

The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES
with Pastor Greg Formey



Caesar's Decree and God's Promise

Luke 2:1-7

Sunday, December 14, 2025

1 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. ESV

Empires count in order to control. Companies measure bodies, dollars, and online clicks. Luke begins the Christmas story with a census. But hidden beneath the surface a higher plan is taking shape. God works his plan in the midst of the census to work his purposes to bless the world. He moves His Son to David's city hidden in plain sight.

In the ancient world a decree was a binding order from the throne. Families traveled to ancestral towns for registration. Guest rooms were undoubtedly crowded with relatives and friends. The only place that could be found by this poor family ironically was a cave with a manger - a feeding trough meant for sheep - in which the bread of heaven (Jesus) was laid.

God chooses this set of pressurized circumstances to launch a revolution, the likes of which the world has never seen.

CAESAR'S DECREE

Luke reports a decree (a royal edict that must be obeyed) from Caesar Augustus that all his international realm should be registered and taxed. Unwittingly, this powerful government is playing into the prophetic hands of God.

Israel's Scriptures warned about the pride of counting people for the sake of power. In Exodus, the Lord gives a specific command regarding taking a census of the Israelites.

Exodus 30:12

When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the Lord when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them." ESV

In other words, the Lord instructed that whenever a census was taken, each person was to give a ransom offering to avoid a plague. This command was to remind them that the people ultimately belonged to God, not to human rulers, and to prevent the pride of self-reliance.

David had gotten Israel into trouble many years before by doing this very thing. 1 Chronicles 21. David orders a census of Israel, and this act is seen as a sinful reliance on human strength rather than trust in God. As a result, God sends judgment, and David repents.

The true Son of David comes to Bethlehem the promised city of His birth, prompted by a decree of man.

Micah 5:2

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. ESV

Where have you fallen into the trap of trusting the wheels of government then the promises of God. What step of humble trust can you take this week to show your reliance on Him?

THE TRUE SON ENTHRONED

Daniel had prophesied centuries before that one would come who would receive an everlasting kingdom.

Bethlehem is David's city, and Mary gives birth to the promised Son. Luke's manger leads to Daniel's throne where the Son of Man receives an everlasting kingdom. At the cross and empty tomb He disarms rulers and powers, making a public spectacle, and invites bold allegiance now.

Daniel 7:13-14

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. ESV

This was accomplished at the resurrection of Jesus, when according to **Colossians 2:15, He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.** ESV

Probing question: What allegiance will you show this month that makes the Kingdom of Jesus The Messiah more visible than the pressures of Caesar's power?

Conclusion

In David's city the promised King arrives, as Caesar Augustus plays right into his hands. Thirty-three years later, Heaven gives Him the everlasting throne. He strips the powers and makes a public spectacle of them.

And so, we must live as citizens of His kingdom that will never come to an end.