

Yesterday I discussed Matthew's account of how it is that Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem, if in fact he "came" from Nazareth.

Of course, critical scholars suspect Matthew has placed [Jesus' birth there to fulfill Michah's prophecy](#) (5:2) that a great ruler (the supposed messiah) would come from Bethlehem.

For Matthew it is because Joseph and Mary were originally from Bethlehem. That was their home town. And the place of Jesus' birth. Two or more years after his birth, they relocated to Nazareth in Galilee, over a hundred miles to the north, to get away from the rulers of Judea who were thought to be out to kill the child. (That in itself, I hardly need to say, seems completely implausible, that a local king is eager to kill a peasant child out of fear that he will wrest the kingdom away from him....)

Luke has a completely different account of how it happened. In Luke, Bethlehem is decidedly not Joseph and Mary's home town. The whole point of the story is that it is not. They are from Nazareth. But then how does Jesus come to be born somewhere else? In the most famous passage of the birth narratives, we are told that it is because of a "decree" that went out from the ruler of the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus. "All the world" had to be "enrolled" - that is, there was a world-wide census. We are told that this was the "first enrollment" made when Quirinius was the governor of Syria.

Since Joseph is "of the house and lineage of David,"

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