

Week of November 29, 2020

Matthew 1

¹ A record of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: ² Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Aram. ⁴ Aram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. ⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse. ⁶ Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asaph. ⁸ Asaph was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was the father of Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amos. Amos was the father of Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers. This was at the time of the exile to Babylon. ¹² After the exile to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the father of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. ¹⁴ Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Achim. Achim was the father of Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob. ¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary—of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ. ¹⁷ So there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen generations from the exile to Babylon to the Christ.

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly. ²⁰ As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²² Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: ²³ *Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, And they will call him, Emmanuel. (Emmanuel means "God with us.")* ²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. Joseph called him Jesus.

What's in a family?

Genealogy has been a popular pastime for generations, but before it was a hobby, it was a lifeline. Who you were connected to could raise your social standing and could be a gateway into a better life. In the case of Jesus, who he was related to was a big deal for Matthew's audience, who were ethnically and religiously Jewish. Traditional Jewish interpretation said the Messiah would be of David's lineage, so it was important that there was a connection to David if Matthew was to convince his audience that Jesus was the real deal. This lineage provides just that.

Aside from David, there are some other interesting names, particularly in the women that are included, as women generally weren't included in a patriarchal genealogy. Tamar is the first woman named, and she was Judah's widowed daughter-in-law who he saw while traveling and mistook her for a prostitute, slept with her, and became the father of twins by her (Genesis 38). It's a troublesome story that most people would probably try and hide, but that it is so specifically called out is worth noting. Rahab is mentioned, too, and she was the prostitute who hid the spies Joshua sent to Jericho as the Israelites were trying to enter the promised land. She's the second woman with a questionable back story, but who played an incredibly important role and is considered a heroine. Then there's Ruth, the daughter-in-law of Naomi who was a Moabite by birth, and when her husband died she elected to stay with Naomi as they sought a way to make a

life in a world where widowed women had little to no social mobility. Ruth's commitment to staying with Naomi is immortalized in the words of Ruth 1:16 - "Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." Ruth is a titan of faith, but her foreign ancestry created some problems for her. Finally, "the wife of Uriah" is mentioned, although very strangely, not by name. This woman is, of course, Bathsheba, who David saw bathing on her roof, lusted after her, got her pregnant, and had her husband, Uriah, sent to the front lines of battle in order to have him killed to hide the infidelity (2 Samuel 11). It's perhaps the most shameful episode of David's life, yet it's lifted up in this genealogy.

You could dive into the stories of each member of the lineage and find interesting things about the people, but focusing on the women gives us an incredible insight into the path that led us to Jesus. Jesus' family tree wasn't full of upstanding people, but contained many people with dark pasts - prostitution, incest, foreigners, infidelity, and murder. Jesus' own birth came with its own bit of controversy - resulting from an unexpected pregnancy before wedlock. And because Jesus was not the product of relations between Joseph and Mary, there's the question of whether or not he can claim the genealogy of Joseph anyway. Clearly this is a family tree with a long and difficult history - some incredible stories of faith and resilience, and some unexpected characters no one would expect in a King's family. It's a family tree perhaps like your own.

What Jesus' family tree and birth show us is that the family we are born into (or adopted into) will come with baggage. Everyone's family has it - though some maybe more than others. Despite some of the more unsavory parts of our lineage, we can be assured that God has claimed us and is doing something amazing through each of us. Jesus isn't our Lord because of who he was related to, he is our Lord because God chose to walk among us in the person of Jesus. Likewise, we don't have to be tethered to our family history. We have been claimed as God's own, and it's that claim that is strongest of all.

Holy God, parent of all creation, you blessed Jesus with a rich line of diverse and interesting ancestors. Through him you brought salvation to the people of this world. Bless our families; those we are embarrassed by and those we remember with pride; those related by blood and those brought to us by love. Help us to remember, above all, that we are all part of YOUR family. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Savior, our brother, we pray. Amen.