

Midweek Advent I

“Jesus Came”

It was a time unlike any other in history. The Roman Empire dominated the known world. Augustus ruled as the leader known as Caesar. The Romans built a series of roads and developed a postal mailing system that linked the people of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Decades of wars had been fought and won by Roman armies. All enemies have been defeated. Now it is the time of Roman peace, the *Pax Romana*. But it is the Greek culture and language that is in style. Every area has its own native language, but Greek is the universal tongue that most people know. It is read and spoken everywhere.

God has arranged this as the proper time to fulfill His promise of a Savior for the world. Into a time and place so seemingly united politically and culturally, but also truly united in rebellion against its Creator, God Himself is born into our human flesh. Luke the historian makes sure we know that the story of Jesus is not a fairy tale or a fable of fancy fiction. Luke connects Jesus' birth with the governing officials of that time. There is Caesar Augustus who calls for the counting of people when a man named Quirinius is governor of Syria. For this reason a man named Joseph has to take his legal wife Mary to his hometown of Bethlehem in order to register them for this government taxation program, even though she is very pregnant.

Luke later connects the preaching of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry to the fact that by then Tiberius is the Roman emperor, that Pontius Pilate is the Roman governor of Judea, that Herod Antipas is the Roman puppet king of Galilee and that Caiaphas is the Jewish high priest. People who like to dig in the dirt for a living, aka archeologists, have discovered a pavement stone with the name of Pontius Pilate inscribed on it in a city from that time. In a tomb outside of Jerusalem a stone bone box, called

a crypt, has been found with the name of Joseph Caiaphas on it. He was the leader of the Jewish religious court that accused Jesus of impersonating God, aka blasphemy, and then conspired with the Romans for His crucifixion.

Unlike the religions of the world where the leader is a figment of someone's imagination, Jesus is a real person. He lived in a part of the world that truly exists. We still can go to the very places where Jesus walked. Jesus lived at the same time as many people whose names are recorded for us in books of this world's history. Such was the way it had to be for God to do His work of salvation for us. For the God of all eternity, holiness and glory to rescue us from our selfishness, despair and death, He had to become one of us. Our God would have to live this life in our shoes, or sandals, in this case, in order to truly show us the way back to Himself.

In the life of His own Son, the God of all eternity became a person. He lived with the limitations of our human nature. He resisted temptations to sin that were stronger than we ever face. Yet Jesus remained purely obedient to the will of His Father. We know from experience that to be human means eventually to die. Jesus did this for us also, but on account of our sins. He died on the cross as the perfect, innocent sacrifice in the place of a world full of guilty sinners. Jesus then rose alive from the dead. He frees us from sin's control over us, from death's hold upon us, and from the devil's power within us.

All this really happened. The truth of God's Word, the Holy Bible, and the factual events of human history go together hand in hand. At a very definite time, in a very certain place, and among a very real people, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into this world. Jesus came for us and for our salvation. In His

Name, Amen.

AM The Song of Response

PM Magnificat