

Caesar Augustus – 12.10.17

Christmas According to Luke Series

Have you ever wondered what the world like when Jesus was born? Luke gives us insight into this in **Luke 2**.

Luke 2:1-3 (NIV) *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)³ And everyone went to their own town to register.*

- Luke clearly tells us that this is not “once upon a time” with fanciful stories of Zeus and Apollo on Mount Olympus, but this is a *real*, specific, **verifiable** time in world history, when Caesar Augustus was in power and Quirinius was governing Syria.

#1 What is so significant about “those days” that Luke would mention them?

- Luke is making us understand a **SPECIFIC** time in history, when **in those days** Rome ruled the civilized world (**from England to Iran**) through military conquest. Early in its military domination, Rome was a republic, a government in which citizens elected noble men to rule on their behalf in a voting body called the Senate, but their military was led by individual generals.
- The Romans really believed that they could go into a town and **instill PEACE** through sword or crucifixion. These were the days that Jesus was born into.

#2 What is significant about Caesar Augustus that Luke mentioned him by name?

- In 45 BC Julius Caesar, a Roman general, starts making a name for himself.
- In 44 BC, Julius Caesar is assassinated by the Senate without a son or rightful heir, **but his will states that** his nephew, Octavian, is now his official adopted heir or son.
- 6 months later, people believe 7 day comet is Julius Caesar ascending to Zeus.
- In 42 BC, the Senate **agrees** and decides to **DEIFY Julius Caesar, making him a god**. Octavian now is known **as the son of a god**.
- In 30 BC, Octavian takes over sole power of Rome.
- In 27 BC, the Senate **gives Octavian ultimate power over Rome** and the official title, **“Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of god.”**
- And for 41 years (27 B.C. - A.D. 14), Caesar Augustus ruled Rome as emperor.
- In the **Priene Inscription, 9 BC**, the high priest **Apollonius stated 3 phrases** about Augustus: **Augustus was sent that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and that the birthday of the god Augustus has been for the whole world the beginning of good news.**
- Caesar Augustus wasn’t just placed in the gospel of Luke by chance, but was mentioned to prove a point: that **the world actually starts to think** that God could become a **MAN**.
- From this point on, it is generally known that this time in history is **the beginning of the gospel of Caesar Augustus, son of god**, who will bring good news of peace (pax romana) to the entire known world. (see **Mark 1:1**)
- There is about to be **CLASH** of kingdoms between God and with Rome.
- **And it’s not going to be decided on the battle field**, but it will be decided by a **BABY** born in Bethlehem.

Luke 2:1-2

- So with all this new power, Augustus orders a census to count how much you owned so he knew how much he could tax you. This census wasn’t a simple **questionnaire**, but it was a way for Caesar Augustus to **TAX** the entire Roman world so that he could finance his vast armies, build roads and afford his personal luxury. Augustus said give me your obedience and your taxes and I will protect you and give you peace on earth.

Luke 2:3-7

- So, Joseph and Mary left Nazareth for Bethlehem and there Jesus was born which actually fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy of **Micah 5:2**.

God allowed Augustus to rise to **unheard human power for many reasons**, but most of them pointed to Christ. **In some ways, not only did John the Baptist prepare the way for Christ, but Caesar Augustus was like a ROMAN John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus.**

Luke 2:8-11

- Everywhere you went, you either had to say **“Caesar is Lord”** or you received the sword or crucifixion, but now God (and Luke) is saying that **“Jesus is Lord”**.
- *This is why **this baby** caused so much of a stir in Israel and Rome.*
- God was coming to **REDEFINE** how life was to be lived and who everyone needed to serve.

Ironically, Caesar Augustus wanted to be worshiped as a god, but nobody worships him today. Christ’s kingdom is still established, but Caesar’s is not.

- This isn’t a coincidence. (see **Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2:1-45**)

History documents that four nations ruled the civilized world from that point and on until Jesus’ birth.

- The first kingdom in the dream was the **BABYLON**, under Nebuchadnezzar 609-539 BC (**Jews were exiled to Babylon**)
- The second kingdom in the dream was **PERSIA**, under Cyrus the Great 539-330 BC (**Jews allowed to return to their land**)
- The third kingdom in the dream is **GREECE**, under Alexander the Great 330-168 BC (**Mandated universal language, Greek**)
- The fourth kingdom is **ROME**, 168 BC-476 AD, (**the road system**)
- And **AFTER the fourth kingdom**, it says that **God will set up a future kingdom that will NEVER be destroyed** and that kingdom is **JESUS CHRIST**.
- **All four of these kingdoms set the stage for Jesus.**

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV) *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law⁵ to redeem those under law, the we might receive the full rights of sons.*

- The birth of Jesus wasn’t at some random time, but **Jesus came into the world at PRECISELY the proper moment in history.**
- God knows what He is doing.
- **God has a better plan for you than you do so trust Him!**
- **If you are questioning where God is in your situation, know today that He is there!**

Next week: Bethlehem