



READ: Luke 2:1-5 (NirV)

In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to their own town to be listed. So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.

ENTER THE STORY:

Have you ever stopped to wonder what God is like? We hear all kinds of stories about God, but we don't always focus on what he is like.

For example, God isn't even mentioned in this story, but he is there if we look closely. How do we know?

Well, it was *NOT* an accident that this Roman ruler wanted to know how many people were living in his area at that very moment in time. NO! This was God's plan. If God wants something to happen, it WILL HAPPEN, no matter what!

Many years earlier, Micah, one of God's messengers, told God's people that the promised Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. When Caesar Augustus called for the census, Mary and Joseph were still living in Nazareth, and Mary was REALLY, REALLY pregnant. She was about to give birth to this special baby, God's own Son. The census meant that Mary and Joseph would have to travel to Bethlehem, the very place God wanted them to be!

God's plan all along was for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph, descendants of king David and from that same town. This is why God set his plans for a census into the heart of a great Roman emperor, who brought about the very thing God desired.

God has always been in control of everything, even before he created the world. In the Advent stories we've read, we have been able to see the pictures pointing forward to Jesus' arrival as a baby. Tomorrow, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we will also celebrate the fulfillment of so many of God's promises. This should give us great joy and comfort because it means that we can trust God too! He has always been true to his word, and he will always be true to his word. If he promises something will happen, we can be sure that he will keep his promises.

Who knew there was so much to learn from a Roman ruler wanting to count all of his people?

PRAY: *God, once again, we find ourselves in awe of your power and control over every detail of our lives. May the knowledge of this bring us so much comfort and joy, and may we sleep good tonight knowing that you are always on your throne, working everything out for your glory and for our good. Amen.*