

**1. Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus, and the Imperial Cult:**

- Imperial Cult – the state-sanctioned worship of Caesar Augustus (Octavian) as divine.
- Born Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, given the title of Augustus, which means “to be venerated.”<sup>1</sup>
- Caesar Augustus was reigning when Jesus was born – Luke 2:1.

**2. Ancient City in Asia Minor, Priene<sup>2</sup> (modern-day Turkey):**

- An inscription about Ceasar Augustus that dates to 9 BC was discovered in the ancient city of Priene.<sup>3</sup>

**3 Two Kingdoms Collide:<sup>4</sup>**

- Under the reign of Caesar Augustus, there was the promise of a “New World Order” and that Caesar had the power of the gods and heaven to manifest this coming order.
- The latter half of the book of Isaiah speaks of the coming new world order under the reign of God’s chosen servant – the Messianic King.

<b>Coming world order under Caesar Augustus</b>	<b>Coming world order under King Messiah (Isaiah 40-66)</b>
- Law and Order	- Law and Order (Isa. 42:1)
- Health and Prosperity	- Health and Prosperity (Isa. 61:1)
- Justice and Mercy	- Justice and Mercy
- ultimate goal of Peace	- ultimate goal of Peace (Isa. 65:17-25)

- Path to Peace – Roman propaganda set forth the Empire’s ideal of “*peace through victory.*”

<b>Roman Path to Peace</b>	<b>Kingdom of God Path to Peace</b>
<i>Piety</i> – return to your faith in Rome	Covenant – return to the Covenant
<i>War</i>	Forgiveness
<i>Victory</i>	Justice
<i>Peace</i>	Peace

- One aspect of the Good News of God’s Kingdom is that it forces us to choose “Who do you call Lord?” – Caesar? Or Jesus?
- When we make Jesus Lord – having sovereign power of our lives and the cosmos – we must have faith (trust, confidence) that his path is the one that will manifest peace both within our inner being and in the world around us.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus\\_\(title\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus_(title)) – The title Augustus for the first emperor of the Roman Empire.

<sup>2</sup> About the Priene archeological site - <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6348/>

<sup>3</sup> Calendar Inscription of Priene: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhh65fb>

<sup>4</sup> Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with the Kingdom of God.* Harper San Francisco, (2004).

4. Titles and Events widely used for Caesar Augustus:<sup>5</sup>

Caesar Augustus	Jesus of Nazareth
Called Lord	Called Lord
“son of god”	“Son of God”
Savior	Savior
Birth was “good news” for the world	Birth was “good news” for the world (Lk. 2:8)
A witnessed ascension	A witnessed ascension
Seated at the “right hand” of a deity	Seated at the “right hand” of God
Advent (Gk. <i>Parousia</i> ) – initial	Advent (Gk. <i>Parousia</i> ) and expected return (1Thess. 4:15)

5. Calendar Inscription found at Priene:

- The Greeks of Asia Minor are intending to change their calendar (how they reckon their years) to begin with the birth of Augustus.

Decree of the Greek Assembly in the province of Asia, on motion of the High Priest Apolionios, . . . whereas Providence that orders all our lives has in her display of concern and generosity in our behalf adorned our lives with the highest good: Augustus, whom she has filled with virtue for the benefit of humanity, and has in her beneficence granted us and those who will come after us [a Savior] who has made war to cease and who shall put everything [in peaceful] order; and whereas Caesar, [when he was manifest], transcended the expectations of [all who had anticipated the **good news**], not only by surpassing the benefits conferred by his predecessors but by leaving no expectation of surpassing him to those who would come after him, with the result that the birthday of our God signaled **the beginning of Good News for the world** because of him; . . . [proconsul Paul Fabius Maximus] has discovered a way to honor Augustus that was hitherto unknown among the Greeks, namely to reckon time from the date of his nativity; therefore, with the blessings of Good Fortune and for their own welfare, the Greeks in Asia decreed that the New Year begin for all the cities on September 23, which is the birthday of Augustus; and, to ensure that the dates coincide in every city, all documents are to carry both the Roman and the Greek date, and the first month shall, in accordance with the decree, be observed as the Month of Caesar, beginning with 23 September, the birthday of Caesar.”<sup>6</sup>

“The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I **bring you good news** of great joy which will be to **all the people**. For there is born to you, this day, in the city of David, a **Savior**, who is **Christ**, the **Lord**.”

Luke 2:10-11

<sup>5</sup> Evans, Craig (2000). *Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to the Greco-Roman Gospel*, Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism, Issue (1), pp. 67-81. Web archive of this article can be found on the Wikipedia page for the Priene Calendar Inscription or here <https://web.archive.org/web/20170829065710/http://craigaevans.com/Priene%20art.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO.: Clayton Pub. House, 1982), 217.