

December 21st



# Advent 2025

—THE CONTRASTS OF CHRISTMAS—

*Let us therefore be contrite but without anxiety,  
For Powers and Times are not gods but mortal  
gifts from God; Let us acknowledge our defeats  
without despair, For all societies and epochs are  
transient details, Transmitting an everlasting  
opportunity, That the Kingdom of Heaven may  
come, not in our present And not in our future,  
but in the Fullness of Time.*

—W.H. Auden, *For the Time Being*

## “CAESAR & CHRIST”

Setting the Stage:

Luke 2:1-7; John 1:16-18

### The Old Testament Background

- The visions of the prophet Daniel anticipated the rise of \_\_\_\_\_ as a world power.

Dan. 2:40-42—<sup>40</sup> And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. <sup>41</sup> And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. <sup>42</sup> And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle.

Dan. 7:7— After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet.

### The Historical Background

#### The Rise of Rome

- Following its founding in the 8th c. B.C., Rome grew from a city-state to a regional power that controlled the majority of the \_\_\_\_\_ peninsula by the end of the 3rd c. B.C.
- The rise of Julius Caesar brought about the end of the \_\_\_\_\_ even as Roman power and influence in the Mediterranean world continued to expand.

#### The Rise of Octavian

- Octavian rose to prominence after the death of Julius Caesar because he was his \_\_\_\_\_ son.  
“Many statues have made his features familiar: refined, delicate, serious, at once diffident and resolute, yielding and tenacious; and idealist forced to be a realist, a man of thought painfully learning to be a man of action. He was thin and pale and suffered from poor digestion. He ate little, drank less, and outlived the strong men around him by abstinence and regularity of life.”  
—Will Durant, *Caesar & Christ*
- After the defeat of his rival, Mark Antony, he was given almost complete \_\_\_\_\_ by the Senate.  
⇒ His status as supreme ruler was secured when in 27 B.C. he was given the title “\_\_\_\_\_.”  
“Hitherto the word had been applied only to holy objects and places, and to certain creative and augmenting divinities (*augere*, to increase); applied to Octavian it clothed him with a halo of sanctity, and the protection of religion and the gods.”  
—Will Durant, *Caesar & Christ*
- His rule began a nearly two hundred year period of peace and prosperity know as the “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- He eventually came to be viewed as the god-Man who was given divine titles and worshiped.  
⇒ Throughout the empire, he was added to various provincial pantheons of gods. He was hailed as “\_\_\_\_\_,”  
“Bringer of \_\_\_\_\_,” and “God the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.”

#### The Death of a god

- He died in 14 A.D. quoting a Roman comedy: “Since well I have played my part, clap now your hands,  
and with applause dismiss me from the stage.”

“The very peace that Augustus had organized, and the security he had won for Rome, had loosened the fibre of the people...Luxury had taken the place of simplicity, sexual license was replacing parentage; by its own exhausted will the great race was beginning to die.”  
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## The Theological Background: Colossians 1:15-20

### Before the Incarnation

“Originally, Christ was not like us...He became like us only by voluntarily sharing our life; that is, as the particular individual that He was, He existed before creation; and that His existence as a man was continuous with His earlier existence as a heavenly being.”

—Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*

- **“He is before all things...”**—The focus is in His \_\_\_\_\_, similar to Jn. 8:59, “Before Abraham was, I AM.”
- **“By Him all things were created...”**—The focus here is \_\_\_\_\_ of existence. If all things were created by Him and are dependent upon Him, then He Himself was surely not created.
- **“He is the First-born over all creation...”**—The word *prototokos* is used here as it is in the LXX in Ps. 89:27 which was at the time of Christ recognized as a Messianic Psalm. The term carries with it the idea of primogeniture (sovereignty over a \_\_\_\_\_ and the right of \_\_\_\_\_).

### Jesus as the God-man

- **“He is the image of the invisible God...”**—God makes Himself accessible to mankind through Christ. We may \_\_\_\_\_ and understand Him most clearly in the person and work of Christ (Jn. 1:18).
- **“For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...”**—He did not cease to be God during His incarnation. Rather, He was fully and completely God, accommodated to us and \_\_\_\_\_ like us in every way (Heb. 2:17; 4:15).

### Jesus as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords

- **“...whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”**  
All earthly power and authority is ultimately \_\_\_\_\_ from the power and authority which Christ possesses.

### Jesus as the Rescuer of His People

- **“And he is the head of the body, the church.”**—He has authority over His people to exercise leadership and to secure for them the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
- **“...and through him to reconcile to himself all things...making peace by the blood of his cross.”**—The end goal of the incarnation of our Lord was the \_\_\_\_\_, through which He brought about the reconciliation of all things.

## Caesar and Christ in Luke 2:1-7

1. The decree issued by Caesar was ultimately subject to the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ (Dan. 4:34b-35).
2. Augustus' life and work secured the peace of Rome for 200 years, but the life and work of Christ secured peace for His people both in this \_\_\_\_\_ and for all \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 29:11; Jn. 14:27; Rom. 15:13).
3. While Augustus secured \_\_\_\_\_ for himself through the death of others, Christ secured glory for His \_\_\_\_\_ through His own death. (Lk. 2:30-32; Heb. 2:10).
4. While Caesar Augustus was in many ways representative of the greatness of human achievement, Jesus Christ is the one true joy of Man's \_\_\_\_\_! (Jn. 6:35, 7:37; Heb. 1:3).

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