



December 24th AM – Purple

Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14

Message: Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Sermon Title: Prince of Peace

Luke 2:1-7 (LSB)

1 Now it happened that in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus for a census to be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was going to be registered for the census, each to his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was betrothed to him, [and] was with child. 6 Now it happened that while they were there, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guest room.

Luke 2:1 (NET)

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus to register all the empire for taxes.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (LSB)

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
7 There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.

Numbers 3:13 (LSB)

13 "For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am Yahweh."

1. The great example of Humility.

Luke 2:8-14 (LSB)

8 In the same region there were [some] shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people. 11 For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "And this [will be] the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Proverbs 11:2 (LSB)

2 When arrogance comes, then comes disgrace, But with the meek is wisdom.

2. The right response to God's presence brings peace.**Luke 2:15-20 (LSB)**

15 And it happened that when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds [began] saying to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. 17 And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it marveled at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary was treasuring all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as was told them.

Philippians 3:7-8 (LSB)

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.

3. We need to treasure the Gift of the Messiah.

The Teeter Totter of Faith:

Luke 2:14 (LSB)

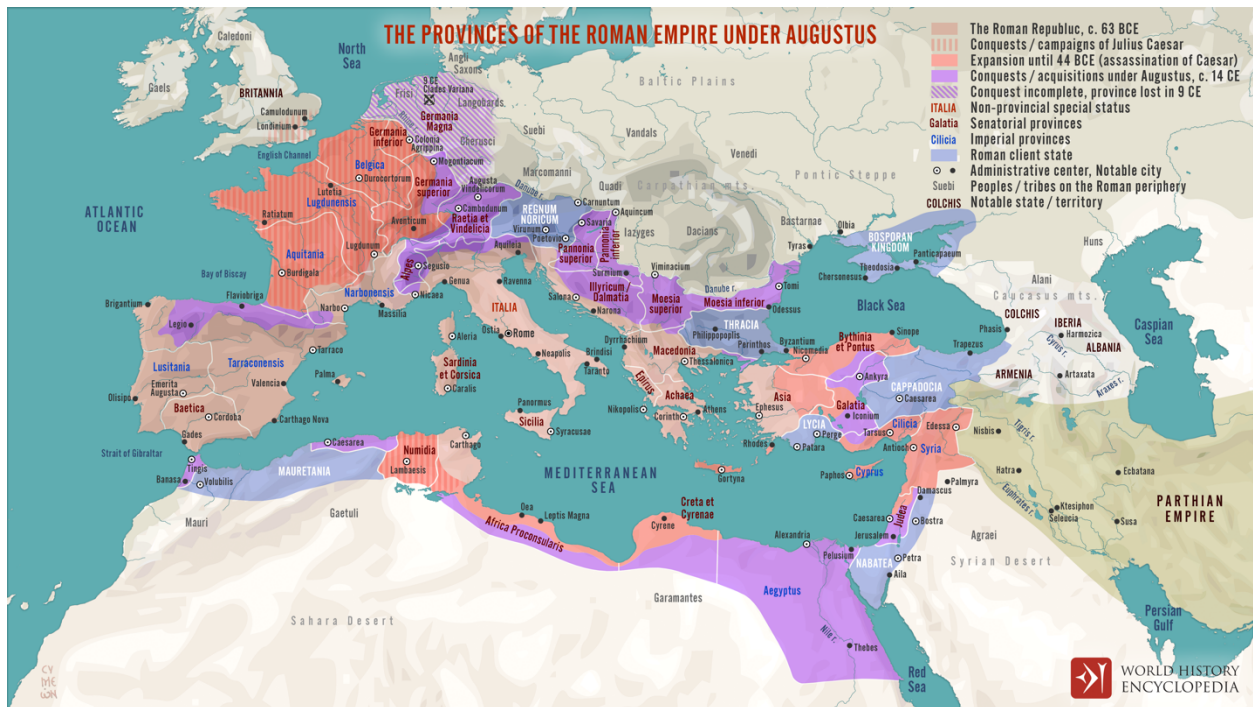
14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

God's Glory:

Peace:

The Glory Peace Teeter Totter:

Map of the Roman Empire under the rule of Augustus.
 First Century during the birth of Christ.



Map of Israel at the birth of Christ.



Augustus Caesar, Emperor (Αὔγουστος, *Augoustos*).
The first emperor of Rome (r. 31 bc–ad 14).

Augustus in History

Early Life

Augustus Caesar was born in 63 bc as Gaius Octavius. His father, also named Gaius Octavius, was a knight from Velitrae who rose to be a senator and a praetor. He died when Octavius was young, so Octavius'

mother, Atia, primarily raised Octavius. Eventually Atia's uncle, Julius Caesar, adopted Octavius and made him his heir. At that point Octavius adopted his uncle's name and became Gaius Julius Caesar.

Consolidation of Power

Octavius was 19 when Julius Caesar was assassinated (44 bc). Following this event, Octavius entered into a political alliance known as the Second Triumvirate with Julius Caesar's allies Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and Mark Antony. In October of 42 bc, Octavius and Mark Antony's forces defeated those of Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, at the Battle of Philippi. Over the next 11 years, Octavius ruled the Roman world in the west, aided by Agrippa and Maecenas, while Antony ruled the Roman world in the east with Cleopatra. However, over time, Octavius and Antony's relationship deteriorated. At the Battle of Actium in 31 bc, Octavius' forces finally defeated the combined forces of Antony and Cleopatra. Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide in 30 bc. Octavius then became the sole ruler of the entire Roman world.

Rise to Emperor

Although Octavius had relied on military force to consolidate his power, once he had succeeded, he began preparations to restore the traditional republican government. In January of 27 bc, Octavius "transferred the state to the free disposal of the senate and the people," in his own words (Grant, *The Twelve Caesars*, 53). Three days later, the Senate conferred upon him the title "Augustus," after he had declined the names of "Rex" and "Dictator." This title, which comes from the Latin term meaning "august" or "revered," implied "no definite powers, but being an epithet equally applicable to gods or men, was well adapted to express his exalted position" (Boak and Sinnigen, *A History of Rome to ad 565*, 270).

While Augustus transferred many powers back to the senate, he retained much power for himself. For example, he continued to hold annual consulships, and he also took Spain, Gaul, and Syria as his province in addition to Egypt. These regions included the greater part of the army as well as his own praetorian guard, who were responsible for protecting him. Later, Augustus would resign the consulship but would retain the large province and even achieve some legal authority to intervene in other provinces (Grant, *The Twelve Caesars*, 53).

Augustus was also given the title of "Tribunician Power," which enabled him to stand for the rights of the lower classes. He was given the chief priesthood in 12 bc and declared the "Father of the Country" in 2 bc.

Augustus died in ad 14 at the age of 76 and was succeeded by his stepson and heir, Tiberius.

Augustus in the Bible

Luke 2:1 contains the only biblical reference to Augustus, stating, “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered” (ESV). Nevertheless, Augustus’ political actions provide the backdrop for the New Testament events. For example, it was Augustus who divided Palestine into three parts to be ruled by Archelaus, Philip, and Herod Antipas; and Herod Antipas played an important role in the deaths of both John the Baptist and Jesus (Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism*, 199). Augustus’ successor, Tiberius, was the reigning emperor at the onset of Jesus’ public ministry and is the subject of Jesus’ references to “Caesar.”

Jason Darrell Coplen, “Augustus Caesar, Emperor,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

Publicus Sulpicius Quirinius (Κυρήνιος, *Kyrēnios*).

Roman legate of Syria ad 6–9. Responsible for the census over Judaea after the territory came under direct Roman rule in ad 6.

Biblical Significance

According to Luke 2:2, Quirinius was the governor of Syria when Jesus was born. His census caused Joseph and Mary to leave their residence in Nazareth and travel to Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to Jesus (Luke 2:1–5). The same census led Judas of Gamala—mentioned in Acts 5:37—to lead a tax revolt.

Census of Judaea

After Judaea, Samaria, and Idumea were transferred from Archelaus to direct rule under the administration of Syria, a census was taken in the affected regions. Josephus reports that Caesar Augustus sent Quirinius to assess the property and assets of the people of the province and liquidate Archelaus’ estate (Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.353–54). The annexation was the end of a long process of increasing Roman authority in the East, beginning in Israel with the campaign of Pompey. The census and imposition of a direct head tax to Rome signaled the official subordination of Judaea—unlike Galilee and Peraea, which remained “autonomous” (Gruen, *The Expansion of the Empire*, 157).

The Jews were outraged at the census, and Judas of Gamala led a number of people to revolt (Acts 5:37). Judas decried the assessment, calling taxes no better than slavery and rousing the people to declare independence from the Romans (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.4). His descendants would later lead revolts and attacks against Roman domination as well (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.433–34, 7.253–54). The high priest Joazar persuaded other Jews to give an account of their estates to the census taker without complaint (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3). After Quirinius' task in Judaea had been completed, he replaced Joazar with Ananus as high priest (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.26).

The details of the census are unknown. Josephus' data indicates it was a general census of the province of Syria. A census inscription from the Syrian city Apamea, which was ordered by Quirinius, is unclear whether the census counted only citizens or all free men. The inscription records population only, but Josephus indicates the census was of property as well. The two registrations probably occurred at the same time (Kennedy, *Demography*, 112–15).

Life of Quirinius

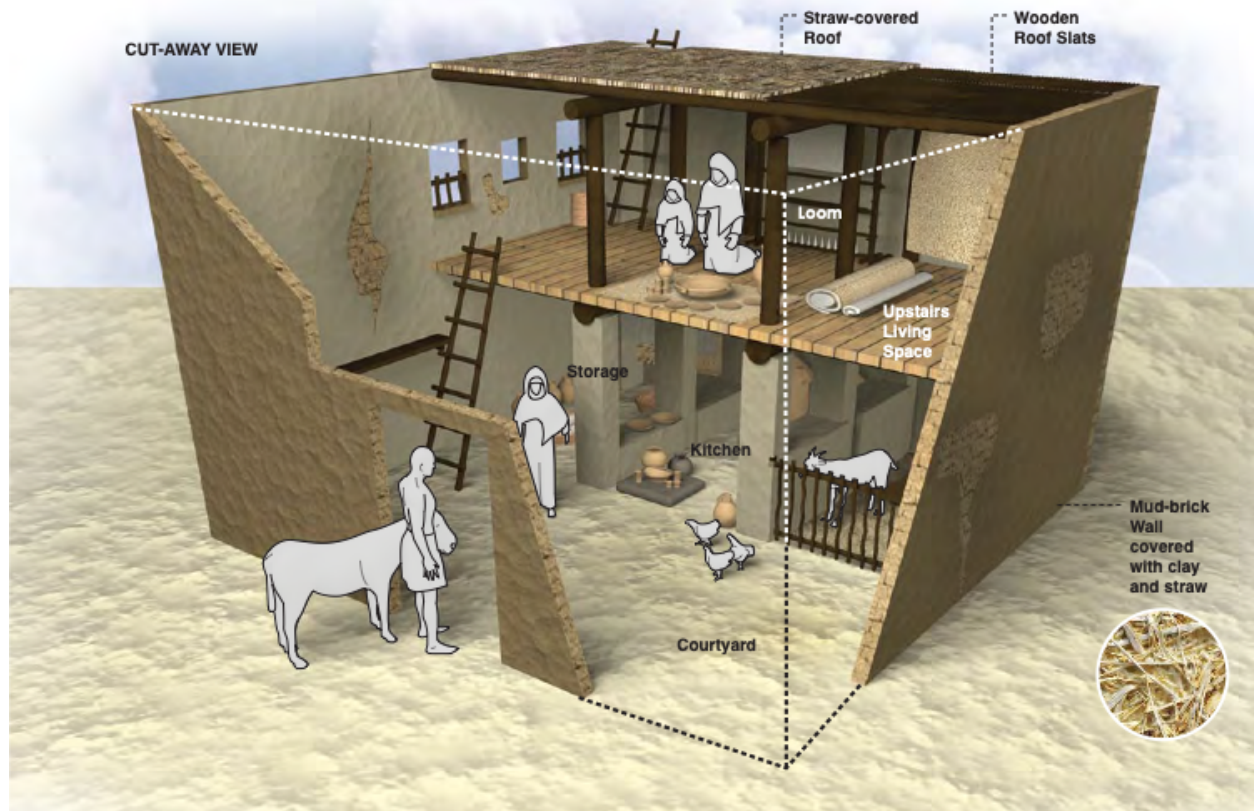
Quirinius was a celebrated military leader. Later in his life, he held governmental positions in Roman Asia. In 5–3 bc, he led forces against a tribe known as the Homonadenses in Galatia, a province of Asia Minor (Gruen, *The Expansion of the Empire*, 153–54). An inscription mentions Quirinius as *duuvir* (a municipal office) of Pisidian Antioch (Lawrence, *Publius Sulpicius Qurinius*, 197). He was appointed as an advisor to Gaius in the Armenian government from ad 1–4 (Tacitus, *Annals* 3.48). When he assumed the legate of Syria from P. Quinctillius Varus in ad 6 and responsibility over the newly annexed provinces of Judaea, Samaria, and Idumaea, Quirinius was a *consul* (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1–2). As governor, he was responsible for maintaining the eastern guard of the empire from foreign powers and keeping an eye on the provinces held by the Herodian dynasty (Gruen, *The Expansion of the Empire*, 154). He died in ad 21, and his funeral celebration was ordered by Tiberius (Smith, *Caesar's Decree*, 344; Tacitus, *Annals* 3.48). Despite his fame as a soldier, Quirinius' reputation was tarnished by a fierce divorce hearing with Lepida, who was accused of adultery and attempting to poison him (Tacitus, *Annals* 3.22–23).

Alex Ramos, "Publicus Sulpicius Quirinius," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

Manger similar to the Biblical narrative in Luke.



A possible “inn” in the Christmas narrative in Luke 2

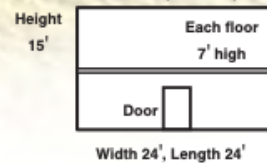


First-Century Israelite House

The homes of poor families were small and plain. They were built of rough stone (or mud-brick) walls and roofs of woven branches covered with clay. Living spaces were used for household work—cooking and weaving. At night, the family’s domestic animals were housed in the lower level.

Size comparison:

First-century houses were smaller than modern double-wide trailers and accommodated an entire family.



Double wide mobile home (front view)



Width 24', Length 60'

GRAPHIC BY KARBEL MULTIMEDIA, COPYRIGHT 2011 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE