

Synchronizing the Nativity Accounts of Matthew and Luke

Part Two: From the birth of John the Baptist
to the taxation in Bethlehem

In the first lesson, we learned about the generations from Abraham to Christ

1. Abraham
2. Isaac
3. Jacob
4. Judas
5. Phares
6. Esrom
7. Aram
8. Aminadab
9. Naasson
10. Salmon
11. Booz
12. Obed
13. Jesse
14. David

1. David
2. Solomon
3. Roboam
4. Abia
5. Asa
6. Josaphat
7. Joram
8. Ozias
9. Joatham
10. Achaz
11. Ezekias
12. Manasses
13. Amon
14. Josias

1. Jechonias
2. Salathiel
3. Zorobabel
4. Abiud
5. Eliakim
6. Azor
7. Sadoc
8. Achim
9. Eliud
10. Eleazar
11. Matthan
12. Jacob
13. Joseph
14. Christ

Matthew 1:17

So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

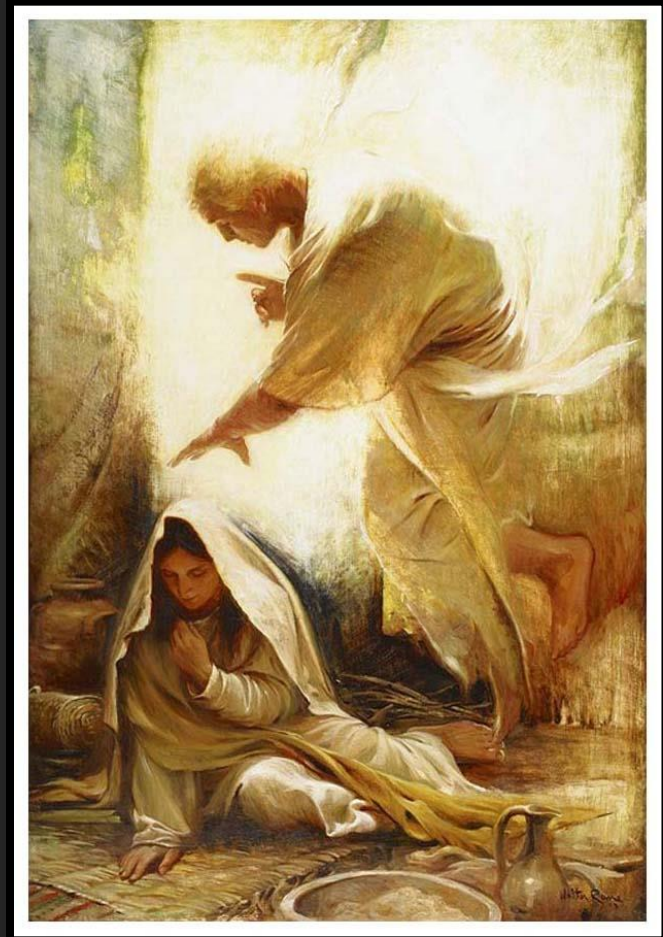
And the 3 Appearances of Gabriel:

1. To Zacharias in the temple in Jerusalem



And the 3 Appearances of Gabriel:

1. To Zacharias in the temple in Jerusalem.
2. To Mary in Nazareth of Galilee



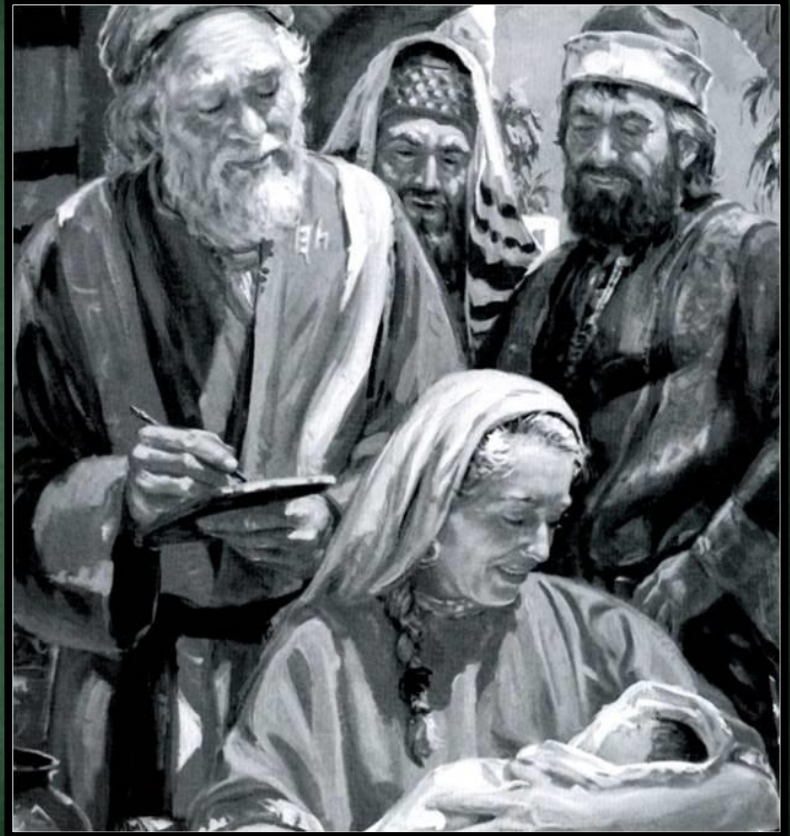
And the 3 Appearances of Gabriel:

1. To Zacharias in the temple in Jerusalem.
2. To Mary in Nazareth of Galilee
3. To Joseph, in a dream.



The birth, circumcision, and naming of John are recorded in Luke 1:57-79.

These events took place in the third month of Mary's pregnancy.



The Birth of John the Baptist

Luke 1:57-58

- 57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.
- 58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

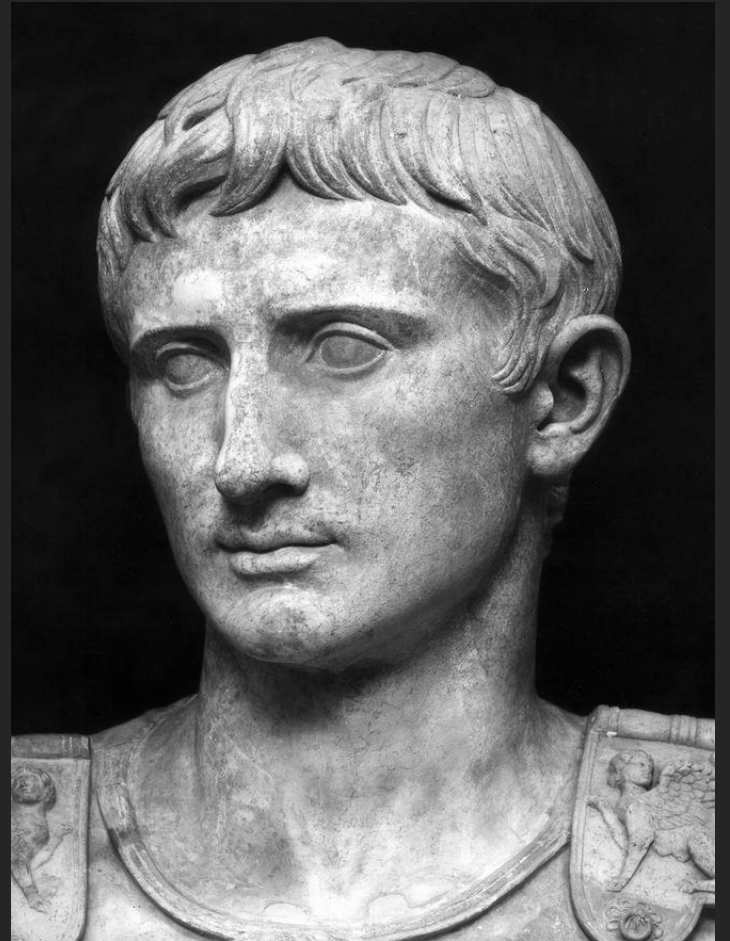


Some months later, in Mary's last days of her pregnancy, she and Joseph were forced to travel to Bethlehem to pay their taxes.

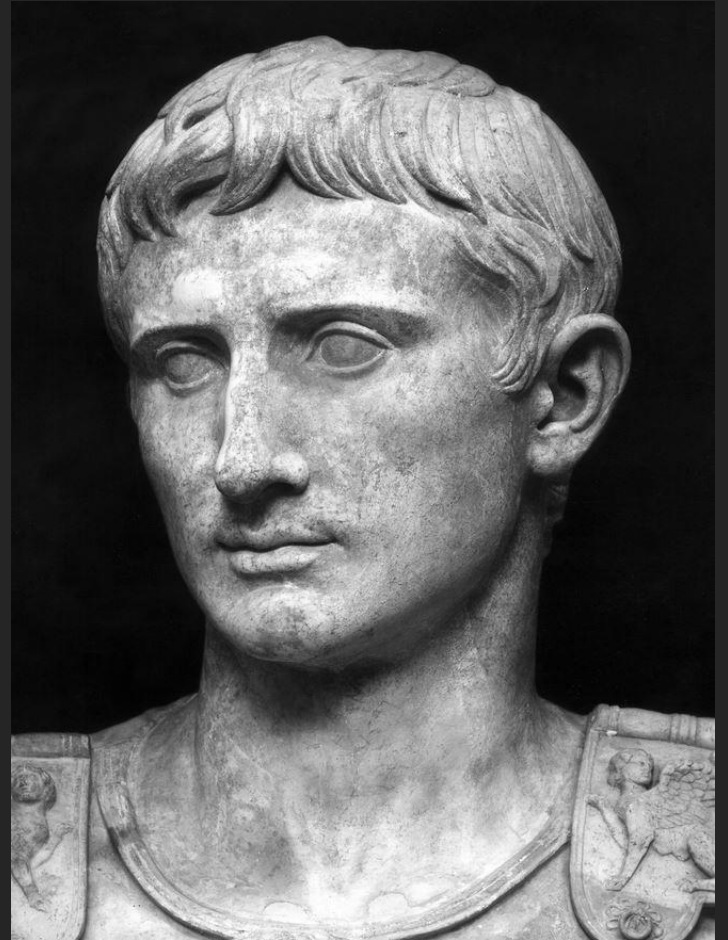


Luke 2:1

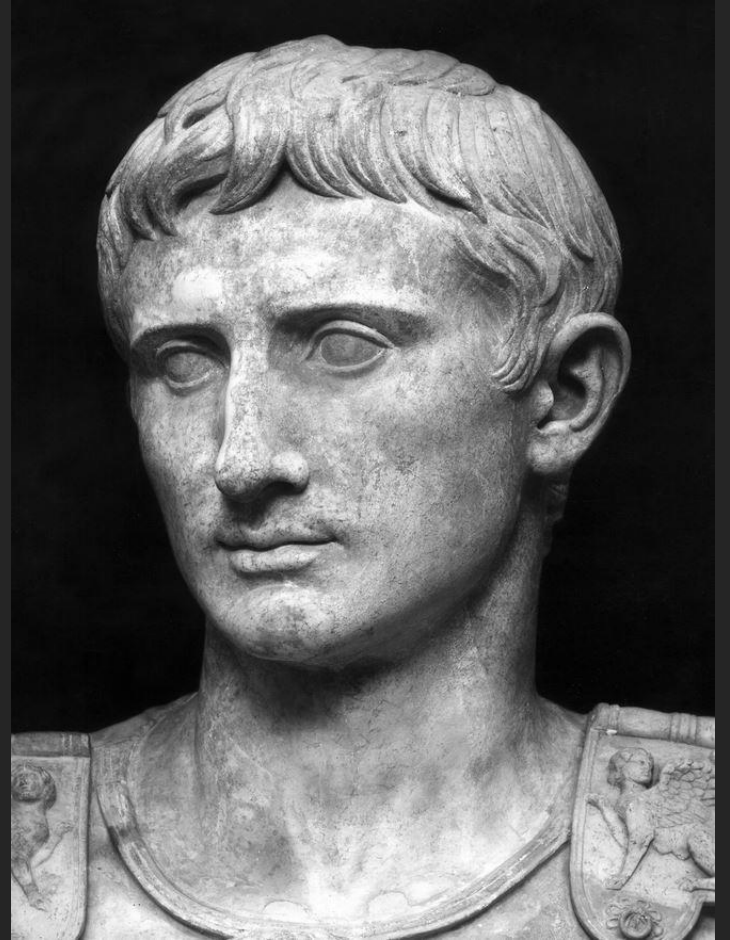
¹ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.



Caesar Augustus (63 BC to 14 AD) was the founder of the Roman Empire and its first Emperor, ruling from 27 BC until his death. He established the form of government under which Rome ruled for the next 300 years.



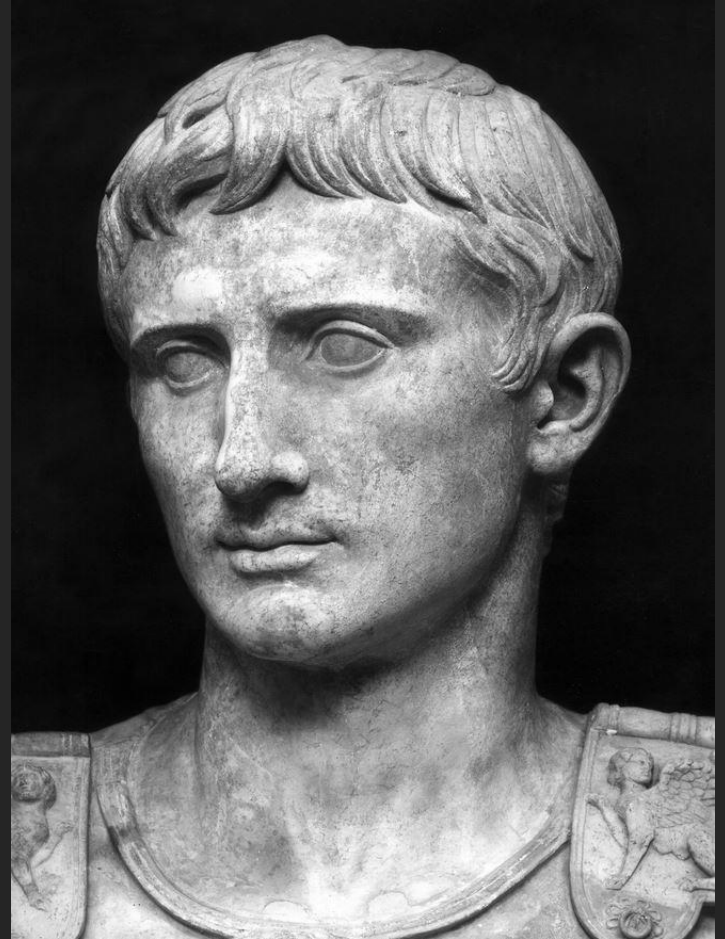
Augustus was adopted son of Julius Caesar. When Julius was assassinated in March 44 BC, he took his place on the throne. But in order to secure his position, he had to first battle the armies of Marc Antony and Cleopatra who had their own plans for power following Julius Caesar's death.



Luke also identifies the provincial ruler:

Luke 2:2

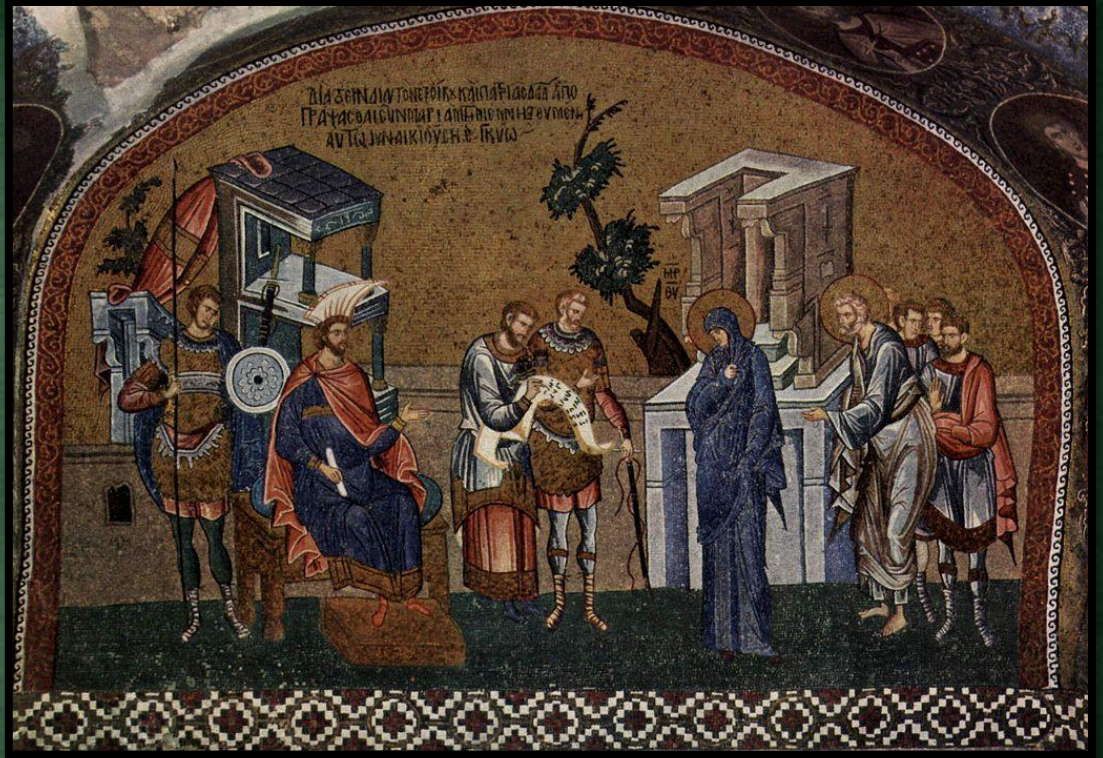
² (And this taxing was first made when
Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)



Cyrenius

aka Publius Sulpicius Quirinius
(c. 51 BC – AD 21)

was appointed governor of
Syria after the banishment of
Herod Archelaus (the son of
Herod the Great) in **AD 6**.



Mary and Joseph register for the census before Governor Quirinius.
(Byzantine mosaic at the Chora Church, Constantinople)

Luke 2:2

² (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

Why is **Syria** important to this story? Iudaea (the conglomeration of Samaria, Judea and Idumea) was joined to Syria for the purpose of a census.



The Journey to Bethlehem

Luke 2:3-5

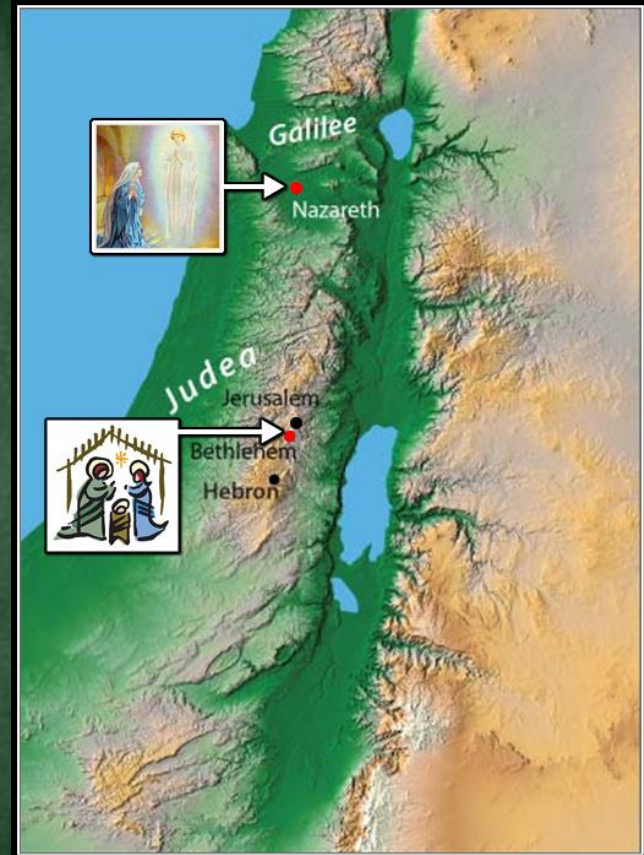
- 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
- 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.



The Journey to Bethlehem

Bethlehem, the city of David's birth, is about five miles south of Jerusalem.

From Nazareth to Bethlehem is about 90 miles. Such a trip would take around 5 to 7 days.



There are 2 places the Bible calls the City of David: Bethlehem and Zion.

Bethlehem is the place he was born. Zion is the place of his great military victory that secured Jerusalem for the Jews.

2 Samuel 5:7

- ⁶ And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.
- ⁷ Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is **the city of David**.





Bethlehem was the burial place of **Rachel**, the wife of Jacob and younger sister of Leah. Rachel died soon after giving birth to Benjamin.



Genesis 35:16-18

- ¹⁶ And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.
- ¹⁷ And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.
- ¹⁸ And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.



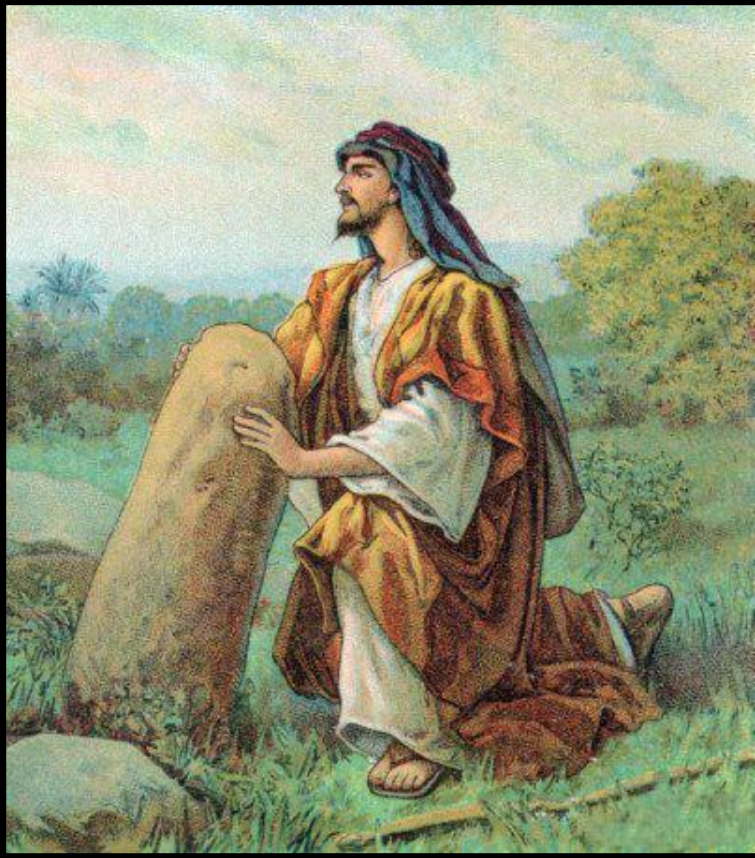


Benoni means the son of my sorrow
Benjamin means the son of the right hand

Genesis 35:16-18

- ¹⁶ And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.
- ¹⁷ And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.
- ¹⁸ And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name **Benoni**: but his father called him **Benjamin**.





Genesis 35:19-20

- ¹⁹ And Rachel died,
and was buried in the way to Ephrath,
which *is* Bethlehem.
- ²⁰ And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave:
that *is* the pillar of Rachel's grave unto
this day.





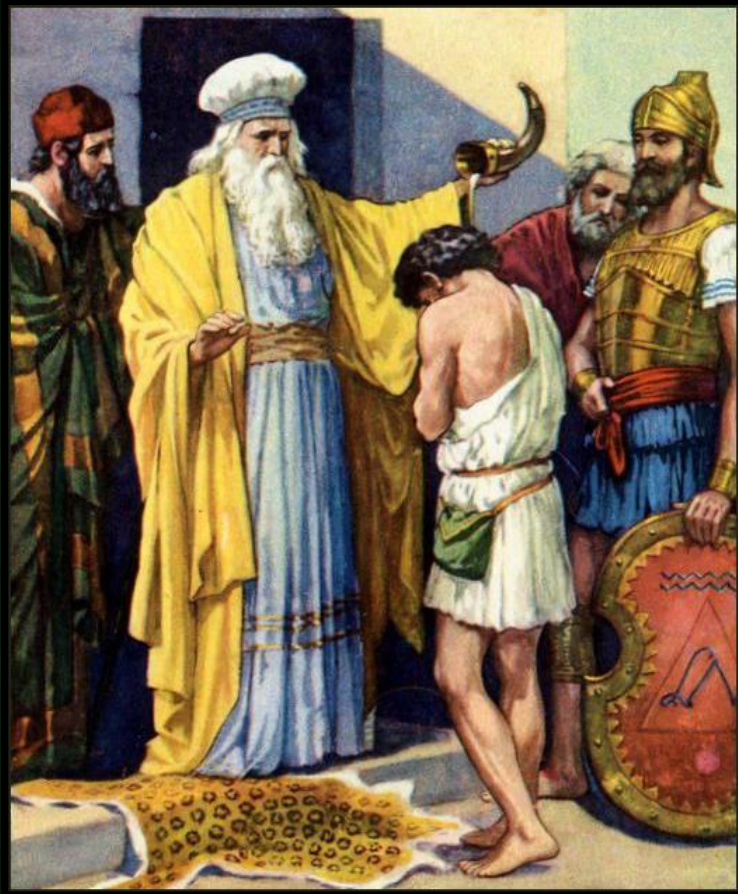
Bethlehem was the birthplace of Boaz,
the kinsman redeemer of Ruth,
and great-grandfather of King David.



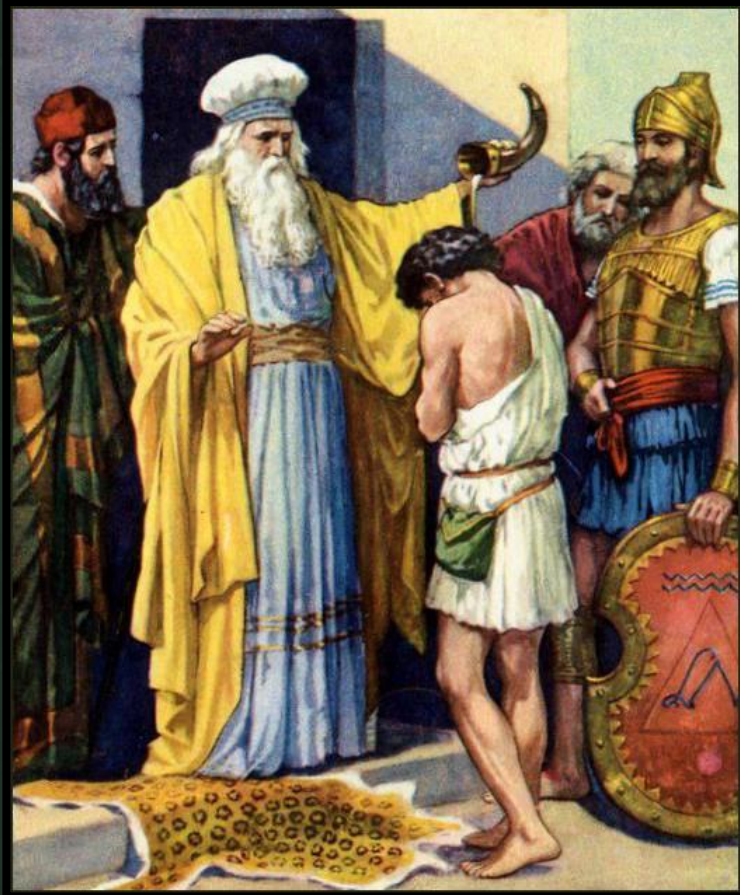
Ruth 2:2-4

- ² And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.
- ³ And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.
- ⁴ And, behold, **Boaz came from Bethlehem**, and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.





Bethlehem was the birthplace of David, and the place where he was anointed by the prophet Samuel.



1 Samuel 16:4a, 13a

- 4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem...
- 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed [David] in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward...



“The little town of Bethlehem” we sing about at Christmastime was the long-foretold birthplace of the Messiah:

Micah 5:2

² But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though thou be little among the thousands of Judah*, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is to be ruler in Israel*; whose goings forth *have been from of old, from everlasting.*



Because Jesus grew up in Galilee, many people assumed that he was also born there, and this made them doubt he was the true Messiah.

John 7:40-43

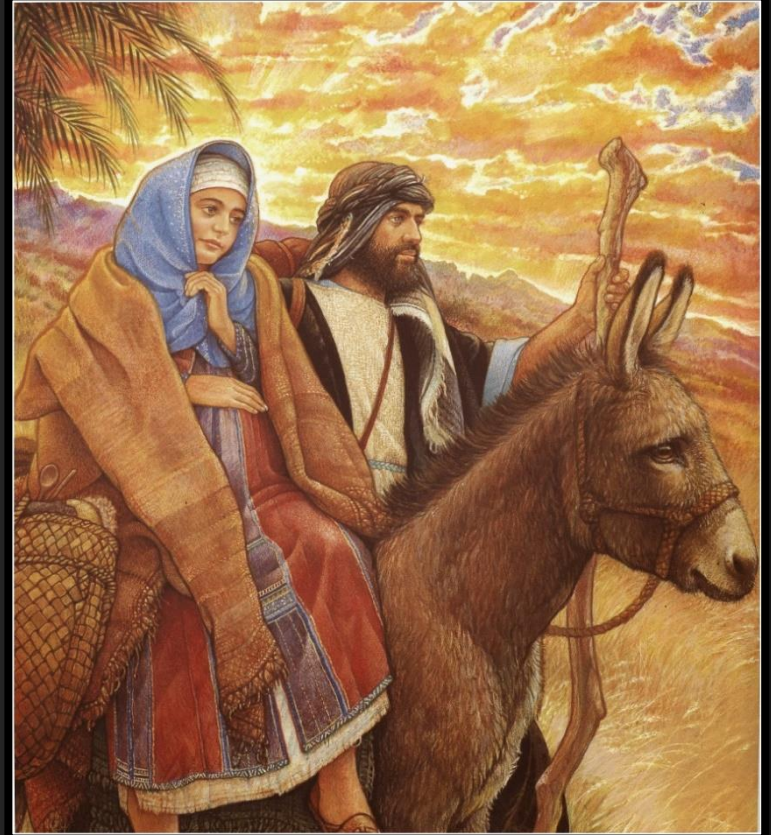
- ⁴⁰ Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.
- ⁴¹ Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?
- ⁴² Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?
- ⁴³ So there was a division among the people because of him.



It is amazing to realize that God worked in the heart of a pagan emperor to call for this taxation because it ensured that God's Son would be born in Bethlehem.

Proverbs 21:1

¹ The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.



The Lord God does not require man's faith or cooperation to use him for his purposes.

God called the king of Babylon "my servant."

Jeremiah 25:8-9

- ⁸ Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words,
- ⁹ Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, **my servant**, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.



God used Nebuchadnezzar to chastise his people.

He used the king of Persia to give Israel yet another chance to serve him.

Ezra 1:1-2

- ¹ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,
- ² Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.



This is a good thing to remember in times like these when we wonder how God can possibly work things for our good with such people running the government.



In good times and bad,
our times are in God's hand.

Psalm 31:15

¹⁵ My times *are* in thy hand:
deliver me from the hand
of mine enemies,
and from them that
persecute me.





With this in mind, we read this passage again:

Luke 2:4-5

- 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.





Next:
The Word is made flesh



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