior to or after 3 BCE, allows deciding. Information given by Tacitus involves a period between 12 BCE and 2 CE and the fact that Cassius Dio does not speak of these operations leads to limit it between 6 BCE and 2 CE (the period for which the text of Dion Cassius is lost). A study on governors³⁵ leads to two possibilities for Quirinius's legation while they were not mutually exclusive. In the case of a legation in Galatia, Homonadeis's war would be date between 5 and 3 BCE³⁶ but between 3 to 1 BCE in the case of a legation in Syria:

Homonadeis's war	year	Legate of Galatia	Legate of Syria
	-7	Cornutus Aquila	Sentius Saturninus
	-6	Cornutus Aquila	Quinctilius Varus
	-5	Sulpicius Quirinius	Quinctilius Varus
	-4	Sulpicius Quirinius	Quinctilius Varus
	-3	?	Sulpicius Quirinius
	-2	?	Sulpicius Quirinius
	-1	M. Servilius?	Quinctilius Varus
	1	M. Servilius	Quinctilius Varus

Legation in Galatia from 5 to 4 BCE is required³⁷ for the following reasons:

- According to Strabo: *Now Cremna is occupied by Roman colonists and Sagalassus is subject to the same Roman governor to whom the whole kingdom of Amyntas was subject (...) Amyntas captured Cremna, and, passing into the country of the Homonadeis, who were considered too strong to capture, and having now established himself as master of most of the places, having even slain their tyrant, was caught by treachery through the artifice of the tyrant's wife. And he was put to death by those people, but Quirinius overthrew the inhabitants by starving them, and captured alive 4,000 men and settled them in the neighbouring cities, leaving the country destitute of all its men who were in the prime of life* (Geography XII:6:5). To overcome by hunger the Homonadeis, the main tribe of Lycaonia, Quirinius had to rely on an army of several legions. In addition, keeping a siege of 4,000 men entrenched in many forts necessitated probably more than one year. In 2 BCE the census of Syria and the war against the Itureans occupied Quirinius for at least all the year. In 3 BCE, he could have led a war against the Homonadeis only during the beginning of the year, which seems insufficient. A legation of 2 years in Galatia to lead this war is more likely.
- The legate of Galatia³⁸, Cornutus Aquila, inaugurated the *Via Sebaste* in 6 BCE³⁹, a road probably built to facilitate the movement of Roman troops from Syria, where three or

³⁴ N. KOKKINOS - The Honorand of the Titulus Tiburtinus: C. Sentius Saturninus? in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 105 (1995) pp. 21-36.

³⁵ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines Tome I pp. 90,177,314,234,235; Tome II p. 248.

³⁶ K. STROBEL - Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire II in: C.E.R.O.R. Paris 2000 Éd. De Boccard p. 519.

³⁷ A.S. HALL - The Gorgoromeis in: *Anatolian Studies* XXI (1971) pp. 156-158.

³⁸ R.K. SHERK - Roman Galatia. The Governors from 25 BC to AD 114 in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen part II* vol 7.2 (1980) p. 966.

³⁹ CIL III, 6974, 14401; ILS 5828; all dated: Imp. Caesar cos. desig. XI, trib.pot. XIIX (= from July 1 to December 31, 6 BCE).

four legions were stationed. Logic would dictate that this war to suppress banditry began shortly after this preparatory stage, therefore in 5 BCE. The creation of the *Via Sebaste* was therefore as the penultimate step in a plan developed by Augustus to pacify the region after the death of King Amyntas⁴⁰.

- The plan of Augustus to control these strategic areas⁴¹ began with: 1) the establishment of several Roman colonies in Pisidia (*Gestae Res* 28), along with 2) the arrival of many veterans of legion and 3) a recruitment in Asia Minor of a large number of auxiliaries for Roman troops, then finally 4) the construction of the *Via Sebaste*, the last step before 5) the war against the Homonadeis⁴².
- Unexpected retirement of Tiberius to Rhodes in 5 BCE had to slow down significantly military operations undertaken in the East, at least until 1 BCE (end of his proconsular *imperium* and tribunitian power which will be renewed to Caius Caesar), as well as those planned for Armenia by Augustus⁴³. The decision to attack the Homonadeis had probably to be taken before 5 BCE (perhaps in 6 BCE).

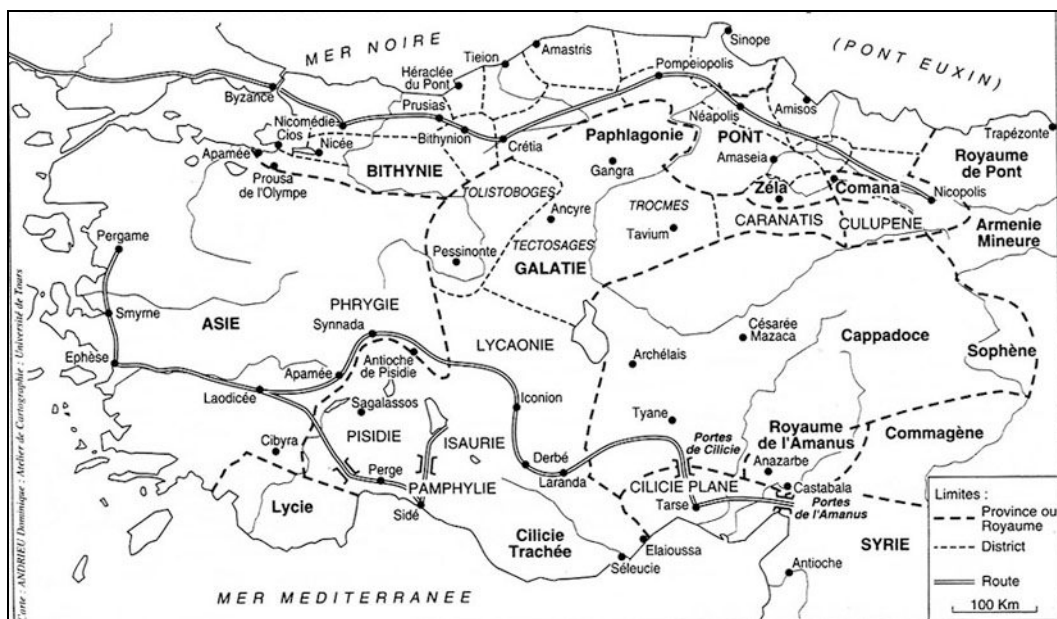


Fig. 4: Provinces and client States in Anatolia towards the beginning of our era

This new path also favored trade between Syria and Pisidia, which is confirmed by the ease of movement of the first Christian missionaries between Antioch in Syria and Antioch in Pisidia via Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (Acts 14:1-26, 16:1-6). Despite repeated Roman repression, the road remained dangerous because of the continued presence of brigands (2 Corinthians 11:26). Province allocation of the legate is more complex to define, but Galatia still seems preferable to Syria. The tribe of Homonadeis lived in Isauria but because of the historical context of fight against the brigands of Cilicia the region depended militarily of the legate of Syria, who had at least three legions. There is no certain evidence of the presence of legions in Galatia (epigraphic documentation, however,

⁴⁰ B. REMY - Les carrières sénatoriales dans les provinces romaines d'Anatolie au Haut-empire Istanbul 1989 Éd. Divit pp. 127-136.

⁴¹ A.D. RIZAKIS - La littérature géométrique et la colonisation romaine en Orient in: Colonie romane nel mondo greco. Roma 2004 Ed. L'Erma di Bretschneider pp. 85-87.

⁴² S. MITCHELL, D. FRENCH - Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia in: *BAR International Series* 156 Ankara 1983 pp. 14-20.

S. MITCHELL, D. FRENCH - Studies in the History and Topography of Lycia and Pisidia. Ankara 1994 The British Institute of Archaeology pp. 104, 105.

⁴³ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome p. 105-113.

suggests the presence of the VIIth legion in this area)⁴⁴ and it is likely that some legions of Quirinius came from Syria⁴⁵. The construction of the *Via Sebaste* in 6 BCE mobilized more likely auxiliary troops than legions.

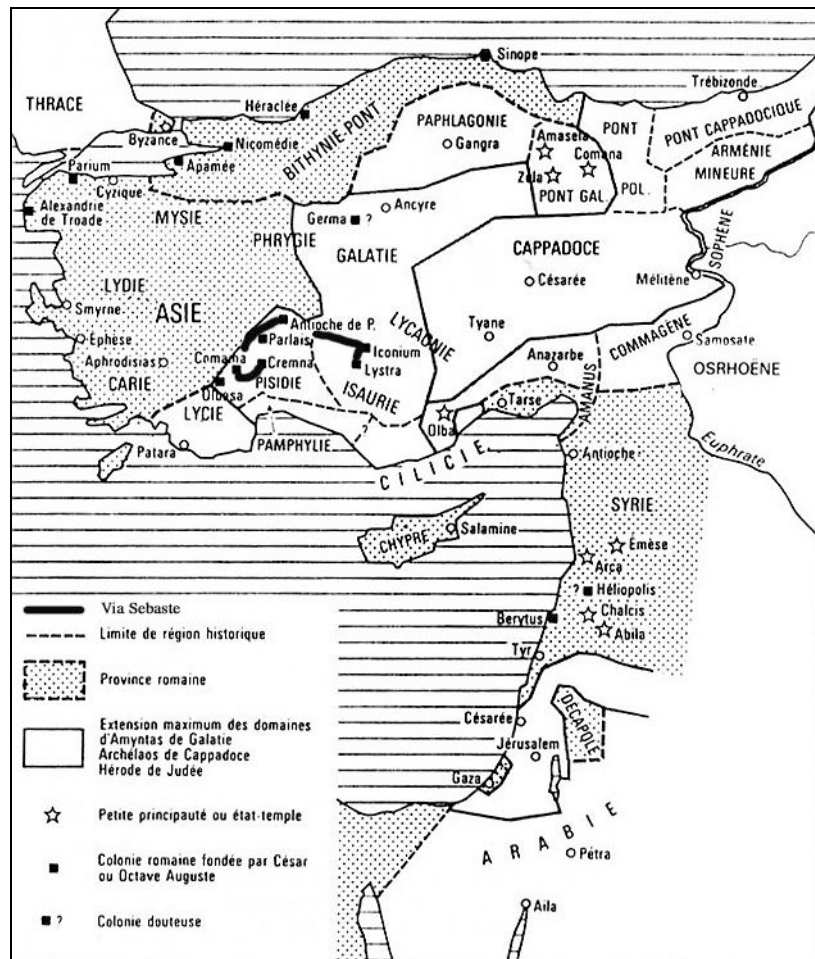


Fig. 5: The East (Syria, Anatolia) at the beginning of the empire (with the *Via Sebaste*)

After 25 BCE the armed forces of king Amyntas were set up in a Roman legion called *legio XXII Deiotariana*⁴⁶, which then moved to Egypt⁴⁷. According to Strabo: *The Romans thought that it was better for the region to be ruled by kings than to be under the Roman prefects sent to administer justice, who were not likely always to be present or to have armed forces with them. Thus Archelaüs received, in addition to Cappadocia, Cilicia Trachea; and the boundary of the latter* (Geography XIV:5:6) and according to Dio Cassius (Roman History LIV:9:2), attribution to Archelaus of Cappadocia was decided by Augustus to 21/20 BCE. Tacitus mentions in his inventory of the Roman legions, the presence of four of them in Syria (but none appears in Galatia), while noting that several of these legions were traveling in the region (Annals IV:5:1-4). Excavations⁴⁸ have confirmed the very special status of the region. For

⁴⁴ C. BRELAZ - Les colonies romaines et la sécurité publique en Asie Mineure in: Colonie romane nel mondo greco. Roma 2004 Ed. L'Erma di Bretschneider pp. 196-199.

⁴⁵ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire 44 av. J.C.-260 ap. J.C. Tome 1 Paris 1990 Ed. Presses Universitaires de France p. 151.

Y. PERRIN, T. BAUZOU - De la Cité à l'Empire histoire de Rome in: Universités Histoire Paris 2000 Ed. Ellipses p. 297.

⁴⁶ R.K. SHERK - The Cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium in: Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen part II vol 7.2 (1980) p. 958.

⁴⁷ S.A. COOK, F.E. ADCOCK, M.P. CHARLESWORTH -The Augustan Empire X in: The Cambridge Ancient History 1971 Ed. University. Press p. 244.

⁴⁸ N. RAUH, L. WANDSNIDER - Juliosebaste: Discovery of a Lost Roman City 2000 Ed. Purdue University and University of Nebraska.

example, residents of Ninica made careers in the Roman legions stationed in Antioch of Pisidia, proving that Ninica, a colony founded by Augustus with veterans⁴⁹ of the Vth *Gallica* and VIIth Legion, depended on the Roman province of Galatia and not the vassal kingdom of Archelaus⁵⁰ since this city was located in Cilicia Trachea (western Cilicia). Geographically Isauria depended on the province of Galatia (although the contours of these regions were fluctuating)⁵¹ and not that of Syria. Isauria was very close to the eastern part of Cilicia which was attached to Syria. The definition of a Roman administrative province did not correspond to our modern definition with its geographical overlap: *There was not at that time [under the Republic], in the Roman public law, a territorial distribution for skills of magistrates: no "prefect of the eastern regions" (...) In contrast, magistrates are or may be responsible for a jurisdiction — traditional or tailored, no matter: this is called their provincia (...) The notion of territory may or may not be them affected: sometimes it is a military command against such an enemy in that sector, or, if it is a court, it will run in a certain jurisdiction. In other cases, the land is so inordinately extended and expanded it extends the limits of the world (as we have seen for Pompey in 66 and 57 BCE). But in the cases considered, the notion of territory is never the first: it is a corollary, a consequence of the mission entrusted (...) It is only gradually that the word took a territorial meaning more precise, without any overlaps or privileges cease to make this word always a little rough. Because although most often it is a geographical entity which came to designate the sphere and the area of competence is meant to give a man (eg a planned war against an external enemy is implicitly included in the grant as the province of a particular area, Asia for a war against Mithridates, Syria for Parthian war), these geographical entities are, in fact, territorially discontinuous in which free and allied cities are enclaves where sometimes the promagistrat, on the contrary, must take care of those who are geographically outside his "territory"*⁶². In general the governor could operate only in his province⁵³. In case of war, the army of a province could sent, into the field of operations, an entire legion or a detachment of each of its legions and placed it under the command of the sector⁵⁴. To answer the difficult question of knowing which Governor depended the legions in Isauria, history of Roman choices in this region provides conclusive evidence. To fight against the Isaurian robbers who took refuge in the Taurus Mountains the governor of Asia in the early and the legate of Syria were regularly asked⁵⁵:

- In 96 BCE, the command of a province of Cilicia (*provincia Cilicia*), without territorial basis, was attributed to Sulla to fight against pirates.
- In 77 BCE, P. Servilius Vatia campaigned to reduce Cilicia and clean Lycia, Pamphylia and Isauria.
- In 74 BCE, the Senate granted to M. Antonius Creticus an *imperium infinitum* to fight against pirates in the East.
- In 67 BCE, Metellus Nepos, Pompey's legate in Syria, commanded a region from Lycia to Phoenicia and was responsible for the fight against the bandits.
- In 63 BCE, Pompey received an *imperium infinitum* to destroy piracy. He successfully completed his mission, but it was in Cilicia Trachea that resistance remained the largest.

⁴⁹ M. SARTRE - L'Asie Mineure et l'Anatolie d'Alexandre à Dioclétien
Paris 1995 Éd. Armand Colin pp. 210, 211.

⁵⁰ R. SYME - The Augustan Colonies in Anatolica: Studies
in Strabo Oxford 1995 Ed. A. Birley p. 240.

⁵¹ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire 44 av. J.C.-260
ap. J.C. Tome 1 Paris 1990 Éd. Presses Universitaires de France pp. 174, 201.

⁵² C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 202-205.

⁵³ H.M. JONES - Studies in Roman Government and Law
Oxford 1960 Ed. Basil Blackwell p. 9.

⁵⁴ Y. LE BOHEC - L'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire
Grenoble 1989 Éd. Picard pp. 30,31,40.

⁵⁵ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique
Paris 2001 Éd. Arthème Fayard pp. 436,462.

- In 51 BCE, M. Calpurnius Bibulus, proconsul of Syria, fought against the brigands of Cilicia.
- In 25 BCE, Amyntas, Client king of Galatia, was killed fighting against the Homonadeis in Isauria. After the death of Amyntas, the Roman province of Galatia was created.
- Between 6 and 1 BCE, Quirinius's expedition leads to defeat the tribe of Homonadeis, thus avenging the king Amyntas.
- In 6 CE, an Isaurian revolt is put down by M. Plautius Silvanus, legate of Galatia. Roman historians date this event indicating that Silvanus was legate of an eastern province (Cassius Dio LV:25:1, LV:28:2; Velleius Paterculus II:112). As Quirinius was legate of Syria in 6 CE, according to Josephus, Silvanus should be legate of Galatia.
- In 17 CE, Archelaus's kingdom of Cappadocia (Cilicia Trachea) is annexed and will be attached to Cilicia towards 72/73.
- In 19 CE, according to Tacitus (Annals II:77:1, 80:1), Piso, legate of Syria, attacked one of the places belonging to robbers in Cilicia.
- In 36 CE, Vitellius, governor of Syria, sent Legate M. Trebellius in the Taurus with 4000 legionaries and some auxiliaries to besiege the rebels that he reduced to surrender by the sword, the rest by drought (Annals VI:41:1).
- In 51 CE, Ummidius Quadratus, governor of Syria, sent the prefect Curtius Severus in Mount Taurus with cavalymen to quell a tribe who were besieging the city of Anemur in Cilicia (Annals XII:54:3-55: 2).

The case of the legate of Galatia M. Plautius Silvanus who crushed a revolt in Isauria (in 6 CE) is similar to the mission of Quirinius. According to this approximation, the legation of Quirinius took place in Galatia rather than in Syria. Two inscriptions from the Roman colony of Pisidian Antioch also attest the fame of Quirinius (the *duumvir*) in this region and confirm his role as legate of Galatia.

Fig. 6: *Quirinius inscriptions in Galatia*



ILS 9502 inscription

C. C A R I S T A [NIO]
C.F.SER.FRONT[ONI]
CAESIANO IVLI[O]
PRAEF.FABR.PON[TIF.]
SACERDOTI PRAE[F.]
P.SVLPICI.QVIRINI.IIV[IRI]
PRAEF. M.SERVILI
HVIC PRIMO OMNIVM
PVBLICE D.D.STATVA
POSITA EST

CARISTANI
FRONTONICAESIANO
IVLIO PRAEFFABRTRIBMIL
LEGXII FVLMPRAEF COHBOS
PONTIF PRAEF PSVLPICIQVIRINI
IIVIR PRAEF M SERVILI PRAEF

ILS 9503 inscription

C. Carista[nius]
s[on of] C[aius] Ser[sius] Fronto
Caesianus Jul[ius]
pref. of engi[neers], pontif.
priest, pref. of
P. Sulpicius Quirinius *duu[mvir]*
pref. of M. Servilius
by this man, the first of all [with a]
public decree of D. council, the statue
was set up

By Caius Caristianus
Fronto Caesianus
Julius pref. of engine. military tribune
of legion 12 Fulm. pref. of Bos. cohort.
pontif, pref. of **P. Sulpicius Quirinius**
duumvir, pref. of M. Servilius, pref. of

Cities often sought the protection of the nearest legate and solicited him to assume either the patronage of the city⁵⁶ or the duumvirate (mayoralty). These inscriptions support

⁵⁶ Y. LE BOHEC - L'armée romaine sous le Haut-empire
Grenoble 1989 Éd. Picard p. 250.

a legation of Quirinius in Galatia. One can read that once elected as *duumvir* of the city, Quirinius was represented at this annual charge by C. Carista Fronto. The inscription states that the successors of Quirinius, M. Servilius, then another (name unreadable) did the same. As M. Servilius was legate of Galatia around 2 CE⁵⁷ it involves placing before our common era the previous legation of Quirinius as governor of Galatia.

Numismatics also clarifies this early period of history. A coin depicting the goddess Victory was issued exceptionally in Apamea 3 BCE (year 28 of Actium). Another, found in Cilicia (dated around the same time) is even more surprising, it bears the following inscription (the portrait of Octave is at the reverse):

PRINCEPS FELIX
NE TER COLONIA IULIA IIVIR



Fig. 7: Coin of Apamae

The reading and the interpretation of this inscription are discussed⁵⁸. The text refers to the *Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Ninica*, a Roman colony founded by Augustus in Cilicia Trachea, which existed under that name from 25 BCE to 6 CE, then under the name of Claudapolis. The first word enigmatic NE might be an abbreviation of the word NEIKH⁵⁹ "Victory". Some coins have been found with the following inscriptions: NEIKH TIBEPIOY "Victory of Tiberius" or NE L BPS "Vic[tory] y[ear] 282" (the year 282 of the Seleucid era in Syria corresponding to 31 BCE, date of the Battle of Actium). Therefore the text could read: *Ne[ike] Ter Colonia Iulia Princeps Felix Du[um]vir* "Victory for the 3rd time, Julian colony of Prince [Augustus] Felix, Duumvir." The information provided by this inscription refers to Quirinius. The 3 victories could refer:

- 1) When he was proconsul of Crete and Cyrenaica, towards -21/-20⁶⁰, he won a victory over the Marmarides, in Libya (Works of Florus II:30). This war was led in conjunction with the African proconsul Lucius Cornelius Balbus who received, him, a triumph (March 27, 19 BCE) for having defeated the Garamantes⁶¹. His proconsulship of Crete and Cyrenaica (a senatorial province and thus a Praetorian a charge) must be fixed after 21 BCE (= 51 BCE + 30), because appointment to quaestorship was done usually at the age of 25⁶² and appointment to praetorship at the age of 30⁶³, and prior 18 BCE as the province was submitted to the proconsular *imperium* of Agrippa from 18 to 13 BCE.
- 2) He fought during this period (between 6 and 1 BCE) and won a victory over the Homonadeis located precisely in this region of Cilicia.
- 3) The two inscriptions found in Antioch of Pisidia (written after 2 CE) shows he received the honorary title of *duumvir* (probably when he was proconsul of Asia around 1 BCE, and after his victory over the Itureans, the 3rd one after his victories over the Marmarides and the Homonadeis).

⁵⁷ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 522-523.

⁵⁸ A. BURNETT, M. AMANDRY, P.P. RIPOLES - Roman Provincial Coinage I London 1992 Ed. British Museum Press pp. 598 n°4082, 531 n°3371, 662 n°4774.

⁵⁹ The archaic spelling NEIKE is usual at this time.

⁶⁰ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines Tome I pp. 177,314; T. II p. 248.

⁶¹ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines Tome II pp. 503,529.

⁶² The death of Quirinius is fixed just before the end of 21 CE, a year after having made his wife Aemilia Lepida condemned, according to Tacitus (Annals III:22-23) and Suetonius (Tiberius XLIX) and his birth must be in 51 BCE.

⁶³ Y. PERRIN, T. BAUZOU - De la Cité à l'Empire histoire de Rome in: Universités Histoire Paris 2000 Éd. Ellipses p. 284.

If this victory is that Quirinius on Homonadeis, it implies that this war occurred before 3 BCE. Thus the scenario of the legation of Quirinius in Galatia is the most likely⁶⁴. Quirinius had probably need 2 years to neutralize successfully this vast tribe scattered in the Taurus mountains, as it had been planned by Augustus (*Res Gestae* §28). The fact that Varus was governor of Syria during the period from 6 to 4 BCE, facilitated the cooperation of the latter with Quirinius because they were both close to Augustus. Thus, Varus was able, without difficulty, putting some Syrian legions available to Quirinius (the fact that Quintilius Varus reappear after Herod's death has led some scholar postulating the existence of a hypothetical second Quintilius Varus⁶⁵, son of Quintilius Varus!). This chronological reconstruction gives the following result:

year (cens)	Legate of the East	Governor of Syria	Herodian reign	Rector of Caesar (main event)	Governor of Galatia	era of Actium
-19	(Agrippa)	P.V. Messala	20		Cusinius Rufus	12/13
-18	(Agrippa)	P.V. Messala	21	(census postponed)	Cusinius Rufus	13/14
-17	(Agrippa)	(Agrippa)	22			14/15
-16	Agrippa	(Agrippa)	23			15/16
-15	Agrippa	(Agrippa)	24			16/17
-14	(Agrippa)	(Agrippa)	25		C. Piso <i>Pontifex</i>	17/18
-13	(Agrippa)	(Agrippa)	26	(census)	C. Piso <i>Pontifex</i>	18/19
-12		M. Titius	27	(death of Agrippa)	C. Piso <i>Pontifex</i>	19/20
-11		M. Titius	28			20/21
-10		M. Titius	29			21/22
-9		S. Saturninus	30			22/23
-8		S. Saturninus	31	(general census)		23/24
-7		S. Saturninus	32		C. Aquila?	24/25
-6	Tiberius	Q. Varus	33		C. Aquila	25/26
-5	(Tiberius)	Q. Varus	34		S. Quirinius	26/27
-4	(Tiberius)	Q. Varus	35	[0] (Herod's testament)	S. Quirinius	27/28
-3	(Tiberius)	S. Quirinius	36	[1]		28/29
-2	(Tiberius)	S. Quirinius	37	[2] (census of the world)		29/30
-1	C. Caesar	Q. Varus	3	M. Lollius	M. Servilius?	30/31
1	C. Caesar	Q. Varus	4	M. Lollius	M. Servilius	31/32
2	C. Caesar	(C. Caesar)	5	S. Quirinius	M. Censorinus	32/33
3	C. Caesar	(C. Caesar)	6	S. Quirinius	M. Censorinus?	33/34
4		V. Saturninus	7	(death of C. Caesar)		34/35
5		V. Saturninus	8			35/36
6		S. Quirinius	9	(Archelaus deposed,	M. Silvanus	36/37
7		S. Quirinius	10	(Varus governor of	M. Silvanus	37/38
8		S. Quirinius?		Germania)		38/39
9		S. Quirinius?		(death of Varus)		39/40
10		S. Quirinius?				40/41
11		S. Quirinius?				41/42
12		M. Silanus				42/43
13		M. Silanus				43/44
14		M. Silanus		(general census)	Libuscidianus	44/45
15		M. Silanus		(death of Augustus)	Libuscidianus	45/46

⁶⁴ B. THOMASSON - *Laterculi praesidum*

Göteborg 1984 col. 253 n° 3.

⁶⁵ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - *Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II*
Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 434-435, 446-447.

This reconstruction raises the following questions:

- *No historical records mention Quirinius's legation in Galatia.* It is possible that this absence is due to a combination of exceptional circumstances: the history of Cassius Dio covering the period from 6 BCE to 4 CE has unfortunately been lost and the writings of Strabo over the period from 2 BCE to 14 CE are themselves also very incomplete. The upper part of the inscription of Tibur is missing but the lower part starts with a reference to a subjected tribe [the Homonadeis], making likely the reference to a legation in Galatia in the previous line [missing]. The inscription of Apamea mentions the census when Quirinius was governor of Syria and some decorations received after Homonadeis's war. It is likely that the recipient did not bother to mention that these honors came from the former legation of Quirinius in Galatia.
- *Quirinius would have accepted a downgrading of his status.* This unusual case is not unprecedented since Piso Pontifex, who was appointed consul in 15 BCE, had accepted a disqualification of his rank when he was appointed legate of Galatia from 14 to 12 BCE, because the province was usually entrusted to a senator of praetorian rank⁶⁶.
- *The testimony of Tacitus would partly wrong.* If Tacitus wrote that *Quirinius removed in Cilicia the fortresses of Homonadeis*, it is possible that, writing a century after the fact, he has committed a little anachronism applying geographical boundaries of his time (different) to this ancient event. Cilicia Trachea was dependent on Syria only after 17 CE and was attached to the province of Cilicia, with the Cilicia Plane only toward 72/73⁶⁷.
- *Varus would have been legate of Syria twice.* His first legation is well documented and is dated between 6 and 4 BCE. However, the existence of a second legation between 1 BCE and 1 CE is related to the date of Herod's death. In fact, the 'war of Varus' in Syria after the death of Herod was led under the auspices of Caius Caesar, the imperial legate in the East between 1 BCE and 4 CE. According to Cassius Dio (Roman History LV:10a:5-7) when Artagira in Armenia was taken (in 3 CE)⁶⁸, after a long siege according to Strabo (Geography XI:14:6), not only Augustus but Caius also assumed the title of *imperator*.

Historians in trying too quickly to reconcile Roman and biblical data created great confusion. If Justin (Apology I:34:2; I:46:1) has referred to the Roman archives, about 150 CE, to certify the census of Quirinius, placing it at the very beginning of our era, Tertullian (Against Marcion IV:19:10), 50 years later, will assimilate this census with the census of Roman citizens performed by Sentius Saturninus (in 8 BCE), mixing up the census with the inventory of 2 BCE. Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History I:5:3-4), toward 310 CE, mixed up the census of Quirinius in 2 BCE with the one mentioned by Josephus in 7 CE.

Conclusion: All historical synchronism of the reign of Herod provide, without exception, a date of the death toward 2/1 BCE. In addition, the lunar eclipse mentioned (unique in all the work of Josephus) is dated January 9/10, 1 BCE, 5 days after the fast of 10 Tebeth, which is a remarkable confirmation. In 4 BCE, not only there was no fasting, but a feast (Nicanor). Finally, the census of Quirinius is well documented as it coincides with the inventory of the world in 2 BCE and the War of Varus, after Herod's death, under the auspices of Caius Caesar (who was co-regent)⁶⁹, is dated in 1 CE. According to Maurice Sartre, a leading French academic expert on these issues: *The passage in Luke throws a trouble spot since he places the census directly related to the birth of Jesus: it is to fulfill the obligation to be*

⁶⁶ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne
Paris 1972, 1976 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines Tome I pp. 50,236 Tome II p. 520.

⁶⁷ M. SARTRE - L'Orient romain
Paris 1991 Éd. Seuil p. 45.

⁶⁸ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère
1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 134-139.

⁶⁹ From 19 BCE, imperial greetings and triumphs of a general are assigned to the co-regent (or to the emperor when he had not colleague or co-regent). Caius Caesar was co-regent from 1 BCE thanks to his proconsular *imperium* then *imperator* from 3 CE.

*identified so that Joseph and Mary would have gone to Bethlehem and Jesus would be born. This can only have occurred long after the death of Herod because John the Baptist, older than a few months, was born and was designed at the time of Herod. There was considerable information on the epilogue of Luke, without finding a solution that saves it. Let alone the date, in fact all of the information appears unbearable. Not only there never was a general census of the Empire (except for Roman citizens), but even if the census was confined to the Roman province of Syria, there is no reason why the subjects of client State of Antipas were concerned (...) how Luke could be so wrong by combining the census — if it took place in 6 AD — with the birth of Jesus, which occurred, according to Matthew 2.1, at the end of the reign of Herod, probably in 6 or 5 BC (...) After the departure of P. Quinctilius Varus, governor since 7 BC and still in place at the time of Herod's death (he repressed the revolt in Jerusalem), he was replaced directly by L. Calpurnius Piso Pontifex, who remained in place until 1 BC. Therefore, there is no vacancy for a first term of Quirinius. According to this prestigious and powerful academic⁷⁰: in fact all of the information [from Luke] appears unbearable (...) how Luke could be so wrong⁷¹. Who to believe, Luke or Sartre? In any case, one of them is either an incompetent historian or, worse, a liar. When you know that there is no evidence to prove the presence of L. Calpurnius Piso Pontifex in Syria⁷², the answer is obvious. Some scholars have tried to identify the anonymous who was governor of Syria twice in the inscription of Tibur to Calpurnius but it is impossible because he was prefect of Rome from 13 to 32 CE however this prestigious function (Annals VI:10) would not appear at the end of his *cursus honorum*. The anonymous can only be Quirinius as demonstrated by Theodor Mommsen⁷³.*

⁷⁰ As a member of the editorial board of major journals of French history he is the guarantor of "orthodoxy" of articles.

⁷¹ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique
 Paris 2001 Éd. Arthème Fayard pp. 540,542.

⁷² R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II
 Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 383-384.

⁷³ T. MOMMSEN – Res gestae divi Augusti
 Berlin 1883 Ed. Weidmann pp. 167-168.

Dating the war of P. Quinctilius Varus

The biography of Quinctilius Varus⁷⁴ is as follows: born in Cremona toward 47 BCE, he was quaestor in Achaia in 22 BCE, quaestor of Augustus during his trip to East in 22-19 BCE, legate of a proconsul of Asia in 15 BCE, ordinary consul in 13 BCE, proconsul of Africa in 7 BCE, governor of Syria in 6-4 BCE, governor of Gaul-Germany in 7-9 CE, died in Teutoburg on September 9 CE. Varus played an important role in the life of Herod since he negotiated (in 4 BCE) an agreement to grant the inheritance to his sons made in presence of Augustus (Jewish War I:573-628), and it is still him who was instructed to quell the various rebellions after his death. Herod's death should be dated to 1 BCE, because the intervention of Varus, after Herod's death, is described as a war by Flavius Josephus (Against Apion I:34) and also by the Seder Olam⁷⁵: *from the war of Varus [written As-uerus] to the war of Vespasian 80 years [in fact 70 years]*, yet the only war mentioned in the Roman archives in this region and at that time is the one conducted by Caius Caesar (in 1 CE).

Sequence of events	Reference	date
S. Saturninus , a former governor of Syria (9-6), is convened in Beirut by Augustus about a trial concerning royalty of Herod's sons.	B.J. I:538	Summer 5 BCE
Herod went into Rome in order to modify his testament concerning the kingship of his sons. Varus the governor of Syria is regularly consulted.	B.J. I:617-628	Summer 4 BCE
Last testament of Herod (codicil).	B.J. I:664	21 January 1 BCE
Herod's death	B.J. I:665	26 January 1 BCE
Archelaus goes to Rome to make confirm his kingship.	B.J. II:1-4	
Departure of Governors for their province.		April/June 1 BCE
Feast of the Passover.	B.J. II:10	6 April 1 BCE
Varus arrives soon into Syria at the request of Archelaus.	B.J. II:16	
Antipas leaves for Rome to obtain confirmation of his kingship mentioned in Herod's testament rather than in his codicil.	B.J. II:20	
Augustus reads the reports of Varus and Sabinus and sits with Caius .	B.J. II:25	
Varus , the governor of Syria, announces a Jewish revolt, represses it, leaves for Antioch, leaving a legion in Jerusalem.	B.J. II:40	
Feast of Pentecost.	B.J. II:42	28 May 1 BCE
Caius leaves for the East with a pro-consular <i>imperium</i> .		July 1 BCE
Sabinus fears for the legion left in Jerusalem and calls Varus for help.	B.J. II:45-54	
Revolt fomented by Ahab, and Judas son of Hezekiah.	B.J. II:55-56	
Rebellions fomented by Simon, then Athrongaios.	B.J. II:57-65	
Varus returned to Syria with two additional legions.	B.J. II:66	
Beginning of the war of Varus under the auspices of Caius.	C.A. I:34	September 1 BCE
Caius leads troops in Galilee and Varus control those in Samaria.	B.J. II:68-69	
Varus ends "his war", Festival (of Booths), Sabinus leaves Jerusalem.	B.J. II:72-79	November 1 BCE
Caius is appointed consul at Rome		1 January 1 CE
Herod's sons are officially 'enthroned' by Augustus, according to the testament of July 4 BCE.	B.J. II:80-100	
'King' Herod Archelaus sent a delegation to Augustus.	B.J. II:111	Summer 6 CE

B.J. (Jewish War); C.A. (Against Apion); A.J. (Jewish Antiquities)

⁷⁴ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les Gouverneurs de Province à l'Époque Augustéenne Tome II Paris 1976 Éd. Nouvelles Éditions Latines pp. 434-435.

W. DE GRUYTER – Prosopographia imperii romani

Wissens 1999 Ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften pp. 20-24.

⁷⁵ H.W. GUGGENHEIMER – Seder Olam. The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology Laham 2005 Ed. Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. pp. 261-263.

After Herod's death, Varus quelled several rebellions as Commandant of Syria (not as Governor)⁷⁶ including the one of Simon narrated by Tacitus (History V:9). Josephus prefers to speak of war because all the legions of Syria were mobilized. Indeed, in this time Syria had been three major wars: the ones of Pompey (in 63 BCE), Varus (in 6-1 BCE) and Titus (in 66-70 CE). This war of Varus was conducted under the auspices of Caius (Cassius Dio LV:10:18), imperial legate of Caesar in the East from 1 BCE to 4 CE. It has been granted to him in the inscription on a cenotaph. Deny this identification requires accepting that a major war, led by the designated successor of the emperor himself, has left no trace in history⁷⁷. Maurice Sartre, in favor of a death of Herod in 4 BCE, offers the following scenario⁷⁸: Caius Caesar would not have led a war in Syria (unlike the inscription!) but a simple campaign in Arabia to enthrone officially Aretas IV (king of Nabatène from 9 BCE to 40 CE). Enthroning in 1 CE a king who was already king since 9 BCE is absurd, moreover, the aim of this campaign would have been ridiculous for a co-regent. In fact, this self-proclaimed king after the death of Obodas II (30 to 9 BCE) was ratified by Rome in 1 CE as a result of his support for the army of Varus to quell the revolt after Herod's death (Jewish War II:68-70). If Herod was dead in 4 BCE, Aretas IV would have been recognized king by Rome (in 1 CE) only 4 years later, but in that case one has to assume the unlikely solution: after Aretas helped a Roman vassal king, Augustus would have annexed the country of Aretas from 3 to 1 BCE (which would have been a punishment!), then Caius Caesar would have restored (?) his kingdom in 1 CE.

The career of Caius Caesar, the grand-son of Augustus, was very brief. An inscription in a cenotaph of Pisa (CIL XI 1421; ILS 140) provides his *cursus honorum* and mentions as the only honorary remarkable action: *after the consulship which he held with good fortune, waging a war beyond the farthest borders of the Roman people, when the state was successful and the greatest and most warlike peoples were conquered and received his protection, had himself been snatched by cruel fate*⁷⁹ (lines 9 to 12 of the inscription below). It is therefore important to identify this war and to date it.

5	QVOE	SVNT CVM IN COLONIA NOSTRA PROPTER CONTENTIONES CANDIDATO
	RV	AGISTRATVVS NON ESSENT ET EA ACTA ESSENT QVAE INFRA SCRIPTA SVNT
	CVM A	II NONAS APRILES ALLATVS ESSET NVNTIVS C CAESAREM AVGVSTI PATRIS PATRI
	AE	NTIF MAXSVMI CVSTODIS IMPERI ROMANI TOTIVSQVE ORBIS TERRARVM PRAE
	SII	ILIVM DIVI NEPOTEM POST CONSVLATVM QVEM VLTRA FINIS EXTREMAS POPV
10	LI	ANI BELLVM GERENS FELICITER PEREGERAT BENE GESTA RE PVBLICA DEVICTEIS AVT
	IN	EM RECEPTIS BELLICOSISSIMIS AC MAXSIMIS GENTIBVS IPSVM VOLNERIBVS PRO RE
	PV	CA EXCEPTIS EX EO CASV CRVDELIBVS FATIS EREPTVM POPVLO ROMANO IAM DESIGNA
	TV	VSTISSVMVM AC SIMILLVMVM PARENTIS SVI VIRTVTIBVS PRINCIPEM COLONIAEQVE
	NC	RAE VNIVM PRAESIDIUM EAQVE RES NONDVM QUIETO LVCTV QVEM EX DECES
15	SV	AE SARIS FRATRIS EIVS CONSVLIS DESIGNATI AVGVRI PATRONI NOSTRI PRINC
	PIE	VENTVTIS COLONIA VNIVERSA SVSCEPERAT RENOVASSET MVLTPLICASSETQVE
	M	OREM OMNIVM SINGVLORVM VNIVERSORVMQVE OB EAS RES VNIVERSI DECV
	RI	S COLONIQVE QVANDO EO CASV IN COLONIA NEQVE II VIR NEQVE PRAEFECTI
	ER	NEQVE QVISQVAM IVRE DICVNDI PRAERAT INTER SESE CONSENSERVNT PRO
20	ML	NITVDINE TANTAE AC TAM INPROVISAE CALAMITATIS OPORTERE EX EA DIE

Fig. 1: Cenotaph of Pisa CIL XI 1421; ILS 140

⁷⁶ Governor (*egemon*) of Syria from 6 to 4 BCE (Jewish War I:617) then Commandant (*strategon*) of Syria (Jewish Antiquities XVII:250).

⁷⁷ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 134-135.

⁷⁸ M. SARTRE - D'Alexandre à Zénobie. Histoire du Levant antique Paris 2001 Éd. Arthème Fayard pp. 519-520.

M. SARTRE - L'Orient romain

Paris 1991 Éd. Seuil pp. 30-31.

⁷⁹ D. BRAUND - Augustus to Nero: A Sourcebook on Roman History, 31 BC-AD 68 New York 1985 Ed. Taylor & Francis pp. 38-40.

Velleius Paterculus (Roman History II:99-102), who was an eyewitness to the career of Caius Caesar, said: *Tiberius Nero, who had now held two consulships and celebrated two triumphs; who had been made the equal of Augustus by sharing with him the tribunician power; the most eminent of all Roman citizens save one (and that because he wished it so); the greatest of generals, attended alike by fame and fortune; veritably the second luminary and the second head of the state — this man, moved by some strangely incredible and inexpressible feeling of affection for Augustus, sought leave from him who was both his father-in law and stepfather to rest from the unbroken succession of his labours. The real reasons for this were soon made plain. Inasmuch as Gaius Caesar had already assumed the toga of manhood, and Lucius was reaching maturity, he concealed his reason in order that his own glory might not stand in the way of the young men at the beginning of their careers. I must reserve for my regular history a description of the attitude of the state at this juncture, of the feelings of the individual citizens, of the tears of all at taking leave of such a man, and how nearly the state came to laying upon him its staying hand. Even in this brief epitome I ought to say that all who departed for the provinces across the sea, whether proconsuls or governors appointed by the emperor, went out of their way to see him at Rhodes, and on meeting him they lowered their fasces to him though he was but a private citizen — if such majesty could ever belong to a private citizen — thereby confessing that his retirement was more worthy of honour than their official position (...) Julia was banished to an island and removed from the eyes of her country and her parents, though her mother Scribonia accompanied her and employed with her as a voluntary companion of her exile. Shortly after this Gaius Caesar, who had previously made a tour of other provinces, but only as a visitor, was dispatched to Syria. On his way he first paid his respects to Tiberius Nero, whom he treated with all honour as his superior. In his province he conducted himself with such versatility as to furnish much material for the panegyrist and actions deserving of praise. On an island in the Euphrates, with an equal retinue on each side, Gaius had a meeting with the king of the Parthians, a young man of distinguished presence. This spectacle of the Roman army arrayed on one side, the Parthian on the other, while these two eminent leaders not only of the empires they represented but also of mankind thus met in conference — truly a notable and a memorable sight — it was my fortunate lot to see early in my career as a soldier, when I held the rank of tribune. I had already entered upon this grade of the service under your father, Marcus Vinicius, and Publius Silius in Thrace and Macedonia; later I visited Achaia and Asia and all the eastern provinces, the outlet of the Black Sea and both its coasts, and it is not without feelings of pleasure that I recall the many events, places, peoples, and cities. As for the meeting, first the Parthian dined with Gaius upon the Roman bank, and later Gaius supped with the king on the soil of the enemy. It was at this time that there were revealed to Caesar, through the Parthian king, the traitorous designs, revealing a crafty and deceitful mind, of Marcus Lollius, whom Augustus had desired to be the adviser of his still youthful son; and gossip spread the report abroad. In regard to his death, which occurred within a few days, I do not know whether it was accidental or voluntary. But the joy which people felt at this death was equalled by the sorrow which the state felt long afterwards at the decease in the same province of Censorinus, a man born to win the affections of men. Then Gaius entered Armenia and at first conducted his campaign with success; but later, in a parley near Artagera, to which he rashly entrusted his person, he was seriously wounded by a man named Adduus, so that, in consequence, his body became less active, and his mind of less service to the state. Nor was there lacking the companionship of persons who encouraged his defects by flattery — for flattery always goes hand in hand with high position — as a result of which he wished to spend his life in a remote and distant corner of the world rather than return to Rome. Then, in the act of returning to Italy, after long resistance and still against his will, he died in a city of Lycia which they call Limyra. Velleius says that the career of Caius in the East began with Syria but he does not specify what were his ‘actions deserving of praise’. Cassius Dio (Roman History LV:10:17-18; LV:10a:4) says that the young Caius learned to control legions on the Danube at the beginning of the year 1 BCE before going to Syria and he resided in Syria in the year of his consulate (beginning on January 1, 1 CE), coinciding with the war mentioned in the inscription on the cenotaph*

of Pisa. According to Ovid this "future glorious mission of Caius Caesar in the East" was officially announced by Augustus at the dedication of the Temple of Ultor on May 12, 2 BCE (Art of Love I:171-228). Caius left his position for the East at the expiration of the powers of Tiberius (July 1 BCE)⁸⁰ but because of his age (19 years old when he left Rome), Augustus put in charge Marcus Lollius as rector of Caius, from 1 BCE until his disgrace in 2 CE, and then Quirinius. The usual date of January 29, 1 BCE, marking the departure of Caius Caesar to the East is conjectural and not founded⁸¹. The name of Caius Caesar would appear only in a piece of text which is entirely restored⁸².

Caius Caesar came to the East with a proconsular *imperium*⁸³ (previously held by Tiberius) primarily to address issues of Parthia and Armenia, and for this reason that his actions in Syria are seen by Latin authors as secondary. The only historian to talk about the campaign in Syria is Pliny (Natural History XII:55), who recounts a glorious campaign of Caius in "Arabia", general term for Syria (Natural History VI:141), which involved Aretas IV, Arab king of the Nabataeans⁸⁴ (Jewish War II:68-70). This self-proclaimed king (in 9 BCE) was endorsed by Rome (in 1 CE) thanks to his support for the army of Varus after Herod's death. The role of Caius Caesar beside Varus was more honorary than decisive because Josephus briefly presents him either as the son of Agrippa or as the friend of Varus (Jewish War II:25, 68). According to Tacitus (Annals II:30:4, IV:66:1), Quirinius and Varus were indeed intimate of Augustus Caesar and therefore of Caius Caesar.

During the period 6-4 BCE, Varus was governor (*hégémôn*) of Syria. Josephus distinguishes the administrative aspect of his command during the first legation using the title of governor and then the title, more military, of commandant (*strategon*), which is used during the second legation after the death of Herod.

year	Legate in Syria	Exact title of the "governor" of Syria
-12 -9	M. Titius	Governing (ἡγεμόνα) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVI:270</i>
-9 -6	S. Saturninus	Governor (ἡγεμόν) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVI:344</i>
-6 -3	Q. Varus	Governor (ἡγεμόν) <i>Jewish War I:617</i>
-3 -1	S. Quirinius	Governor (ἡγεμόν) <i>Luke 2:2; Inscription of Apamea</i>
-1 1	Sabinus	Procurator (ἐπίτροπος) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVII:252</i>
-1 1	Q. Varus	Commandant (στρατηγού) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVII:250</i>
1 2		Governing of legions (ἡγεμόνα) with Caius Caesar <i>Jewish War II:68</i>
6 10	S. Quirinius	[Supreme] Judge (δικαιοδότης), censor of the people <i>Jewish Antiquities XVIII:1</i>
12 17	M. Silanus	Commandant (στρατηγού) <i>Jewish Antiquities XVIII:52</i>

The terms used by Josephus are accurate and consistent. From 12 to 1 BCE the post of governor of Syria was relatively autonomous but from 1 BCE to 2 CE it was

⁸⁰ F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 110-111.

⁸¹ P. ARNAUD – Transmarinae provinciae : réflexions sur les limites géographiques et sur la nature des pouvoirs en Orient in: *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz* 5 (1994) pp. 221-253.

⁸² MAXI[MO C. CAESAR PRINC(EP)S IUVENT(UTIS) AD PROVINCIAS TRANS]MARINA[S]

This reconstruction is erroneous because the inscription begins by MAR[-] not by MAXI[-] (A. DEGRASSI – Inscriptiones Italiae vol. XIII fas. II. 1963 Roma Ed. Poligrafico della stato pp. 116-117, Tab XXXV). In addition, the expression *provincias transmarinas* is unknown at this time. This very particular expression is always written *transmarinas provincias*. Spannagel conjectures the following reconstruction assuming it meant the departure of Tiberius to the East in 22 BCE (M. SPANNAGEL -Exemplaria principis. Untersuchungen zu Entstehung und Ausstattung des Augustusforums in: *Archäologie und Geschichte* 9, Heidelberg, 1999, p. 26):

MAR[CELLO ET ARRUNTIO CON(N)S(ULIBUS) AD TRANS]MARINA[S] PROVINCIAS

The new proposal of Spannagel to link that date of January 29 to Tiberius is not satisfactory because it does not appear in the *Fasti Vicomagistri*, written in 2 BCE, neither in the *Fasti Verulani*, written under Tiberius. In fact, during the period 27-1 BCE the only intimate of Caesar sent on a mission to the East in January was Marcus Agrippa in 16 BCE (H. HALFMANN –Itinera principum. Wiesbaden, 1986, pp. 164-165). In this case the inscription should read:

MAR[CUS AGRIPPA PROCO(N)S(UL) MISSUS IN TRANS]MARINA[S] PROVINCIAS ESSET

⁸³ This *imperium* was superior to that of governors, according to Tacitus (Annals II:43) and Cassius Dio (Roman history LIV:28).

⁸⁴ Toward 36/37, the Etmarch of King Aretas IV tried to seize Paul (2 Corinthians 11:32). This episode must be located shortly before the period of unrest between Herod Antipas and Aretas IV (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:106-118).

subordinated to that of Caius Caesar. The title of Quirinius between 6 and 10 CE was more prestigious than a simple governor. After 6 CE, the governor of Syria will support the procurator of Judea. The question of the imperial legate of Syria during the period 1 to 4 CE is tricky because the title and the mission of Caius Caesar was very special⁸⁵, but the chronology given by Josephus imposes a legation of Varus in Syria under the authority of Caius Caesar, identical to that of governor of Syria Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso who collaborated with the imperial Legate Germanicus Caesar. If Josephus does not mention the mission of Caius Caesar in the East, nor the first legation Quirinius, it is because these events had little impact on the political life in Judea. This exceptional⁸⁶ and unusual coexistence of several legates may be explained: Augustus commissioned several of them simultaneously (chosen from his family to avoid potential conflicts of authority) with specific and different objectives⁸⁷: negotiating with Parthia and Armenia, ensuring the succession of the kingdom of Herod and promoting the accession of his grand-son Caius at the head of the Empire. Caius Caesar, Augustus's adopted son, implicitly disposed of an *imperium maius* as legate of the East, he was assisted militarily by Varus, a former legate of Syria, and politically by Lollius a counselor. Sabinus was designated as financial procurator to identify goods of Herod (during the year -4 he was busy reorganizing the justice in the province of Cyrenaica after serious complaints of Greek citizens against Roman judges)⁸⁸.

Caius Caesar as imperial legate of the East, Lollius as rector of Varus and Caius as chargé de mission could each be considered as governor of Syria. The presence of several 'governors' of Syria occurred several times since Syria was a strategic region in the Roman East and the geographical overlapping of Judea and Syria inside the East produced an exceptional situation of overlapping in imperial missions⁸⁹. As its name suggests, the imperial legate (endowed with an *imperium*) was only accountable to the emperor, however, to ensure peace within his jurisdiction (a major part of his mission), the legate imperial of the East could commandeer the legate of Syria, who himself could commandeer the procurator of Judea for the same reasons⁹⁰. The proconsular *imperium* of Caius allowed him to appoint governors (in theory, but in practice this possibility depended on the emperor) in the same way that the emperor appointed his procurators. If he deemed necessary, the emperor could also appoint an imperial legate in place of the proconsul without depart the latter, he could also add legates to the governor. The proconsul could also appoint his own legates⁹¹. Hurlet carefully studied this complex issue⁹², he explains:

The prince had, since 27 BCE, the right to submit "instructions" (the mandala) as well to his own legates as to generals acting under their own auspices (...) [concerning Caius] one must admit that the young prince was invested with a proconsular imperium, if not superior in any case "equal" to the one of proconsuls (...) If one admit, however, for Agrippa the existence of an imperium maius, the imperium of Caius Caesar would be higher to the one of provincial governors (...) in other words: the "co-regent" acting exclusively in the own area of the prince, it would be superfluous to specify in a

⁸⁵ E. DABROWA - The Governors of Roman Syria from Augustus to Septimius Severus Bonn 1998 Ed. Rudolf Habelt GMBH pp. 201-205.

⁸⁶ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire Tome 1 Paris 1990 Éd. Presses Universitaires de France pp. 15-21, 34, 57-61, 170-174.

⁸⁷ J.M. RODDAZ - Marcus Agrippa - Les arcanes de la puissance Farnèse 1984 Éd. École française de Rome pp. 337-381.

⁸⁸ F. DE VISSCHER - Les édits d'Auguste découverts à Cyrène Louvain, Paris 1940 Ed. Les Belles Lettres, pp. 23-30.

⁸⁹ Vitellius, un gouverneur de Syrie et légat impérial d'Orient (Annales VI:32:3-4) a révoqué Pilate, un procurateur de Judée (Antiquités juives XVIII:85-88), de même Quadratus qui a révoqué Cumanus (Annales XII:54).

⁹⁰ P. HOROVITZ - Essai sur les pouvoirs des procureurs-gouverneurs in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* Tome 17 (1938) pp. 775-792.

⁹¹ F. JACQUES, J. SCHEID - Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire Tome 1 Paris 1990 Éd. Presses Universitaires de France pp. 14-15, 170-171.

⁹² F. HURLET - Les collègues du prince sous Auguste et Tibère 1997 Rome, École française de Rome pp. 132-133, 296-303.

senatus consultum and law if the imperium of the "co-regent" was aequum or maius compared to the one of proconsul; it was sufficient in this case to define the nature of his relations with the imperial legates and accordingly with the prince himself, who was only delegating his own powers to his legates (...) such a reality clearly raises the question of the nature of the relationship of the "co-regent" with the governors of imperial provinces (...) such a definition of the nature of relationship between the prince and his "co-regent" worth strictly speaking only for Augustus and Agrippa. The example of Germanicus clearly shows that there was on this issue an important development: the imperium "aequum" of Agrippa ended by becoming, at an unspecified date, higher compared to the governors of public provinces, but at the same time lower than that of the prince. We have the testimony on this issue of the Senatus consultum of Piso, which delivers unambiguously the content of the law of investiture: "provided that in all circumstances, the imperium of Tiberius Caesar was higher than that of Germanicus Caesar" (...) the imperium defined as maius assured the prince an absolute supremacy in all provinces as well as in relation to proconsuls as to his "co-regents" (...) the nature of the relationship of "co-regents" with the legates of the prince is a critical issue (...) by enumerating the number of grievances against the legate of Syria, non-compliance by the latter of mandata of Tiberius, the official document primarily reflects much of the important remote role played by the prince in the definition of the mission of his delegate, in contrast, clearly distinguishing the mandates of the prince from Germanicus letters, the text of senatus consultum shows that contrary to the prince, the "co-regent" had no recourse to coerce an imperial legate to absolute submission to him (...) The episode of conflict of jurisdiction between Germanicus and Piso shows how much the prince played a key role in the definition of the relationship between the "co-regent" and the governors of imperial provinces: it was only by the use of imperial mandates that were indirectly adjusted the concrete relations between the extraordinary envoy of the prince and the delegates of the latter, far from Germanicus not argue that for such a practice should be extended for sure to all the other extraordinary missions in so far as they always had as frame at least one imperial province.

The fact that Varus and Quirinius appeared several times in Syria is not unusual⁹³ because this region occupied a strategic position and the chronic instability of the eastern kingdoms: Armenia and Parthia, according to Velleius Paterculus (Roman History II:100-102), forced Augustus to use confirmed and trustworthy men, leading him to renew their legations, without being exceptional. According to Tacitus (Annals II:30:4, IV:66:1), Quirinius and Varus were intimates of Augustus and had both a strong military experience.

According to Josephus, the formalization approaches of power (for Herod's sons) took place around the Jewish Pentecost. This period (June/July) was precisely the time when the Romans took office (Jewish Antiquities XVII:254). The meeting shortly before Pentecost (May 28, 1 BCE) took place in May. Caius was able starting from Rome to the East as imperial legate (June 1 BCE) because he had just received his proconsular *imperium* previously held by Tiberius. If the legation of Varus had ended in 4 BCE, he would have had little time to watch the many rebellions that followed the death of Herod; whereas in 1 BCE he was at the beginning of his legation and could have at least 2 years to pacify Judea, which is much more likely. The fact that Archelaus claiming the arrival of Varus insistently is easily understandable if Varus came from Rome to take office in his new position (Jewish Antiquities XVII:221). According to Cassius Dio (Roman History LVII:14:5; LX:11:6; LX:17:3), governors were appointed on 1st January and had to leave Rome before 1st June to join their assignment (1st April after 42 CE). The presence of Varus was appropriate because, after succeeding Sentius Saturninus, he officiated at the end of his mandate [in 4 BCE] dynastic quarrels between Herod's sons on the succession of their father and made validated the last will of Herod in front of Augustus⁹⁴ (Jewish Antiquities XVII:89-146),

⁹³ R. SZRAMKIEWICZ - Les gouverneurs de province à l'époque augustéenne Tome 1 Paris 1972 Éd. Nouvelles éditions latines pp. 306-311.

⁹⁴ C. SAULNIER - Histoire d'Israël Paris 1985 Éd. Cerf pp. 222-227.

testament serving to legally establish the start date of their reigns⁹⁵. The careers of Varus and Quirinius were overlapping because their role was clearly complementary in Syria. Herod's death was immediately followed by several major revolts, which Varus crashed thanks to the legions of Syria. This "war of Varus" was led in cooperation with Caius Caesar (Jewish War II:66-74; Against Apion I:34), who arrived in Syria on January 1, 1 CE. This gives the following chronology:

year	Caius Caesar	Quintilius Varus	Sulpicius Quirinius
-7		Proconsul of Africa	
-6		Governor of Syria (1)	
-5	Caius Caesar made senator	(Testament of Herod under Augustus for his succession)	Governor of Galatia (extraordinary mission to eliminate the Homonadeis)
-4			
-3			Governor of Syria (1)
-2	Augustus declared Father of the Country. Inventory of the World	Death of Herod	Victory over the Itureans Census of Syria
-1	Imperial legate of the East War in Syria.	Governor of Syria (2) (extraordinary mission to secure the succession of Herod)	Proconsul of Asia
1	Negotiations with the Parthians		
2	Negotiations in Armenia		Rector of Caius Caesar (extraordinary mission to train the grand-son of Augustus)
3			
4	Death of Caius Caesar		
5			
6			Governor of Syria (2) (extraordinary mission to settle the succession of Archelaus and identify his goods)
7		Governor of Germania	
8			
9		Death of Varus	
10			

Josephus has collected an enormous amount of information. It was therefore necessary to harmonize them in compiling as do modern historians. Several anomalies appear in his accounts within the period from -4 to 6. Although very prolix in details Josephus goes directly from the 1st legation of Varus [6-4] to the 2nd of Quirinius [6-10] with a vacuum of 10 years. He ignores other governors during this period as Volusius Saturninus (4-6) evidenced by numismatics, leaving the impression of a connection between the exercise periods of these governors. As we have seen the only event commented in great detail is the management of the instability caused by Herod's death. The complexity of such events may have caused unclear narratives from Josephus who, over this period and several times, repeats same facts in several years apart: once at Herod's death and at Archelaus advent and once again after the deposition of Archelaus. It is possible that the double legations of Quirinius and of Varus (the 1st under Herod and the 2nd under Archelaus) have promoted some confusion among from Josephus's accounts or among his copyists. However the titular used by Josephus for the two governors, depending on the period, indirectly confirms the repetition of these delegations.

⁹⁵ W.E. FILMER - The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great
in: *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. XVII. Oxford 1966 pp. 283-298.

Some have doubts about the accuracy of titles used by Josephus because he describes Pilate as "governor (*hégemôn*) of Judea" (Jewish Antiquities XVIII:55) or "procurator (*epitropos*) of Judea" (Jewish War II:169) while a Latin inscription discovered in 1961 gave him the official title of "prefect (*praefectus*)", translated into Greek by *eparchos*. This criticism must be tempered as indicates Saulnier⁹⁶: *We should not unduly harden Roman law because epigraphy shows that the official terminology remained fluctuating under Julio-Claudian (...) Thus the territories of Asturias and Galicia, submitted with difficulty, had been annexed to the province of Hither Spain, while remaining governed by a praeses. A similar solution was adopted for the Alps where, in 25 BC, the ancient dynast, Julius Cottius, received the title of praefectus ciuitatium. In Sardinia, the emperor first appointed a legate who then became a prefect because legionary troops were replaced by an auxiliary force. Under these conditions it is understood that ethnarchy of Palestine after the dismemberment of a kingdom already tributary, has been the subject of a measure of this kind, because the primary concern of Augustus imposing direct administration should be to ensure the timely collection of the tribute formerly supported by Herod; such a decision logically impelled the appointment of a procurator. However disorders which Archelaus had been unable to suppress also requested sending a governor likely to lead police operations, that is to say, a prefect or a legate, depending on the status of forces given. Indeed, the title of praefectus linked with military responsibilities applies to an officer commanding auxiliary troops while a legate have to be at the head of a legionary detachment. In this way it can be assumed that the Judean territory poor, reduced and agitated, was administered by a clerk of the emperor who met both functions of procurator and prefect. Thus, in the present state of our documentation, the most simple is to admit that the governors of Judea had the dual function of praefectus-procurator [as it was the case in Sardinia].*

Therefore, one should be careful before criticizing Josephus and Tacitus (Annals XV:44:3), even if the official inscription from Caesarea points out Pilate as prefect because:

- Luke would commit the same "mistake" since he describes Pilate as "governor (*hégemôn*) of Judea (Luke 3:1)". Contrary to popular belief, literary texts are often more reliable than official inscriptions written by local dignitaries whom institutional culture should not be very high⁹⁷.
- A prefect could not usually apply death penalty in civil courts. However, the prefects of Judaea had this right of *jus gladii*, according to Josephus (and also according to the Gospels), confirming their specific role as "governors".
- The inscription from Caesarea being highly mutilated, nothing prevents to assume the existence of a dual title: *procurator praefectus* like the one found in Sardinia: *procurator Augusti and praefectus Sardiniae*. The study of the inscription from Caesarea⁹⁸ permits such a conclusion.

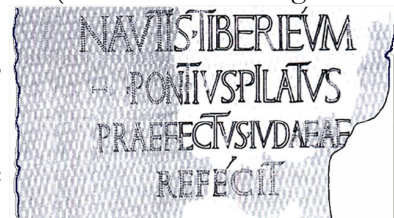


Fig. 2: Inscription from Caesarea

The complete reconstruction of this inscription is controversial⁹⁹, but the available space before *praefectus* implies the existence of a word from 3 to 5 letters. Latin inscriptions being written in a standard way (the name being always connected directly to the title), the missing word can only be the *nomen* of Pontius Pilate (which is already known) or a second title. Double titulatures: *tutor praefectus* have been found in the province of Brittany. The inscription from Caesarea could also contain a double titulature like *proc. praefectus* "proc[urator and] prefect" as in Sardinia. We also know a procurator-governor of Rhaetia

⁹⁶ C. SAULNIER - Histoire d'Israël
Paris 1985 Éd. Cerf pp. 235-236.

⁹⁷ M. TARPIN - L'organisation politique et administratives des cités d'Europe
in: *Pallas. Revue d'études antiques* n°80 (2009) Éd. Presses Universitaires du Mirail pp. 128-129.

⁹⁸ L. BOFFO - Les mentions épigraphiques des personnages cités par Luc
in: *Dossiers d'Archéologie* n°279 (janvier 2003) pp. 108-119.

⁹⁹ J.P. LEMONON - Ponce Pilate
Paris 2007 Éd. De l'Atelier pp. 23-33.

qualified (in 41 CE) as: *Procur(ator) Augustor(um) pro leg(ato) provinciai Raitiai et Vindelic(iai)*¹⁰⁰. Official inscriptions in Greek show that a governor (*hégemôn*) was both a prefect (*eparchos*), ensuring peacekeeping, and a procurator (*epitropos*) managing imperial properties. Historians have sometimes privileged one of the titles according to context, in addition, from Claudius (41-54), the title of procurator (administrative and financial responsibility) became more prestigious than the title of prefect (military and police responsibility)¹⁰¹.

We can therefore check thanks to a chronological reconstruction between 6 BCE and 9 CE, subject to the reservations above, that the events linked with the careers of Quirinius and Varus reported by Josephus, Luke the Evangelist and Roman authors are consistent and complementary. This chronological scheme allows a better understanding of the sequence of events. It appears that the decision to submit the Homonadeis and at the same time of avenging King Amyntas was taken in 6 BCE when the *via Sebaste* was completed. Varus [-47 9] who was 41 years old was appointed by Augustus to the prestigious post of governor of Syria because, although younger than Quirinius [-51 21], he had been consul in 13 BCE, one year before him, and belonged to Roman aristocracy. Quirinius, on the contrary, was a "new man (*homines novi*)" *came from the house which was the most obscure (...) not belonging to the old family of Sulpicii*, as recalled Tacitus (Annals III:23, 48). But he had proved his worth by a victory (to 21/20) in Libya on Marmarides [and Garamantes]¹⁰², and was appointed as governor of Cilicia to eliminate Isaurian brigands. Varus had to work with Quirinius making available some of his legions stationed in Syria, a collaboration facilitated by their common belonging to the family of Augustus. Quirinius was then appointed governor of Syria, where he continued his fight against the Itureans brigands. Approximately 3 months after Herod's death (26 January 1 BCE), Sabinus, a financial procurator arrived in Jerusalem to inventory royal properties. However simmering rebellions pushed Herod's sons claiming governor Varus, recently appointed (January 1, 1 BCE) to accelerate taking his office in order to settle the succession and submitting the rebels. Quirinius, who had completed his term and his war in Ituraea, therefore played no role in Jewish politics. In addition, Caius Caesar who was the designated successor of Augustus arrived in Syria after receiving full power (from July 1 BCE), which explains his brief foray into Jewish political life. Quirinius appointed proconsul of Asia (-1/1) and then rector of Caius Caesar when he led operations in Armenia (from 2 to 4 CE), did not play role anymore in Judea until his appointment in 6 CE as [Supreme] judge and censor of the people to settle the succession of King Herod Archelaus (in 7 CE).

Logical sequence of events enlightens some choices of former historians. Thus, Josephus has preserved facts having implications in the Jewish political life, mainly the maneuvers of Herodian princes to get power from Roman authorities. Roman historians, on the other hand, have retained only military actions from various representatives of the power of Rome and Luke the Evangelist has kept the important fact concerning the life of Jesus: the census of Quirinius (ordered by Augustus to show Rome's glory). These three sources of information (political, military and religious) are different in essence this is why they complement each other without crossing.

¹⁰⁰ F. HURLET – Rome et l'Occident (IIe siècle av. J.-C. – IIe siècle apr. J.-C)
Rennes 2009 Éd. Presses Universitaires de Rennes p. 48.

¹⁰¹ J.-P. LEMONON – Ponce Pilate
Paris 2007 Éd. Les éditions de l'Atelier pp. 45-59.

¹⁰² Works of Florus II:30; PLINE THE ELDER – Natural History V:5:6.

Dating the birth of Jesus

Dionysius the Little (470-544) is known as the inventor of the Anno Domini era, which is used to number the years of both the Gregorian calendar and the Julian calendar. He used it to identify the several Easters in his Easter table, but did not use it to date any historical event. When he devised his table, Julian calendar years were identified by naming the consuls who held office that year — he himself stated that the "present year" was "the consulship of Probus Junior", which he also stated was 525 years "since the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ". Because the anniversary of the Incarnation was 25 March, which was near Easter, a year that was 525 years "since the Incarnation" implied that 525 whole years were completed near that Easter. Consequently one year since the Incarnation would have meant 25 March 1 BC, meaning that Dionysius placed the Incarnation on 25 March 1 BC. Because the birth of Jesus was 9 calendar months later, Dionysius implied (but never stated) that Jesus was born 25 December 1 BC. Using his mathematical equations, Kepler believed he could predict the appearance of the night sky for any day in history, as seen from any place on earth. In December of 1603 he witnessed a Jupiter-Saturn-conjunction, followed by a conjunction of Jupiter-Mars. He then made a rapprochement with the star of the Magi thanks to a Hebrew text of Rabbi Abravanel: *For Jewish astrologers, the Messiah would come from a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces*. Kepler calculated whereas the same conjunction occurred three times in the same year of 7 BC: May 29, October 3 and 4 December. The repetition of this alignment is extremely rare, he concluded that careful observers of the sky as the Magi were able to notice it, he likened this event with the Star of Bethlehem and thus placed the Nativity in the year 7 BC in his book *De Stella Nova in Pede Serpentarii* (first published in 1605). In his 1605 thesis the Polish historian Laurentius Suslyga was the first to suggest that Christ was born around 4 BC, deriving this from the chronology of Herod the Great. Based on the coincidence of the lunar eclipse of 13 March 4 BC, just after the Fast of Esther of 12 March, Academician Wallon¹⁰³ concluded that the 37-year reign of Herod, having started in 40 BC were completed in 4 BC and therefore the birth of Jesus should be set at 25 December 7 BC. This dating without scientific rigor is yet (unfortunately) the choice of the French Academy¹⁰⁴.

The date of December 25 traditionally associated with the birth of Jesus is without historical (and biblical) foundation, and proposing to give birth to Jesus in 7 BC is to be ignorant of all the testimonies of historians of the first six centuries who located this birth in 2 BC. The date of December 25 is mentioned for the first time in 204 CE by Hippolytus of Rome (Commentary on Daniel IV:23). This date marked approximately the winter solstice for Romans and the beginning of longer days. It was chosen to symbolize the "birth of the unconquered sun", associated with a "Risen Jesus" by Justin (Apology I:67:8). The clearest evidence that Jesus was not born in December is that the shepherds were in the fields with their flocks on that night (Luke 2:8-12). In Israel the rainy season begins in autumn and at night flocks were sheltered. Kislev the 9th month of the Jewish calendar was cold and rainy (Jeremiah 36:22; Ezra 10:9,13) and Tebeth (December/January) recorded the lowest temperatures of the year, sometimes heights were covered by snow.

The testimonies of the historians of the first six centuries are unanimous in dating the birth of Jesus around 2 BCE:

¹⁰³ H. WALLON – Mémoire sur les années de Jésus-Christ
Paris 1858 Ed. Comptes Rendus Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.

¹⁰⁴ G. PICARD – La date de naissance de Jésus du point de vue romain
in: *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 139^e année, N. 3, 1995. pp. 799-807.

- Around 148-152, Justin fixed Jesus' birth 150 years earlier (Apology I:46:1).
- Around 170-180, Irenaeus of Lyons situated it in the 41st year of the reign of Octavian (Against Heresies III: 21:3).
- In 204, Hippolytus of Rome dated Jesus' birth on December 25 in the 42nd year of the reign of Augustus (Commentary on Daniel IV:23).
- In 231, Origen dates it in the 41st year of Augustus' reign 15 years before his death (Homilies on Luke 3:1).
- In 325, Eusebius fixes it in the 42nd year of Augustus' reign and 28 years after Cleopatra's death in 30 BCE (Ecclesiastical History I:5:2).
- In 357, Epiphanius dates it in the year when Augustus XIII and Silvanus were consuls (Panarion LI:22:3).
- In 418, Paul Orosius dates it in the year 752 of the founding of Rome (Histories against the pagans VI:22.1).

Clement of Alexandria (The Stromata I:21:145) place the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (December 31, 192 CE) and Tertullian (Against the Jews VIII:11:75) place it in the 41st year of the reign of Augustus¹⁰⁵ [which began from the second triumvirate of October 43 BCE, made official a few weeks later, according to Appian (Civil Wars IV:5-7), by the law *lex Titia* on November 27, 43 BCE] and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (August 29, 30 BCE)¹⁰⁶. By combining these data, the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE in a period between September 1 and October 30.

If Christian writers, who were at the center of violent polemics were such poor historians, as some claim, why is it that their opponents do not have singled out for a "mistake" as easy to detect at that time? If this date was false, it could easily been challenged by historians opponents to Christians (many at that time). Indeed, Christians claimed that Jesus was born during a general registration. At the beginning of our era under Augustus they were carried out every 5 years in the Roman world. It reads: *Now in those days a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited earth to be registered* (Luke 2:1) which therefore places the birth of Jesus during a census decreed by Augustus. Luke refers to a record or an inventory made for determining, among other things: the number of citizens and allies under arms in the words of *Breviarium* and not to an imperial edict for preparing the census tax. In addition, from 18 BCE the census also extended to non-Romans, municipia or colonies of Roman law, as shown in the *lex Irnitana*¹⁰⁷. These censuses are evidenced by the Roman historian Dio Cassius, except that one of 2 BCE, because the part of his history covering the period from 6 BCE to 4 CE has unfortunately been lost. This chronological scheme involves a census in 2 BCE, because the next census is dated on June 4 CE (Cassius Dio LV:13:1-4) and the last one in 14 CE. The general census of Luke in 2 BCE is in agreement with the Roman history¹⁰⁸. On the contrary, the local census dated in 7 CE by Josephus does not fit the timeline of general census ordered by Augustus. Since the census of Apamea by Quirinius concerned people and was made in Syria, while the one described by Josephus was a census of goods (to liquidate the possessions of Archelaus) made in Judea, they have no common point, neither in their purpose, or in the area covered. The census of Apamea must be reconciled with that one of Luke.

¹⁰⁵ Ancient writers reckoned the reign of Augustus not from January 27 BCE, but from October 43 BCE when Octavian, later Augustus, formed the second triumvirate. The 42nd year of Augustus began (at the end of his 41st year), so in October 2 BCE.

¹⁰⁶ G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'Empire romain
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ C. NICOLET - L'inventaire du monde
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard p. 147.

¹⁰⁸ T. CORBISHLEY - Quirinius and the Census : a Re-study of the Evidence
in: Klio 29 (1936) pp. 90-92.

Two elements of *Res Gestae* accredit indirectly an inventory in 2 BCE. If Augustus can boast having given (some *donativa*) 60 deniers to 200,000 persons during his 13th consulate in 2 BCE (*Res Gestae* 15), it is because these persons have been recensed¹⁰⁹, otherwise how Augustus could predict how many? Augustus also boasts of giving 600 million sesterces to the soldiers of Italy and 260 million to the soldiers in provinces (*Gestae Res* 16). The money given to soldiers in consulates of Lucius Caninius and Quintus Fabricius coincides with the inventory of 2 BCE. Historian Paul Orosius (in 417 CE) also place the census of Augustus quoted by Luke in the year 752 of Rome (*Histories against the Pagans* VI:22,1; VII:3-4) or 2 BCE, just before Caius Caesar's departure to the East in 1 BCE. The census of 2 BCE was special because it was an 'inventory of the world'. As the program of this inventory (*breviarium totius imperii*) was posted in 2 BCE (*Res Gestae* §35) in the temple of Mars Ultor on May 12, the census would begin after that date and the birth of Jesus therefore took place after June 2 BCE.

Although Roman emperors were not kings [officially], historians of that time, however, spoke of their years of reign¹¹⁰, as Evangelist Luke does. Cassius Dio (*Roman History* LVIII:27:1-28:5) dated exactly the reign of Tiberius indicating that he ruled the empire 22 years 7 months and 7 days, which places the beginning of his reign from the death of Augustus on August 19, 14 CE, and not from the time of his nomination by the Roman Senate on September 17, 14 CE. Tacitus (*Annals* I:5:1) also confirms that Tiberius became master of the empire at the death of Augustus. Josephus (according to his reckoning, Augustus began to rule after the death of Caesar in 44 BCE) knows this way of dating emperors (*Jewish War* II:168). The first year of Tiberius therefore runs from August 19, 14 CE to August 18, 15 CE. This way of counting the years was usual at that time. Tacitus (*Annals* IV:1:1), for example, parallels the 9th year of Tiberius (from August 19, 22 CE to August 19, 23 CE) with the consulates of C. Asinius and C. Antistius, which are dated from January 1, 23 CE December to 31, 23 CE. Suetonius (*Tiberius* 73:2), after dated the death of Tiberius on March 16, 37 CE, added that he was in his 23rd year of his reign (from August 19, 36 CE to August 18, 37 CE). Suetonius (*Claude* 2:1, 10:1, 45:2) further states that Claude was born on August 1, under the consulates of Julius Antonius and Fabius Africanus (in 10 BCE), he became emperor in his 50th year (August 1, 40 CE July 31, 41 CE) and died on October 12, 54 CE in his 64th year (August 1, 54 CE July 31, 55 CE), which was year 14 of his reign (January 24, 54 CE to January 23, 55 CE).

For contemporaries of Luke, the 15th year of Tiberius therefore was running from August 19, 28 CE to August 18, 29 CE. According to this reckoning, the baptism of Jesus, 6 months after the beginning of the preaching of John the Baptist (Luke 1:36), is therefore to be between February 19, 29 CE and August 18, 29 CE. By inference, if Jesus was 30 years old at this event, his birth must have occurred during the period between February 19 and August 18 in 2 BCE. As Luke says that Jesus was "about 30 years", the word "about", translated from the Greek word *hosei* supposes an approximation. When the classical authors, such as Xenophon (*Anabasis* II:6:20), use this particular expression *hos triakonta* "he was as 30 years," translators render it as "he was around 30." The imprecision of term is usually understood as the nearest whole number, for example: "about 8 days (Luke 9:28)" or "about the 6th hour (Luke 23:44)." For years counting the term "about" means that the number of months can be ignored, there is no exception in the biblical text. Thus "about 30 years" implies a period of "30 years +/- 6 months." This gap of more or less 6 months (12 months at the most) can be explained by two types of counting found in the Bible: after

¹⁰⁹ C. NICOLET - *L'inventaire du monde*
Paris 1988 Éd. Fayard pp. 144,278 n.28.

¹¹⁰ J. FINEGAN - *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*
Massachusetts 1999 Ed. Hendrickson pp. 340,341.

the Exodus appears a religious reckoning starting the new year from Nisan (Exodus 12:2) and a secular reckoning (agricultural) shifted by 6 months, which accounts it from Tishri. In addition, the Seleucid calendar in Syria was shifted by 6 months compared with that of Babylonia. Thus, the expression of "about 100 years" (Romans 4:19) or "100 years +/- 6 months" refers to the "100 years" of Genesis 17:17.

Clement of Alexandria places the birth of Jesus 194 years before the death of Commodus (December 31, 192 CE) and Tertullian locates it in the 41st year of Augustus's reign, which started at his second triumvirate in late October 43 BCE officialized few weeks later, according to Appian (Civil Wars IV:5-7) by the law *lex Titia* (November 27, 43 BCE), and 28 years after the death of Cleopatra (August 29, 30 BCE)¹¹¹. By matching all these information the birth of Jesus must be fixed in 2 BCE within the period between September 1 and October 30. This dating is consistent with the text of Luke 3:1-3, 21-23, which states that John the Baptist began preaching and baptized Jesus (presented as Messiah) at the age of 30 years, in the 15th year the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

A chronological detail from the book of Luke allows fixing the exact date of Jesus' birth. Indeed, John the Baptist was born 6 months before Jesus (Luke 1:26) and his conception was announced at the Temple 9 months earlier. This announcement may be dated toward June, because this was the class of Abijah, to which belonged Zechariah father of John the Baptist, who officiated at this time of the year (Luke 1:5-13). The name and the order of classes of priests are very old (1 Chronicles 24:7-18). According to Josephus (Jewish Antiquities VII:365-366), each class officiated a week from Sabbath to next Sabbath (1 Chronicles 9:25 2 Chronicles 23:8), and the Mishna (Sukka 4:7) states that during the great annual festivals the 24 classes served together, which synchronised both cycles of 24 weeks, the first beginning on Nisan and the second on Tishri. Manuscripts found at Qumran (4Q321) confirm the seasonal order of such a calendar¹¹². The turnover of classes of priests was cyclic on the year, this system worked until the destruction of the Temple in September 70 CE (Tosephta Taanit 2:10 b)¹¹³. The cycle of 24 classes which lasted 24 weeks coincided with the lunar year, as the 1st cycle began after the Passover (Nisan 14 to 21) and lasted 24 weeks and the 2nd cycle began after the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 10 to 21). A period of 6 lunar months lasts exactly 177 days (= 6x29,5), or approximately 25 weeks (25x7 = 175 days). The religious year began on 1 Nisan. As the weeks go from Saturday to Saturday, the 8 days of Passover (Nisan 14 to 21) were overlapping 1 or 2 weeks (depending on the year). Similarly, the calendar year started on 1 Tishri, thus the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 10 to 21) covered 2 or 3 weeks. Therefore, the 24 classes of priests officiated all together on average 2 weeks during the two major festivals (Passover Nisan 14 to 21 and Feast of Tabernacles starting with Yom Kippur from 10 to 21 Tishri), since the solar year of 365 days is 52 weeks (= 24x2 + 2x2).

The conception of John the Baptist occurs after the announcement during the office of Abijah class and therefore at the beginning of the next class that one of Jeshua. The conception of Jesus is placed 3 months before the end of the gestation of John the Baptist (Luke 1:56). The birth of John the Baptist therefore precedes exactly 6 months that one of Jesus.

Synchronized list of classes of priests:

¹¹¹ G. GOYAU – Chronologie de l'Empire romain
Paris 2007 Éd. Errance p. 7.

¹¹² M. WISE, M. ABEGG, E. COOK – Les manuscrits de la mer Morte
Paris 2001 Éd. Plon pp. 388-398.

¹¹³ J. BONSIRVEN – Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siècles
Roma 1955 Ed. Pontificio Istituto Biblico p. 264.

Class of priests	Month	Class of priests	Month
23 Delaiah	[1] Nisan	23 Delaiah	[7] Tishri
24 Maaziah	≈ April	24 Maaziah	≈ October
<i>Feast of Passover</i>		<i>Feast of Tabernacles</i>	
All classes		All classes	
1 Jehoiarib		1 Jehoiarib	
2 Jedaiah	[2] Iyyar	2 Jedaiah	[8] Heshwan
3 Harim	≈ May	3 Harim	≈ November
4 Seorim		4 Seorim	
5 Malchijah		5 Malchijah	
6 Mijamin	[3] Siwan	6 Mijamin	[9] Kislev
7 Haqqoz	≈ June	7 Haqqoz	≈ December
8 Abijah		8 Abijah	
9 Jeshua		9 Jeshua	
10 Shecaniah	[4] Tammuz	10 Shecaniah	[10] Tebeth
11 Eliashib	≈ July	11 Eliashib	≈ January
12 Jakim		12 Jakim	
13 Huppah		13 Huppah	
14 Jeshebab	[5] Ab	14 Jeshebab	[11] Shebat
15 Bilgah	≈ August	15 Bilgah	≈ February
16 Immer		16 Immer	
17 Hezir		17 Hezir	
18 Happizez	[6] Elul	18 Happizez	[12] Adar
19 Pethahiah	≈ September	19 Pethahiah	≈ March
20 Jehezqel		20 Jehezqel	
21 Jachin		21 Jachin	
22 Gamul		22 Gamul	

These previous calendrical information must be combined with the following constraints (which imposes a chronological framework): Sabbaths coincide with Saturdays, Tishri 1 coincides with the 1st visible crescent just after autumn equinox (September 25 at the time), the duration of human gestation is on average 273 days¹¹⁴ (one can assume that pregnancies of John the Baptist and Jesus took place normally) and Jesus presented in the Temple of Jerusalem 40 days after his birth. Such information require the following chronological reconstitution:

- Spring equinox in 3 BCE: March 23¹¹⁵.
- 1st lunar crescent¹¹⁶ after spring equinox (= 1st Nisan): Tuesday April 16, 3 BCE.
- Passover on 14 Nisan: Monday April 29, 3 BCE.
- Start of the first cycle of 24 classes on 26 Nisan: Saturday May 11, 3 BCE.
- Class of Abijah (8th week), beginning on 16 Siwan: Saturday June 29, 3 BCE.
- Class of Jeshua (9th week), beginning on 23 Siwan: Saturday July 5, 3 BCE. Beginning of the gestation of John the Baptist (born 273 days later).
- Yom kippur on 10 Tishri: Saturday October 19 (3 BCE).
- Start of the second cycle of 24 classes on 24 Tishri: Saturday November 2, 3 BCE.
- Angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus 6 months after the one of John the Baptist on 23 Kislev: Monday December 30, 3 BCE (2 days before the Festival of Dedication). Beginning of the gestation of Jesus (born 273 days later).
- Birth of John the Baptist on 1 Nisan: Saturday April 5, 2 BCE.
- Birth of Jesus on 1 Tishri: Monday September 29, 2 BCE (after 273 days of gestation).

¹¹⁴ C. NAUDIN, N. GRUMBACH – Larousse médical Paris 1995 Éd. Larousse p. 449.

¹¹⁵ <http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/temps/saisons.php>

¹¹⁶ http://www.imcce.fr/fr/grandpublic/phenomenes/phases_lune/index.php

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO AN ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
THROUGH SYNCHRONISMS DATED BY ASTRONOMY

April -3	16	1	Nisan	Tuesday				1 st lunar crescent after spring equinox
	17	2		Wednesday				
	18	3		Thursday				
	19	4		Friday				
	20	5		Saturday	24			
	21	6		Sunday				
	22	7		Monday				
	23	8		Tuesday				
	24	9		Wednesday				
	25	10		Thursday				
	26	11		Friday				
	27	12		Saturday	T			All classes of priests (Total)
	28	13		Sunday				
	29	14		Monday				Passover
May -3	30	15	Iyyar	Tuesday				
	1	16		Wednesday				
	2	17		Thursday				
	3	18		Friday				
	4	19		Saturday	T			
	5	20		Sunday				
	6	21		Monday				
	7	22		Tuesday				
	8	23		Wednesday				
	9	24		Thursday				
	10	25		Friday				
	11	26		Saturday	1			Class of Jehoiarib (1Chronicles 24:7-18)
	12	27		Sunday				
	13	28		Monday				
	14	29		Tuesday				
	15	30		Wednesday				
	16	1	Iyyar	Thursday				
	17	2		Friday				
	18	3		Saturday	2			Class of Jedaiah
	19	4		Sunday				
	20	5		Monday				
	21	6		Tuesday				
	22	7		Wednesday				
	23	8		Thursday				
	24	9		Friday				
	25	10		Saturday	3			Class of Harim
	26	11		Sunday				
	27	12		Monday				
	28	13		Tuesday				
	29	14		Wednesday				
	30	15		Thursday				
	31	16		Friday				
June -3	1	17	Iyyar	Saturday	4			Class of Seorim
	2	18		Sunday				
	3	19		Monday				
	4	20		Tuesday				
	5	21		Wednesday				
	6	22		Thursday				
	7	23		Friday				
	8	24		Saturday	5			Class of Malchijah
	9	25		Sunday				
	10	26		Monday				
	11	27		Tuesday				
	12	28		Wednesday				
	13	29		Thursday				
	14	1		Friday				
	15	2	Siwan	Saturday	6			Class of Mijamin
	16	3		Sunday				
	17	4		Monday				
	18	5		Tuesday				
	19	6		Wednesday				
	20	7		Thursday				
	21	8		Friday				
	22	9		Saturday	7			Class of Haqqoz
	23	10		Sunday				
	24	11		Monday				
	25	12		Tuesday				
	26	13		Wednesday				

	27	14	Thursday	8			
	28	15	Friday				
	29	16	Saturday				Class of Abijah
	30	17	Sunday				
July -3	1	18	Monday	9			
	2	19	Tuesday				
	3	20	Wednesday				
	4	21	Thursday				Angel Gabriel announces the birth
	5	22	Friday		0		of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-23)
	6	23	Saturday		1	1	Class of Jeshua
	7	24	Sunday		2		
	8	25	Monday		3		
	9	26	Tuesday		4		
	10	27	Wednesday		5		
	11	28	Thursday		6		
	12	29	Friday		7		
	13	30	Saturday		8		Class of Shecaniah
	14	1	Sunday	10	9		
Tammuz	15	2	Monday		10		
	16	3	Tuesday		11		
	17	4	Wednesday		12		
	18	5	Thursday		13		
	19	6	Friday		14		
	20	7	Saturday		15		Class of Eliashib
	21	8	Sunday		16		
	22	9	Monday		17		
	23	10	Tuesday		18		
	24	11	Wednesday		19		
	25	12	Thursday		20		
	26	13	Friday		21		
	27	14	Saturday		22		Class of Jakim
	28	15	Sunday	11	23		
August -3	29	16	Monday		24		
	30	17	Tuesday		25		
	31	18	Wednesday		26		
	1	19	Thursday		27		
	2	20	Friday		28		
	3	21	Saturday		29		Class of Huppah
	4	22	Sunday		30	2	
	5	23	Monday		31		
	6	24	Tuesday		32		
	7	25	Wednesday		33		
	8	26	Thursday		34		
	9	27	Friday		35		
	10	28	Saturday		36		Class of Jeshebab
	11	29	Sunday	12	37		
Ab	12	1	Monday		38		
	13	2	Tuesday		39		
	14	3	Wednesday		40		
	15	4	Thursday		41		
	16	5	Friday		42		
	17	6	Saturday		43		Class of Bilgah
	18	7	Sunday		44		
	19	8	Monday		45		
	20	9	Tuesday		46		
	21	10	Wednesday		47		
	22	11	Thursday		48		
	23	12	Friday		49		
	24	13	Saturday		50		Class of Immer
September -3	25	14	Sunday	13	51		
	26	15	Monday		52		
	27	16	Tuesday		53		
	28	17	Wednesday		54		
	29	18	Thursday		55		
	30	19	Friday		56		
	31	20	Saturday		57		Class of Hezir
	1	21	Sunday	14	58		
	2	22	Monday		59		
	3	23	Tuesday		60	3	
	4	24	Wednesday		61		
	5	25	Thursday		62		
	6	26	Friday		63		
	7	27	Saturday		64		Class of Happizez

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO AN ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
THROUGH SYNCHRONISMS DATED BY ASTRONOMY

	8	28	Elul	Sunday	65		
	9	29		Monday	66		
	10	30		Tuesday	67		
	11	1		Wednesday	68		
	12	2		Thursday	69		
	13	3		Friday	70		
	14	4		Saturday	19	71	Class of Pethahiah
	15	5		Sunday	72		
	16	6		Monday	73		
	17	7		Tuesday	74		
	18	8		Wednesday	75		
	19	9		Thursday	76		
	20	10		Friday	77		
	21	11		Saturday	20	78	Class of Jehezqel
	22	12		Sunday	79		
	23	13		Monday	80		
	24	14		Tuesday	81		
	25	15		Wednesday	82		Autumn equinox
	26	16		Thursday	83		
	27	17		Friday	84		
October -3	28	18		Saturday	21	85	Class of Jachin
	29	19		Sunday	86		
	30	20		Monday	87		
	1	21		Tuesday	88		
	2	22		Wednesday	89	4	
	3	23		Thursday	90		
	4	24		Friday	91		
	5	25		Saturday	22	92	Class of Gamul
	6	26		Sunday	93		
	7	27		Monday	94		
	8	28	Tishri	Tuesday	95		
	9	29		Wednesday	96		New moon
	10	1		Thursday	97		
	11	2		Friday	98		
	12	3		Saturday	23	99	Class of Delaiah
	13	4		Sunday	100		
	14	5		Monday	101		
	15	6		Tuesday	102		
	16	7		Wednesday	103		
	17	8		Thursday	104		
	18	9		Friday	105		
	19	10		Saturday	T	106	Yom kippur
	20	11		Sunday	107		
	21	12		Monday	108		
	22	13		Tuesday	109		
	23	14		Wednesday	110		
	24	15		Thursday	111		
	25	16		Friday	112		
	26	17		Saturday	T	113	
	27	18		Sunday	114		
November -3	28	19		Monday	115		
	29	20		Tuesday	116		
	30	21		Wednesday	117		
	31	22		Thursday	118		
	1	23		Friday	119	5	
	2	24		Saturday	1	120	Class of Jehoiarib
	3	25		Sunday	121		
	4	26		Monday	122		
	5	27		Tuesday	123		
	6	28		Wednesday	124		
	7	29	Heshvan	Thursday	125		
	8	30		Friday	126		
	9	1		Saturday	2	127	Class of Jedaiah
	10	2		Sunday	128		
	11	3		Monday	129		
	12	4		Tuesday	130		
	13	5		Wednesday	131		
	14	6		Thursday	132		
	15	7		Friday	133		
	16	8		Saturday	3	134	Class of Harim
	17	9		Sunday	135		
	18	10		Monday	136		
	19	11		Tuesday	137		

	20	12		Wednesday		138		
	21	13		Thursday		139		
	22	14		Friday		140		
	23	15		Saturday	4	141		Class of Seorim
	24	16		Sunday		142		
	25	17		Monday		143		
	26	18		Tuesday		144		
	27	19		Wednesday		145		
	28	20		Thursday		146		
	29	21		Friday		147		
December -3	30	22		Saturday	5	148	6	Class of Malchijah
	1	23		Sunday		149		
	2	24		Monday		150		
	3	25		Tuesday		151		
	4	26		Wednesday		152		
	5	27		Thursday		153		
	6	28		Friday		154		
	7	29		Saturday	6	155		Class of Mijamin
	8	1	Kislev	Sunday		156		
	9	2		Monday		157		
	10	3		Tuesday		158		
	11	4		Wednesday		159		
	12	5		Thursday		160		
	13	6		Friday		161		
	14	7		Saturday	7	162		Class of Haqqoz
	15	8		Sunday		163		
	16	9		Monday		164		
	17	10		Tuesday		165		
	18	11		Wednesday		166		
	19	12		Thursday		167		
	20	13		Friday		168		
	21	14		Saturday	8	169		Class of Abijah
	22	15		Sunday		170		
	23	16		Monday		171		
	24	17		Tuesday		172		
	25	18		Wednesday		173		
	26	19		Thursday		174		
	27	20		Friday		175		
	28	21		Saturday	9	176		Class of Jeshua
	29	22		Sunday		177		
January -2	30	23		Monday		178	1	Angel Gabriel announces the birth
	31	24		Tuesday		179	2	of Jesus 6 months after that
	1	25		Wednesday		180	3	of John the Baptist (Luke 1:36)
	2	26		Thursday		181	4	
	3	27		Friday		182	5	
	4	28		Saturday	10	183	6	Class of Shecaniah
	5	29		Sunday		184	7	
	6	30		Monday		185	8	
	7	1	Tebeth	Tuesday		186	9	
	8	2		Wednesday		187	10	
	9	3		Thursday		188	11	
	10	4		Friday		189	12	
	11	5		Saturday	11	190	13	Class of Eliashib
	12	6		Sunday		191	14	
	13	7		Monday		192	15	
	14	8		Tuesday		193	16	
	15	9		Wednesday		194	17	
	16	10		Thursday		195	18	
	17	11		Friday		196	19	
	18	12		Saturday	12	197	20	Class of Jakim
	19	13		Sunday		198	21	
	20	14		Monday		199	22	
	21	15		Tuesday		200	23	
	22	16		Wednesday		201	24	
	23	17		Thursday		202	25	
	24	18		Friday		203	26	
	25	19		Saturday	13	204	27	Class of Huppah
	26	20		Sunday		205	28	
	27	21		Monday		206	29	
	28	22		Tuesday		207	30	
	29	23		Wednesday		208	31	
	30	24		Thursday		209	32	
	31	25		Friday		210	33	

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO AN ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
THROUGH SYNCHRONISMS DATED BY ASTRONOMY

February -2	1	26	Shebat	Saturday	14	211	34	Class of Jeshebab
	2	27		Sunday		212	35	
	3	28		Monday		213	36	
	4	29		Tuesday		214	37	
	5	1		Wednesday		215	38	
	6	2	Adar	Thursday		216	39	
	7	3		Friday		217	40	
	8	4		Saturday	15	218	41	Class of Bilgah
	9	5		Sunday		219	42	
	10	6		Monday		220	43	
	11	7		Tuesday		221	44	
	12	8		Wednesday		222	45	
	13	9		Thursday		223	46	
	14	10		Friday		224	47	
	15	11		Saturday	16	225	48	Class of Immer
	16	12		Sunday		226	49	
	17	13		Monday		227	50	
	18	14		Tuesday		228	51	
	19	15		Wednesday		229	52	
	20	16		Thursday		230	53	
	21	17		Friday		231	54	
	22	18		Saturday	17	232	55	Class of Hezir
	23	19		Sunday		233	56	
	24	20		Monday		234	57	
	25	21		Tuesday		235	58	
	26	22		Wednesday		236	59	
	27	23		Thursday		237	60	
	28	24		Friday		238	61	
March -2	1	25		Saturday	18	239	62	Class of Happizez
	2	26		Sunday		240	63	
	3	27		Monday		241	64	
	4	28		Tuesday		242	65	
	5	29		Wednesday		243	66	
	6	30		Thursday		244	67	
	7	1	Nisan	Friday		245	68	
	8	2		Saturday	19	246	69	Class of Pethahiah
	9	3		Sunday		247	70	
	10	4		Monday		248	71	
	11	5		Tuesday		249	72	
	12	6		Wednesday		250	73	
	13	7		Thursday		251	74	
	14	8		Friday		252	75	
	15	9		Saturday	20	253	76	Class of Jehezqel
	16	10		Sunday		254	77	
	17	11		Monday		255	78	
	18	12		Tuesday		256	79	
	19	13		Wednesday		257	80	
	20	14		Thursday		258	81	
	21	15		Friday		259	82	
	22	16		Saturday	21	260	83	Class of Jachin
	23	17		Sunday		261	84	Spring equinox
	24	18		Monday		262	85	
	25	19		Tuesday		263	86	
	26	20		Wednesday		264	87	
	27	21		Thursday		265	88	
	28	22		Friday		266	89	
April -2	29	23		Saturday	22	267	90	Class of Gamul
	30	24		Sunday		268	91	
	31	25		Monday		269	92	
	1	26		Tuesday		270	93	
	2	27		Wednesday		271	94	
	3	28		Thursday		272	95	
	4	29		Friday		273	96	Birth of John the Baptist
	5	1	Nisan	Saturday	23	1	97	Class of Delaiah
	6	2		Sunday			98	
	7	3		Monday			99	
	8	4		Tuesday			100	
	9	5		Wednesday			101	
	10	6		Thursday			102	
	11	7		Friday			103	
	12	8		Saturday	24		104	Class of Maaziah
	13	9		Sunday			105	
	14	10		Monday			106	

	15	11		Tuesday		107	
	16	12		Wednesday		108	
	17	13		Thursday		109	
	18	14		Friday		110	Passover
	19	15		Saturday	T	111	
	20	16		Sunday		112	
	21	17		Monday		113	
	22	18		Tuesday		114	
	23	19		Wednesday		115	
	24	20		Thursday		116	
	25	21		Friday		117	
	26	22		Saturday	1	118	Class of Jehoiarib
	27	23		Sunday		119	
	28	24		Monday		120	
	29	25		Tuesday		121	
	30	26		Wednesday		122	
May -2	1	27		Thursday		123	
	2	28		Friday		124	
	3	29		Saturday	2	125	Class of Jedaiah
	4	30		Sunday		126	
	5	1	Iyyar	Monday	2	127	
	6	2		Tuesday		128	
	7	3		Wednesday		129	
	8	4		Thursday		130	
	9	5		Friday		131	
	10	6		Saturday	3	132	Class of Harim
	11	7		Sunday		133	
	12	8		Monday		134	Announce of <i>Brevarium</i> in Rome
	13	9		Tuesday		135	
	14	10		Wednesday		136	
	15	11		Thursday		137	
	16	12		Friday		138	
	17	13		Saturday	4	139	Class of Seorim
	18	14		Sunday		140	
	19	15		Monday		141	
	20	16		Tuesday		142	
	21	17		Wednesday		143	
	22	18		Thursday		144	
	23	19		Friday		145	
	24	20		Saturday	5	146	Class of Malchijah
	25	21		Sunday		147	
	26	22		Monday		148	
	27	23		Tuesday		149	
	28	24		Wednesday		150	
	29	25		Thursday		151	
	30	26		Friday		152	
	31	27		Saturday	6	153	Class of Mijamin
June -2	1	28		Sunday		154	
	2	29		Monday		155	
	3	1	Siwan	Tuesday	3	156	
	4	2		Wednesday		157	
	5	3		Thursday		158	
	6	4		Friday		159	
	7	5		Saturday	7	160	Class of Haqqoz
	8	6		Sunday		161	
	9	7		Monday		162	
	10	8		Tuesday		163	
	11	9		Wednesday		164	
	12	10		Thursday		165	
	13	11		Friday		166	
	14	12		Saturday	8	167	Class of Abijah
	15	13		Sunday		168	
	16	14		Monday		169	
	17	15		Tuesday		170	
	18	16		Wednesday		171	
	19	17		Thursday		172	
	20	18		Friday		173	
	21	19		Saturday	9	174	Class of Jeshua
	22	20		Sunday		175	
	23	21		Monday		176	
	24	22		Tuesday		177	
	25	23		Wednesday		178	
	26	24		Thursday		179	

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO AN ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
THROUGH SYNCHRONISMS DATED BY ASTRONOMY

	27	25		Friday		180	
	28	26		Saturday	10	181	Class of Shecaniah
	29	27		Sunday		182	
	30	28		Monday		183	
July -2	1	29	Tammuz	Tuesday		184	
	2	30		Wednesday		185	
	3	1		Thursday	4	186	
	4	2		Friday		187	
	5	3		Saturday	11	188	Class of Eliashib
	6	4		Sunday		189	
	7	5		Monday		190	
	8	6		Tuesday		191	
	9	7		Wednesday		192	
	10	8		Thursday		193	
	11	9		Friday		194	
	12	10		Saturday	12	195	Class of Jakim
	13	11		Sunday		196	
	14	12		Monday		197	
	15	13		Tuesday		198	
	16	14		Wednesday		199	
	17	15		Thursday		200	
	18	16		Friday		201	
	19	17		Saturday	13	202	Class of Huppah
	20	18		Sunday		203	
	21	19		Monday		204	
	22	20		Tuesday		205	
	23	21		Wednesday		206	
	24	22		Thursday		207	
	25	23		Friday		208	
	26	24		Saturday	14	209	Class of Jeshebab
	27	25		Sunday		210	
	28	26		Monday		211	
	29	27		Tuesday		212	
	30	28		Wednesday		213	
	31	29		Thursday		214	
August -2	1	1	Ab	Friday	5	215	
	2	2		Saturday	15	216	Class of Bilgah
	3	3		Sunday		217	
	4	4		Monday		218	
	5	5		Tuesday		219	
	6	6		Wednesday		220	
	7	7		Thursday		221	
	8	8		Friday		222	
	9	9		Saturday	16	223	Class of Immer
	10	10		Sunday		224	
	11	11		Monday		225	
	12	12		Tuesday		226	
	13	13		Wednesday		227	
	14	14		Thursday		228	
	15	15		Friday		229	
	16	16		Saturday	17	230	Class of Hezir
	17	17		Sunday		231	
	18	18		Monday		232	
	19	19		Tuesday		233	
	20	20		Wednesday		234	
	21	21		Thursday		235	
	22	22		Friday		236	
	23	23		Saturday	18	237	Class of Happizez
	24	24		Sunday		238	
	25	25		Monday		239	
	26	26		Tuesday		240	
	27	27		Wednesday		241	
	28	28		Thursday		242	
	29	29		Friday		243	
	30	30		Saturday	19	244	Class of Pethahiah
	31	1		Sunday	6	245	
September -2	1	2	Elul	Monday		246	
	2	3		Tuesday		247	
	3	4		Wednesday		248	
	4	5		Thursday		249	
	5	6		Friday		250	
	6	7		Saturday	20	251	Class of Jehezqel
	7	8		Sunday		252	

	8	9		Monday		253	
	9	10		Tuesday		254	
	10	11		Wednesday		255	
	11	12		Thursday		256	
	12	13		Friday		257	
	13	14		Saturday	21	258	Class of Jachin
	14	15		Sunday		259	
	15	16		Monday		260	
	16	17		Tuesday		261	
	17	18		Wednesday		262	
	18	19		Thursday		263	
	19	20		Friday		264	
	20	21		Saturday	22	265	Class of Gamul
	21	22		Sunday		266	
	22	23		Monday		267	
	23	24		Tuesday		268	
	24	25		Wednesday		269	
	25	26		Thursday		270	Autumn equinox
	26	27		Friday		271	
	27	28		Saturday	23	272	Class of Delaiah
	28	29		Sunday		273	
	29	1	Tishri	Monday	1	1	Birth of Jesus
	30	2		Tuesday		2	
October -2	1	3		Wednesday		3	
	2	4		Thursday		4	
	3	5		Friday		5	
	4	6		Saturday	24	6	Class of Maaziah
	5	7		Sunday		7	
	6	8		Monday		8	
	7	9		Tuesday		9	
	8	10		Wednesday		10	Yom kippur
	9	11		Thursday		11	
	10	12		Friday		12	
	11	13		Saturday	T	13	
	12	14		Sunday		14	
	13	15		Monday		15	
	14	16		Tuesday		16	
	15	17		Wednesday		17	
	16	18		Thursday		18	
	17	19		Friday		19	
	18	20		Saturday	T	20	
	19	21		Sunday		21	
	20	22		Monday		22	
	21	23		Tuesday		23	
	22	24		Wednesday		24	
	23	25		Thursday		25	
	24	26		Friday		26	
	25	27		Saturday	1	27	Class of Jehoiarib
	26	28		Sunday		28	
	27	29		Monday		29	
	28	30		Tuesday		30	
	29	1	Heshvan	Wednesday	2	31	
	30	2		Thursday		32	
	31	3		Friday		33	
November -2	1	4		Saturday	2	34	Class of Jedaiah
	2	5		Sunday		35	
	3	6		Monday		36	
	4	7		Tuesday		37	
	5	8		Wednesday		38	
	6	9		Thursday		39	
	7	10		Friday		40	Presentation in the Temple
	8	11		Saturday	3		Class of Harim
	9	12		Sunday			
	10	13		Monday			
	11	14		Tuesday			
	12	15		Wednesday			
	13	16		Thursday			
	14	17		Friday			
	15	18		Saturday	4		Class of Seorim
	16	19		Sunday			
	17	20		Monday			
	18	21		Tuesday			
	19	22		Wednesday			

SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO AN ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
THROUGH SYNCHRONISMS DATED BY ASTRONOMY

	20	23		Thursday	5		
	21	24		Friday			
	22	25		Saturday			Class of Malchijah
	23	26		Sunday			(visit of the Magi)
	24	27		Monday			
	25	28		Tuesday			
	26	29		Wednesday			
	27	1	Kislev	Thursday	3		
	28	2		Friday	6		
	29	3		Saturday			Class of Mijamin
December -2	30	4		Sunday			
	1	5		Monday			
	2	6		Tuesday			
	3	7		Wednesday			
	4	8		Thursday			
	5	9		Friday	7		
	6	10		Saturday			Class of Haqqoz
	7	11		Sunday			
	8	12		Monday			
	9	13		Tuesday			
	10	14		Wednesday	8		
	11	15		Thursday			
	12	16		Friday			
	13	17		Saturday			Class of Abijah
	14	18		Sunday			
	15	19		Monday			
	16	20		Tuesday			
	17	21		Wednesday	9		Beginning of Saturnalia
	18	22		Thursday			
	19	23		Friday			
	20	24		Saturday			Class of Jeshua
	21	25		Sunday			Festival of Dedication
	22	26		Monday			
	23	27		Tuesday			Winter solstice
	24	28		Wednesday			
	25	29		Thursday	10		Murder of newborns
	26	30		Friday			Jesus is 3 months old
	27	1	Tebeth	Saturday			Class of Shecaniah
	28	2		Sunday			
	29	3		Monday			
January -1	30	4		Tuesday			
	31	5		Wednesday			
	1	6		Thursday	11		
	2	7		Friday			
	3	8		Saturday			Class of Eliashib
	4	9		Sunday			
	5	10		Monday			Fast of 10 Tebeth
	6	11		Tuesday	12		
	7	12		Wednesday			
	8	13		Thursday			
	9	14		Friday			Total lunar eclipse
	10	15		Saturday	13		Class of Jakim
	11	16		Sunday			
	12	17		Monday			
	13	18		Tuesday			
	14	19		Wednesday			
	15	20		Thursday	14		
	16	21		Friday			
	17	22		Saturday			Class of Huppah
	18	23		Sunday			
	19	24		Monday			
	20	25		Tuesday	15		
	21	26		Wednesday			
	22	27		Thursday			
	23	28		Friday			
	24	29		Saturday			Class of Jeshebab
	25	1	Shebat	Sunday			
	26	2		Monday			Death of Herod
	27	3		Tuesday			
	28	4		Wednesday			
	29	5		Thursday			
	30	6		Friday			
	31	7		Saturday			Class of Bilgah

According to the biblical text, Jesus was born in a family living in Nazareth of Galilee, which, due to the recording ordered by Augustus, had to move to Bethlehem, birthplace of Joseph (Luke 1:26-27, 2:1-4). Arriving in Bethlehem, in late September -2, Mary gave birth to Jesus on September 29 and in accordance with Jewish custom, up to the Temple in Jerusalem 40 days later (Luke 2:22, Leviticus 12:1-8) on Friday 7 November -2. Towards the end of November, astrologers, probably came from Babylon, homeland of astrology (Daniel 1:20; 2:27), reach Jerusalem. A few days later, they arrive and see the baby Jesus then go back to Babylon but without returning to Jerusalem. Late December, seeing that he had been duped, Herod decided to kill all newborns in Bethlehem. Jesus' parents, aware of the project, leave and go in Egypt. Although the event is terrible it involved only an insignificant town of Judea (Matthew 2:6), which would explain the silence of Josephus. In addition, the important festival of Saturnalia had to hide the murder of a few newborns. This Roman festival (*Saturnalia*), celebrated on December 17 at winter solstice (December 23), was known in Palestine, according to the Talmud (Aboda zara I:3, 8a), because it was near the Feast of the Dedication (John 10:22) on 25 Kislev (December 21 in -2). If Herod was unaware of the age of the child otherwise he knew when the star had appeared, at the beginning of the journey of astrologers. If they came from Babylonia on camels (between Babylon and Jerusalem there are about 1500 km by road), it had to spend between 2 and 4 months of journey (Ezra 7:7-9). At that time, 4 to 6 weeks were needed to travel the 500 kilometers from Babylon to Susa¹¹⁷. Therefore, if the Magi left Babylon at the time of Jesus' birth (September -2), they had come to Jerusalem in late November -2. Based on the estimated travel time and adding delay, Herod had to assess the age of the child with a comfortable safety margin of 2 years prior to order the killing of children (on December 25 in -2) because the child Jesus must be 3 months. The Gospels put in parallel his life with that of Moses, the latter being this age in the same circumstances (Acts 7:19-20). Jesus was born on 1 Tishri, 3 months later lead to December 26 in -2. Only the Gospels relate that event (Matthew 2:1-16) but the fact is plausible because leaders at the time often consulted Chaldeans (also called magi) to know the future¹¹⁸. Herod died shortly afterwards. Jesus' family was immediately informed and returned to live in Nazareth which allowed them to celebrate the Passover (Matthew 2:19-23, Luke 2:39-41) on April 7 in -1, since the parents of Jesus are presented in the Gospels as pious Jews. The date of Jesus' birth, set on September 29 in -2, is consistent with the two following chronological information from the well documented Julian reckoning:

- Jesus was born during a general registration of the Roman Empire. As they were quinquennial (every 5 years) and as these censuses at the beginning of our era are well known because they are dated respectively 4, 9 and 14 CE, it is easy to deduce that the previous one had to take place in summer 2 BCE. This coincidence is not accidental because on February 5, 2 BCE, Emperor Augustus became the "Father of the country" and decreed this opportunity to "inventory the world."
- Jesus being about 30 years in the year 15 of Tiberius, or in 29 CE, it is still easy to calculate the year of his birth in -2 (= 29 - 30, no year 0).

¹¹⁷ C. WAERZEGGERS – Babylonians in Susa

in: *Der Achämenidenhof The Achaemenid Court*. Ed. Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, p. 796.

¹¹⁸ TACITUS Annals II:27;2; XII:22:1. At the birth of Octavian, Nigidius Figulus predicted thanks to stars that he would receive a sovereign power and prevented his father who was afraid to kill him (CASSIUS DIO Roman History XLV:1:1-3). Herod made kill his son Antipater because the latter had wanted to rule preterm (FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS Jewish Antiquities XVII:185-191).