

## Genealogy of Jesus

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Let's be honest. There are certain sections of the Bible we avoid. We avoid some parts because we don't understand it. It's too weird. A woman turned into a pillar of salt<sup>2</sup>, terrifying mystical creatures with four wings and four faces<sup>3</sup>, and my personal favorite, a talking donkey<sup>4</sup>.

We avoid other parts because we do understand it and we don't like it. It steps on our toes. Turn the other cheek<sup>5</sup>, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you<sup>6</sup>, how often should I forgive: not seven times, but seventy times seven<sup>7</sup>.

Then there are those passages which are just plain old boring. We don't really care about the command to use blue, purple and scarlet threads to make the curtains of the tabernacle<sup>8</sup> or how many cubits long Noah's Ark is supposed to be<sup>9</sup>. And even worse: the genealogies. So-in-so begat so-in-so who begat so-in-so...

Yet, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reminds us that, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work."

So if that's true (and it is) then even the genealogies are worth our time. (And they are.)

So let's spend some time with one of the two genealogies of Jesus found in the Bible, the one that begins the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew was very intentional in choosing to start his book with the story of Jesus' ancestors. Genealogies were a very well known and specific style of Hebrew literature. This style had two primary purposes:

1. To point to a hero of the faith and
2. To show God's sovereign and intentional activity down through the generations

In this case, Matthew isn't pointing to just any hero, he's pointing to the ultimate hero, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the World.

*Matthew 1:1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

*2.Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3.and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, 4.and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5.and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,6.and Jesse the father of King David.*

*And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, 7.and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, 8.and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, 9.and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and*

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was offered November 29, 2009 while Rev. Degrenia was serving as the pastor of Allendale United Methodist Church in St. Petersburg, Florida

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 19:26

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 1:3-16

<sup>4</sup> Numbers 22

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:39

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:44

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 18:22

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 22 and following

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 6:15

*Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10. and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, 11. and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.*

*12. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13. and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, 14. and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, 15. and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, 16. and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.*

*17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.*

God is sovereign and God is intentional, especially when it comes to salvation. Matthew's list shows how God carefully prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Look how he begins, *"An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham."* (Matthew 1:1)

Matthew starts with a big, showy headline: Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. The name Jesus is Hebrew means "the salvation of Jehovah." Messiah is a Hebrew word meaning "anointed one." An anointed person was chosen by God, consecrated and set apart for holy purposes. Jesus is thus God's Anointed One, set apart to bring about God's saving purpose.

Who received anointing? Prophets, Priests, and Kings. Matthew was announcing that Jesus fulfilled for all time all three roles:

- God's prophet: the one who brings the fullness and truth of God's teaching
- God's great High Priest: the one who stands before God offering perfect prayer and perfect sacrifice for the people
- and God's ideal King: the one who delivers God's people from oppression and slavery. The one who rules them integrity and wisdom forever

Matthew continues, *"Jesus the Messiah, the son of David..."*

As soon as Matthew mentions King David, all the stories and promises about him would come flooding back to the listeners.

Ezekiel 37:24, 26-27

*My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. (Remember the other name given to Jesus? Emmanuel which means "God with us".)*

2 Samuel 7:16

*Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.*

Jeremiah 33:15

*In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land.*

Matthew continues, *"Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham."*

They hear the name of Father Abraham, the pioneer of faith and trust in God. They remember the stories and the covenant God made with Abraham: *I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* (Genesis 12:2-3)

The names keep coming, 42 of them:

- Jacob, the trickster who eventually changed his ways and was reconciled to God and his brother...
- wise King Solomon who built the temple... wicked King Ahaz who sacrificed his own son to a pagan god...
- Zerubbabel who led the first band of Jews home to Jerusalem from the captivity...

Matthew's readers were mostly Jewish. They would have been raised on these stories just like we know the stories of our ancestors. As each name was read, a wave of stories would wash over them.

You know the feeling. You're sitting around the family table and the stories begin. You've heard them before, but you don't care. You love hearing them. They are a part of your identity. Great Uncle Henry fought in the war and was decorated for his bravery. Grandpa John worked on the railroad. You have some people in your family lineage that make you very proud, maybe a Mayflower descendant, president or celebrity. You also have some that are an embarrassment to the family. No worries. So does Jesus.

We know people when we know their story. Just the mention of their name brings to mind their character and contributions. The same is true for the genealogies. When you know the people and their stories, the list isn't boring. It's rich and remarkable. Look up a few of them. (You may need the help of a Bible dictionary) You will discover that this list is an amazing testimony of God using the good, the bad and the ugly for the greater good, the salvation of the world.

In this list you will find the entire history of Israel: the first believers down through slavery in Egypt, freedom from slavery all the way to the high point of the Kingdom, the falling away from God and eventual exile and slavery in foreign lands, the return and rebuilding. Every act of mercy and grace, every miracle and victory down through the generations points to the ultimate act of mercy and grace, the promised Messiah, Jesus.

While you're home using your Bible dictionary to look up these people, notice there are women in this list. Biblical genealogies don't usually list women, so that would have caught their attention and should catch ours. Plus, these aren't the expected women. You would expect the matriarchs: Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel. Instead we get Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary. This is incredible since most of these women were poor. What's even more incredible is that most of them weren't Jewish. What sends it over the edge is that all of these women experienced great humiliation and yet God gave them the wisdom and courage to come through it.

- Tamar - accused of harlotry
- Rahab - a prostitute of Jericho who helped the Hebrew spies
- Ruth - a Moabite who left home to follow God and care for her poor mother-in-law
- Bathsheba - found herself queen due to murder and adultery
- Mary - suspected of adultery

Again the list shows God is sovereign and God is intentional. God wasn't just saving the people of Israel. God was saving the world. In Jesus, Abraham's covenant was being fulfilled, *"in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* (Genesis 12:2-3) From the very beginning the people of God were meant to be a diverse

people: all genders, ages, cultures, experiences and social standings. Nobody is an afterthought and nobody need be excluded from God's plan.

Down through the generations God is intentional, especially when it comes to salvation. This genealogy shows how God carefully prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, Savior of the world.

God is equally intentional about preparing for the second coming of Christ. God used all different kinds of people the first time and God hasn't changed that part of the plan. God wants to include you in the story of salvation. No matter who you are, no matter what you have done. So why don't you let go of the lies: I'm nobody special, God couldn't possibly want me after what I've done. Let go of the lies and say yes to your true identity and purpose. Child of God. Follower of Jesus, preparing the way of the Lord. Say yes to God. It is obvious from this list that God is already saying yes to you.