

Luke 2:1-7 | In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Christmas Eve 2023 | Luke 2:1-7

Right after today's service my wife and I are going to get our kids in their PJ's and drive to their grandparents house and put them down to sleep right when we get there so that Santa isn't held up by their wakefulness. With three kids and a dog for 3 or 4 days and all the Christmas stuff, the density of our small SUV is on the verge of forming a singularity. My wife remember's so many details but there is one of utmost importance; bunny. No bunny = no sleep for Maeble. No sleep for Maeble = the end of the world as you know it. We could forget everything but Bunny. There are some details, you just can't forget.

1. Caesar's Census

Luke 2:1-3 | In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

Caesar Augustus was the Nephew of Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar was particularly fond of this nephew and saw his skill and wisdom and determined in his will that Gaius Octavius would be named emperor upon Julius Caesar's death. Caesar Augustus was a brilliant leader of Rome and gave to the world an unprecedented period of peace. This was in part due to his strength as an administrator. Part of this is expressed in his desire to account for the entirety of the empire. So this nephew of Julius Caesar, emperor of Rome sees to it to call for a Census which would organize the whole of the known world by household. So like Christmas break in college, each returned to his own town.

2. Mary and Joseph

Luke 2:4-5 | And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Mary and Joseph lived in the region of Galilee in a small village called Nazareth. But because of the Census Joseph is required to return to the place of his family, Bethlehem in

Judea. It is a ninety mile journey. For Joseph perhaps not so difficult but for Mary it would have been particularly challenging here in her third trimester about to give birth.

3. No place in the Inn

Luke 2:6-7 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.
 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

While in Bethlehem the time comes for Mary to give birth. She takes her firstborn son, wraps him in swaddling clothes and lays him in the feeding trough of the animals. The reason is because there was no place for them in the inn. The inn was likely a place for Caravans to stop over and was probably full of Roman officials sent to take the census. Upstairs was the inn, downstairs were the stables. This is not certain but probable. Either way they had no true place to stay, and had to make a makeshift accommodation for the birth of our Lord, the incarnation of the Son of God.

Let's collect some of these details. Julius Caesar must take particular care to appoint his nephew the great administrator to the throne. And the heart of this emperor must be set administratively at precisely the right time to correspond with the bringing of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus.

It is necessary in fulfillment of Micah 5:2 that the messiah be born in Bethlehem. It is necessary according to the prophets that he would be called a Nazarene (Mt 2:23). Both are accomplished in this birth story. You can see that by the highest powers all the world is caught up in this birth story. There is no greater earthly power than Caesar Augustus and here by the Providence of God he serves the fulfillment of God's promises for the Messiah. In the next story the angels of God will proclaim the news of this birth to the lowliest of nomads, Shepherds. The glory of the birth would be written in the stars and gather strange kings. It is in the heavens, the highest authorities, the lowest shepherds receive the announcement. All the details of Christ's birth are perfectly established with an unthinkable precision.

The best show of the past 5 years is called the Bear. It is about a Michelin star chef who inherits his brother's rundown restaurant and then seeks with the help of his uninspired staff to make it great. Now I don't know much about Michelin stars, I thought they mostly focused on tires. Zach would probably know better he grew up in Lansing, Michelin. But in this show one character gets sent to a 5 star restaurant and spends a week polishing forks. Every detail must be perfect and everyone in the restaurant works with utmost care to deliver the perfect dining experience. So the owner of the restaurant stays late to cut mushrooms and the new guys polish forks. All so that the guests might feel as though everything conspired for them to have a perfect night.

It reminds me of all creation from the highest to the lowest and all history from the promise to Abraham through David to this moment at the fulness of time conspiring for the birth of the promised savior. Why not leave one room open in the inn?

It is no overlooked detail. The second person of the trinity is born without a home because he came to save one such as you are. He didn't just miss the inn. He hit right where he was aiming. God made us for a home and made a home for us. But when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden that place where they met with God, a flaming sword was placed in their way. Humanity from then on would be in a sense homeless. We couldn't get back to our real home, our real communion with God. Jesus came to where we are so he could bring us back.

2 Corinthians 8:9 | For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Who is higher than Caesar? Who is lower than a Nazarene?

Who is higher than the angels? Who is lower than a shepherd?

Who is higher than God? Who is lower than a homeless infant?

It was no miss. Christ came to save.

Praise the Lord.

Philippians 2:6-11 | who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.