



READ: Luke 2:1-5 (NIV)

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

ENTER THE STORY:

God is in control of all things. ALL THINGS. If you have been in church for any length of time, you have probably heard this phrase many times. The question for all of us is, "Do we really believe it?" Do we really believe that God can control the events of history down to the tiniest details?

Do we think it was just by chance that Caesar Augustus called for a census at that exact moment in time? Did it just so happen that Mary and Joseph were from the town of Bethlehem—the very place Micah prophesied the Messiah would be born? NO WAY! Did you notice the specific key historical details in the passage we just read? It included the name of the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, the name of the Roman governor over that specific region, Quirinius, and Joseph's connection to the house and family of David.

The truth is God can use whoever he wants to bring about his plan...even a pagan Roman emperor. This should not surprise us. We have seen this numerous times throughout the stories of the Old Testament. Many kings and rulers have thought their actions were based on their own decisions and desires, only to later find out that they were directed by the very God they were trying to defy. Remember Pharaoh of Egypt? Or King Nebuchadnezzar?

Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will."

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 foreshadowing of Jesus' first and second coming. 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 he will keep his promises.

Who knew there was so much to learn from a seemingly coincidental census from a Roman Emperor?

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