



And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

²(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

It foreshadows the list I mentioned a couple weeks ago which shows up a few verses later—Luke names all the people who thought they were in charge: Emperor, governor, local King and tetrarchs, even the high priests.

“And it came to pass.” Tennyson wrote in *In Memoriam*:

Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee, And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

All these people who thought they could order people around. Consider the hardship on a poor family ordered to go to their ancestral city for a census.

Now think about your life. Think about all the things that have come to pass:

Big and small. Both Heartaches and trendy fads, they all **come to pass** as Ms. Sally said so well. Bless her. Bless you. **And it came to pass:**

Whether challenges like the Great Depression or World War II,
Whether it is a challenge as huge as dealing with the violence in our world,

Whether it is a trend as inconsequential as bell-bottom jeans,
Whether it is the latest colors we wear or put on our walls (I remember earth

tones in the late 70’s – maybe you are young and remember how everything was
shades of grey in the 90’s. Some of us remember the shades of pink and turquoise

in the 60’s or that mustard yellow that was so popular about 1970. Some residues

remain with us of that institutional greyish green that graced interiors of almost

all schools and public buildings in the 50’s because it was supposed to “calm” us. **And it came to pass!** Thank God, like Caesar, and his dictates, **it came to pass.**

“And it came to pass” I’ve been having some fun using the phrase: “And it came to pass” that on that day Little Larry yet again did not get done everything on his “to do” list.

And It Came to Pass...

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 4th Sunday of Advent December 23, 2012
Rev. Larry Moffet, pastor

On Christmas Eve we will see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.
We will also hear the phrase: “And it came to pass.”

“And it came to pass” is more than ancient verbiage. It has a purpose. It gets our attention. It means “It just so happened that...”
or “this took place, but it wasn’t of ultimate importance.”
It expresses the idea “This is something we have to get through.”

I will always remember a casual conversation in my first congregation that took all of a sudden took on great importance. People were asking each other for favorite Bible phrase. Mr. Alvis said, “Jesus wept.” Charles said, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God.” Ms. Maxine, who taught Sunday School, said, “We love because God first loved us.” All eyes focused on Ms. Sally Belle who said with an intensity and a sparkle in her eye: ““And it came to pass”- Someone else whispered, “This too shall pass.”

Charles, age 20, said, “For real? That phrase doesn’t mean anything.” “Yes it does,” she said firmly. “I know that when a heartache comes, it will not stay; it comes – to pass. It’s not going to be around forever.”
What is your favorite verse in the Bible?

“And it came to pass,” Heb: *wayehi*, is in the Hebrew Bible 1204 times. It is no accident that Luke uses “And it came to pass” right before a names of people who thought they were in charge. They called the shots:

Translation: if Joseph and Mary can make it to Bethlehem, when “it came to pass” that Caesar decided everyone had to go to their ancestor’s town for his census, I too can figure out how to survive! My lists “come to pass.”

The opening phrase, though, is not the only time in the Christmas story that we hear the phrase “And it came to pass.”

Later, Luke uses it a **second** time. It is a transition from the way shepherds watched angels to the way they took action:

⁵And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem... It is a transition from fear to action. When the angel came to them, “they were ‘sore afraid.’ Do you remember what the angel said? ‘Fear not!’

Luke uses the phrase “And it came to pass” – this is a detail we would do well to notice – to mark the difference between Caesar and shepherds. Caesar barks unrealistic commands. Shepherds move from realistic fear to acceptance.

The Christmas story doesn’t stop there. Luke uses the phrase to get our attention a third time to show how shepherds act on what they already believe.

In their words there is not a hint of fear, not a hint of hesitation, just a willingness to believe what they have not yet seen.

They say, “This has come to pass let’s go see! “Listen again to the story: And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem... and see this thing which is come to pass...”

Luke gives “And it came to pass” a deep meaning. It’s not just a sigh. It becomes, in this Christmas story, an affirmation, a credo:

No longer is “And it came to pass” something to get over.

Now it describes how hearts are changing,

First the shepherds were filled with fear.

Then in a heartbeat, fear is transformed: “And it came to pass”

As the angels left them, they were ready to take action. Let’s go! Leave our flocks? Maybe one said, “you go – I’ll stay and watch our lambs.”

Can you look back and see some ways “it came to pass” in your life? Can you acknowledge transformation and – like the shepherds – take action to be a part of what has come to pass – and is coming to pass?

Can you live your life so that every phrase (even those that seem like mere conjunctions) have meaning?

That is Incarnation–Word made flesh. For you.
Because of you. In You.

“And it came to pass”

2000 Decembers Ago by Joel Lindsey

Did it feel like a night any different than at least a million before
Was there any rare expectation like there was some kind of something’ in store
Did the sky have to hold back the thunder, Did the moon find new reasons to glow
Could the children somehow sense the wonder 2000 Decembers Ago
Were the sheep as amazed as the shepherds at the new star that lite up the sky
Did the willow trees whisper excitement to the rivers and streams passing by
Did the joy ricochet off the mountains, ‘til it filled up the valleys below
Did all the world sense love abounding, 2000 Decembers Ago

Did the walls of the barn start to tremble with a glory they could not contain
Did anyone wake with the feeling of peace that they could not explain
Oh the love must have been overwhelming as it warmed everyone in its flow
For all of the earth is still telling of 2000 Decembers ago .

“And it came to pass.”

***THE GOSPEL JOHN 1:1-5, 14**

Inclusive Language version

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

²The Word was in the beginning with God.

³All things came into being through the Word,
and without the Word not one thing came into being.

In the Word was life,
and the life was the Light of all people.

⁵The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen this glory, full of grace and truth.

***THE GOSPEL LUKE 2:1-20**

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

²(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

³And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

⁷And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.¹⁰And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

¹²And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

¹⁵And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass...