

# *Roman Soldiers*

This position in the HOLY WALK is to aid all participants and guests and still maintain authenticity as grim, disagreeable, and domineering. They will be responsible for crowd control and emergency assistance.

**YOUR BIBLE REFERENCE:** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own town to register. (NIV Luke 2:3)

Isaiah 9:6-7

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD, Almighty will accomplish this.”

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR SOLDIERS:** Written in “The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times” by Ralph Gower. Mr. Gower said, “The Roman Army is of great importance in the Bible for it was this army that finally overcame the Jewish people, eventually scattering them so that they could not return to their land for two thousand years. Caesarea was the principal base for the Roman Army in Judea. The city had been built by Herod the Great for the Romans. Detachments of soldiers from Caesarea were normally on duty in Jerusalem (and probably Bethlehem). There was no difficulty in recruitment for wages, raised by local taxation, were reasonable—one denarius a day, food was reasonable—two weights per day, and on recruitment each soldier received an allotment of land, often near the borders of the Empire, where their experience would be supreme

value in case of invasion. Herod was given a contingent of Roman soldiers to help him consolidate his political power. Thereafter, he built up his own army of professional soldiers, mostly Idumaeans and Greek-Syrian mercenaries, who were loyal to him alone. Herod did not trust Jews, whose main function, in his view, was to pay taxes, and provide conscript labor for his building projects.”

Roman soldiers would be intolerant of the fanatical Jews—but tolerant of the quiet Jew. Soldiers can compel anyone to carry their burden for one mile.

**Tid-Bit Information:** Bethlehem is a small village, 5-6 miles south of Jerusalem. Land is hilly—with lots of rocks. Temperature can be 25 to 75 degrees. May through October no rain and December through March is the rainy season. On the road to Bethlehem you would see scrubby trees—oak, cedar, olive, and myrtle are some. Most people walk to Bethlehem from Jerusalem on a narrow winding road. One could possibly travel 15 miles on a good day. They would never travel on the Sabbath. Roads from Jericho to Jerusalem were very treacherous, steep, narrow, and lots of places for robbers to hide. In Bethlehem you could find many beggars too. Just east of Bethlehem you can see the white and chalky wilderness of Judea.

**COINS OF THE TIMES:** Roman coins-silver **denarius** (plural is denarii) was wages for 1 day of common labor. Greek coins-**drachma** is about the same as a denarius. Double drachma was used for paying the Temple tax. (No temple in Bethlehem) so this is why they would need money changers.

Jewish coin- **lepta** (translated the same as mite) is small in value (fraction of a penny) It would take about 80 lepta to equal 1 denarius. **Shekel** is an Old Testament term and it is possible to be used as a weight of silver or gold (4-5 oz). Herod had his own coins too. In Old Testament times people bought either by exchanging goods or by paying an agreed weight of silver or gold, for instance, a shekel is a weight, not a unit of currency. **Talent** was equal to 3,000 shekels.

## Roman Numerals:

Sym bol	I	V	X	L	C	D	M
Valu e	1	5	10	50	100	500	1000

Examples: IV=4

IX=9

XXXIV=34

XL=40

### **INTERACTION WITH ALL PARTICIPATES AND GUESTS:**

Soldiers, more than any other of the Cast, must walk a fine line of demeanor. Soldiers are to play the role of Caesar's and Herod's men (Herod – a man who would murder his wife, mother-in-law, brother-in-law and own son) and still assist guides, guests, villagers and be the emergency crew – always alert. A strong voice and stature are quite helpful. A soldier must be at least 18 years old.

All soldiers will be constantly on watch for any emergency – health or safety – problem in the crowd. Soldiers will be instructed on how to get first aid contact, and what exit paths and methods will be used. They will know who will be carrying two-way radios at the buses and in the village.

Soldiers will not allow any smoking or drinking anywhere on the property. They will be aware this is a city park and it is a religious pageant. It is not desired that we be involved in a liability or portray a poor example. This rule is for all Cast, workers, and guests. Soldiers will use common sense and enforce this rule.

All soldiers will be the contact person for any Guide or Villager who reports undesirable behavior of guest or cast. They will pull aside a person or persons for a little “chat” (the shape up or “bus” out type). They may detain them and let them join the group after the tax tent, or escort them back to the cookie tent (should be escorted by someone if not by soldier) to wait for their group – or put directly on the next bus. No one should allow these persons to spoil the experience of a whole group. Soldiers will not

acknowledge the little “games” some guest may want to play. Soldiers will stay aloof and firm. Soldiers will **NEVER STRIKE, WHIP, OR MAKE BODILY CONTACT WITH ANY GUEST.**

If a soldier sees an “ailing” person they may suggest rest – and then join another group if possible, or the soldier direct the person to transportation back to school. They will do what is necessary in the best interest of the guest.

Soldiers will always be aware of small children (remember they are one of the main reasons for this pageant – parents want to show their children the real meaning of Christmas). They will not harass parents of small children nor separate them from their parents. Soldiers will try not to upset children, but should this happen they should find a way to “make it all right”. This may mean taking them aside and removing the helmet to show them soldiers really are “good guys” or speak to them quietly, etc. Soldiers need to be loud and forceful but should be aware of the reaction of the guest. It is not the intention to frighten or cause distress. Soldiers may need to “tone it down” occasionally and remember to only give the illusion of carrying our orders.

**SOLDIERS AT THE BUSES** (2, at least): The first encounter with guests will be at the incoming buses. The soldiers will demand they get in family groups. They will divide the busload (Probably in half – considering families and groups on bus) and direct them to their family leader (Walking Guide). Soldiers will count off (as they exit bus) the number in the family and tell the Guide. They will assist the guests getting off the bus and get them in line in a “firm” manner. Bus soldiers may be informed by Bus Guides of a rowdy group or may note it themselves. The group may need “a talk” and consider the next Guide. Do not put such a group with a new or timid Guide. You have the option to call a specific person forward and discuss their “willingness” of the challenge. \*\*\*Soldiers may work at loading buses to go back to the high school, if needed.

**SOLDIERS IN THE REGISTRATION TENT** (2, at least): Families have come to Bethlehem to be registered so the Roman rule can impose **yet another tax**. Rulers want to be sure they have an accurate count and they are “getting all they can get” from the people – thus the family leader must register its family. Soldiers should stress if it is accurate, etc.

As a family comes to the tent one soldier will stop them at the entrance. He will be gruff, ask questions: Who? What? Where? When? Etc. This is also a crowd control tactic to know where people are on the path and how much to detain or hurry on a group...

There may be an enclosure (Jail) in this tent – to be able to detain people for various reasons—suspicious logo on clothing, suspicious behavior, slave labor, etc. These people will be released as group leaves for fear of having to feed or some such excuse.

**SOLDIERS AFTER THE HOUSE OF BENJAMIN** (2 at least): This is a crowd spacing station. Soldiers will pound on Benjamin’s House to have the family exit. Have family line up in two lines and check that everyone has their scrolls and get information, may even confiscate money from the Guide, etc.—harass a bit (**No bodily contact**) and eventually let them go into the Village when first shop opens.

**SOLDIERS IN THE VILLAGE** (As many as possible): The soldiers will keep groups moving forward through the village as soon as space is opened at the next stop. No group should stay longer than 2 to 3 minutes. To see ID’s (Scrolls) can be demanded from families at any time. They can order families to “stand aside” while they pass. Families do not necessarily have to stay in line—but can be ordered as a group to move from one area to another—just to keep groups moving forward. Soldiers will look ahead at the holding tent or the tax tent. Ideally, a few families will be detained there. If it is full, families should be detained in the village. Soldiers should always be aware of troublemakers. Sometimes Guides are not sure if the troublemaker is in their group or not. Take troublemakers aside quietly and be serious.

**SOLDIER WHO GETS EVERYONE’S ATTENTION AT JAIL IN CENTER OF VILLAGE** (*There will be a jail set up in the center of the village; when needed, one of the soldiers will pick someone and make a spectacle. This will happen only when the village is getting too crowded; this will give the holding tent some time to clear out and give the guides a break.*) You! What did I hear you say? You saw angels? Ha! Another crazy Hebrew. You Hebrews and your false hopes. No one will save you. Your only savior is Caesar. Maybe a little time in jail will set you straight. Stop this nonsense or we just might keep you as a slave.

**SOLDIERS AT THE HOLDING TENT (3 OR 4):** This is probably the hardest place to maintain character of the soldier. People have time to harass the soldier and there are some in every family. Again—**no bodily contact and be aware of small children.** Do not harass parent, or someone “special” to them. (You can see fear by observing their eyes—but don’t stare at them.) If a frightened child is seen, quietly tell the parents if the child is afraid and they’re anxious about the tax tent, they can take the child around the tax tent and wait for the group. After the tax tent there will be no more soldiers.

Soldiers here, try to maintain order—groups stay in order, prepare for tax tent-take strings off scrolls and have a family member collect strings in a basket. Some guides will try to talk to other families. If it is in the context of the day—this might be appropriate and take some of the edge off just standing there. Soldiers can always make their presence “known” at these conversations. Also, the jail or holding area is available for some family members. Soldiers may ask for payment to release a family member.

**SOLDIERS IN THE TAX TENT (2 at least—plus the “Chief Publican” (collector) and the Publican (one who collects):** This tent is the climax to all the “hype”. Soldiers and tax collectors are not here to collect the tax for which the people just registered—but the other taxes already levied. One soldier “mans” the door gruffly and the other makes a “grand entrance” at the back door. Both are here to carry out the tax collectors’ orders. This will

be to escort someone forward, to the stockades, check out scrolls, and escort them out the back door.