

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

Numbers 1: 1, 2 *“The Lord spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month after the Israelites came out of Egypt. He said, ‘Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one.’”*

Matthew 2:1 *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.”*

Micah 5: 2 *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
out of you will come for me  
one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from old,  
from ancient times.”*

Learning to count starts very early in life and soon becomes ‘numbers’ and ‘math’ at school. We count money, birds and sheep to sleep. And people in Britain are counted every 10 years. Knowing the quantity and facts of material items and people are essential for forward planning.

Moses was instructed by God to take a census of the Israelites one year after their escape from Egypt partly to ascertain their military strength. It has been estimated from figures stated in Numbers that there might have been at that time 2 million Israelites descended from Jacob and his sons. Once the census was complete the Israelites were ready to head for Canaan, the promised land, but they quickly became rebellious and were condemned by God to wander in the desert for 40 years.

Many years later the census ordered by Caesar Augustus throughout the Roman Empire was in part to aid military conscription but also to raise taxes. The timing of the census meant that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem for Jesus’s birth so fulfilling the prophesy in Micah 5:2.

God may appear to move in mysterious ways but it’s all part of His plan.