

## **Roman Soldiers**

Throughout the New Testament, soldiers of the occupying army from Rome are often at the center of the action. They were certainly present in the town of Bethlehem enforcing order on the crowds present for the census.

These soldiers were unpopular for a variety of reasons. First, they are an occupying army having conquered the Jews multiple times. While known as Roman soldiers, these troops were actually conscripts from Syria. Likely, they didn't want to be in Judea and were not predisposed to dealing kindly with the citizens. In the past they had desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and stolen from the treasury.

They would be harsh and unfriendly urging the crowds to move along, and speaking unkindly to the shopkeepers and residents of Bethlehem. Their bright heavy armor is impressive and it makes them even more imposing figures. They are the bad guys.

So in your role, be gruff and loud. Command the crowd to move along. Speak harshly to the shopkeepers. You are scary in your uniform and armor. It will help set the right tone. It can make an impression if you arrange to "arrest" a towns person and haul them away. You may be one of the lasting impressions that our visitors take away from their time in Bethlehem.

HOWEVER – big and little kids are often fascinated by the soldiers. The armor is really cool looking. So, if you are asked to pose for a picture, take a momentary break from playing a role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and enjoy a Kodak moment.

The armor is heavy, and the village is often quite warm. Don't be shy about taking a break to cool down and get some water.

Most of all, have fun – even if you are the bad guy.