

# Speaking to the soul



## Christmas story

**At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. Luke 2:1-3**

**I am delighted that, in our highly secular society, Christmas still has a very special place. No one could possibly miss the**

fact that it is Christmas! All attempts to replace it with a festival such as Winterval have failed miserably.

But even so, we have a problem. The birth of Jesus has become inextricably linked with Father Christmas and Rudolf the red nosed reindeer, and a whole host of other imaginary characters. It's really important that we recognise Jesus' birth was a historic event, and here Dr Luke gives us the facts.

Jesus was born during the long reign of Augustus Caesar, who ruled the Roman Empire from 27BC to 14AD. During his reign, he established the Pax Romana which led to a period of relative peace for more than two centuries. He ruled the Empire tightly and one of his initiatives was to hold a census. Quirinius, as governor of Syria, was given responsibility for covering the area of Judaea. Luke gives us these very specific details because he wants the world to know that God broke into human history in a decisive way by sending his son to be the Saviour of the World. If Jesus was not a historical figure, the whole of Christianity crashes to the floor.

This is what is known as the miracle of the incarnation – of God taking on flesh and becoming part of our world through his son, Jesus. As we enjoy our Christmas celebrations, we are marking the fact that Jesus entered into the rough and tumble of normal human life. You might have thought that Jesus, as the Son of God, would have been given special treatment as he entered the world – but no. Jesus entered the turbulent Roman world and faced all the indignities, regulations and limitations of a country living under

occupation. This is no fairy story. Truly God had come to live on earth.

## **QUESTION**

What do you find most amazing about the Christmas story?

## **PRAYER**

Loving Father, thank you that you loved us so much that you were willing to send Jesus to our confused, cynical and sinful world. Amen

*Photograph - Bethlehem nativity*

