



“The Gift”

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Read Luke 2:1, 3-20

Isn't it interesting that the most beloved account of the Christmas story begins by mentioning two political figures. I want us for a moment to focus our attention on the first one mentioned. **Gaius Julius Caesar** (July 100 BC^[3] – 15 March 44 BC) was a [Roman general](#) and [statesman](#). After [civil war](#) he emerged as the unrivaled leader of the Roman world. Once in control, he began extensive reforms of Roman society and government. He centralized the bureaucracy of the Republic and was eventually proclaimed "[dictator](#) in perpetuity" (eternal; lasting forever). A group of senators, led by [Marcus Junius Brutus](#), assassinated the dictator on the [Ides of March](#) (15 March) 44 BC, hoping to restore the constitutional government of the Republic. However, the result was another [series of civil wars](#), through which Caesar's adopted heir rose to power.

Born **Gaius Octavius Thurinus**, for political purposes he was officially named **Gaius Julius Caesar (after his uncle)**. In 27 BC the Senate awarded him the title [Augustus](#) ("the revered one"), and thus consequently he was **Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus**.

His power stemmed from financial success and resources gained in conquest, the building of patronage relationships throughout the Empire, the loyalty of many military soldiers and veterans, the authority of the many honors granted by the Senate, and the respect of the people. Augustus' control over the majority of Rome's [legions](#) established an armed threat that could be used against the Senate, allowing him to coerce the Senate's decisions. With his ability to eliminate senatorial opposition by means of arms, the Senate became docile towards him. His rule through patronage, military power, and accumulation of the offices of the defunct Republic became the model for all later imperial governments.

The reign of Augustus initiated an era of relative peace known as the [Pax Romana](#), or *Roman peace*. Despite continuous wars on the frontiers, and one [year-long civil war](#) over the imperial succession, the Mediterranean world remained at peace for more than two centuries. Augustus enlarged the empire dramatically. He was a tremendous diplomat. He reformed the Roman system of taxation, developed [networks of roads](#) with an official [courier](#) system, established a standing army, established the [Praetorian Guard \(elite bodyguards\)](#), and created official police and fire-fighting services for Rome.

Upon his death in AD 14, Augustus was declared a god by the Senate—a ruler who was to be worshipped. His names Augustus and Caesar were adopted by every subsequent emperor; and the eighth month of the

Roman calendar, previously named [Sextilis](#), was renamed Augustus (August in English) in his honour. They have even found an inscription referring to him as “savior of the world.” If you were looking for a political savior, you might consider casting your vote for Ceasar Augustus.

Matthew’s gospel says when the wise men came to inquire of the birth of Christ, they asked “Where is the one who has been born **king** of the Jews?” Then after word of this birth reached Herod and those living in Jerusalem, it says “When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.” Why would Herod be disturbed? The same reason Caesar Augustus, Quirinius, or any other ruler of the day would be concerned. New rulers coming to power meant the potential for resistance to existing rule, and perhaps the toppling of those currently in power. The prophecies concerning this child the wise men had come to **worship** confirmed that he would threaten the worship of Caesar, the current “savior” of the world. Did you know that some of the prophecies regarding Jesus Christ have political implications? For example, Daniel 7:14 says “He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all peoples, nations, and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” Isaiah 9:6-7 says “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders...Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.” Isaiah 2:4 & Micah 4:3 say that He will settle disputes between many nations, and that the nations will not train for war anymore. The Jews clung to these prophecies that promised a political ruler who would free them from any and all foreign rule. They were expecting a Messiah that would solve their political problems, and in doing so bring peace to their world. So you can imagine how bewildered & disappointed the disciples of Jesus Christ were when he ended up on a Roman cross. Even after the resurrection, they were still anticipating Jesus’ overthrow of the Roman government, and the setting up of the kingdom of God, with them ruling and reigning alongside Jesus (see Acts 1:6).

Will Jesus one day be a political ruler on planet earth? Absolutely!
Zech 14:⁹ The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. And the changes he will bring about will be incredible. See Isa.11:6-9; Isa.65:²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox...

18 tigers, 17 lions, six black bears, two grizzly bears, three mountain lions, two wolves and a baboon; 49 wild animals killed in Ohio just a couple of months ago. What a tragedy. When Jesus comes, nothing like this will ever happen again!

Why did Jesus not set up His political reign in His first coming? Didn’t they need a political ruler who could bring peace, not just locally, but worldwide? Didn’t they a political ruler who could solve all the social ills of the world? Don’t we still need one today?

So why did Jesus not solve these problems in His first coming? Because before those issues can be adequately dealt with, man’s greater need must be met. It is man’s greater need that has brought on all these other problems in the first place.

That baby laid in a manger in Bethlehem came to meet man’s greatest need FIRST, then as a result of meeting man’s greatest need, He opens the door for one day ALL of man’s needs to be met, and all his problems solved.

See John 6:26ff. Jesus is trying to tell them that their greatest need goes beyond physical provision. Does God care if I’m hungry? Of course He does, and that is why Jesus multiplied the bread and fish. But if all I am seeking from God is for Him to meet my physical need, I neglect my greater need. Read John 6:35;

4:10, 13-14. The paralytic (Matthew 9; Mark 2). See Matthew 1:21. Jesus did not come to provide a temporary fix to man's eternal problem. We have a sin problem; see Rom.3:23. And because we have a sin problem, we are going to die; see Rom.6:23a; The Bible says that if we die without a Savior, we are eternally doomed & damned. That's why man is afraid to die, because we know death is not the end (Eccl.3:11).

But there is hope. Read Rom.6:23b; John 3:16. Jesus is God's greatest gift to mankind...God has provided a universal answer to a universal & eternal problem...INVITATION