

Matthew 1: 1-17

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. ⁴ Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵ Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her ^[b] who had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot ^[c] Asa. ⁸ Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot ^[d] Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah begot ^[e] Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

¹² And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴ Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶ And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

INTRODUCTION:

The first page of the New Testament reads like an ancient Hebrew phone book. Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy that most people just skip, but it's there for an important reason. Why do we start our family Christmas readings of Matthew 1 in the middle of the chapter? Matthew begins his account of Christ's birth with a broad genealogy, but we had never made it a part of our Christmas reading. Virtually every name in the list reveals some lesson about God's grace. Together they clearly show how important God's grace was from generation to generation, as He nurtured and protected the lineage He had chosen to give birth to the Messiah.

The genealogies are included in Scripture for several reasons:

1. **They trace the royal line of Israel** - What this meant was that any claimant to the throne of Israel had to demonstrate genealogically that he descended from David and was in the line of royalty. Scripture records the infallible and authoritative record of that lineage.

- The lineage of Judah’s kings went back to David - God’s promise was that David’s offspring would bring forth the One who would deliver Israel and reign as King. In 2 Samuel 7:16, speaking through the prophet Nathan, God promised David, “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”
2. **They outline God’s dealings with His people** - They reveal how God’s sovereign hand has ordered human events to fulfill His own purposes despite tremendous obstacles. Mankind’s worst sin, rebellion, and treachery have utterly failed to thwart the grace of God.
 3. **They were essential for the conducting of important business** - Laws governing the buying and selling of property, for instance, were designed to keep internal boundaries intact. Land could not be bought and sold across tribal lines. Therefore a person’s genealogy was required simply to validate the sale of property.
 4. **The entire priesthood depended on genealogies** - All Israel’s priests had to be descendants of Levi. After the Babylonian captivity, Ezra used the genealogies to determine which priests had a legitimate claim to office. Those who couldn’t prove their heritage could not serve as priests.

For all those reasons, the genealogies were carefully recorded and guarded. The most important ones were preserved in Scripture. This practice went on for centuries, through the time of Jesus’ birth. In fact, when the New Testament begins, we find Joseph and Mary going up to be registered according to their own ancestry in Bethlehem, their ancestral home (Luke 2:3-4). The nation still identified people genealogically.

The two final genealogies in Scripture both trace the lineage of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). Some see these two genealogies as contradictory. A close look shows they are not. Matthew starts with Abraham and follows the line through David to Jesus via Joseph’s family. Luke starts with Jesus and outlines the genealogy of Mary’s family back through David and all the way back to Adam.

Note that Matthew doesn’t refer to Joseph as Joseph the father of Jesus, but as “the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born” (Matthew 1:16). Scripture is clear that Joseph was not the father of Jesus—God was.

Because Jesus had no human father, He couldn’t be a descendant of David except through His mother. Still, the legal right to rule always came through the father’s side, and this was true even in Jesus’ case, because He was legally Joseph’s eldest son. **We have two necessary genealogies:**

1. **Luke shows that through Mary, Jesus was literally a blood descendant of David.**
2. **Matthew proves that through His adopted father Joseph, Jesus was legally in the royal line. In every way possible, He had the right to rule.**

The family line of Jesus would have been scandalous to the original audience: devout, religious Jews. It was their family line, but the episodes it highlights are not exactly a highlight reel of heroism. By showcasing the sordid details of the family, God uses the genealogy of Jesus to emphasize the fact that we are all sinners and we all need to be born again by Jesus into a new family. The human ancestry of Jesus includes adultery, murder, incest, and prostitution. There are some serious knots in Jesus' family tree! But the prevailing message is that no matter who we are, where we come from, or how bad we are, there is room for us in Jesus' family.

SETTING THE STAGE

For over a thousand years, God's people awaited the coming of their Messiah, a deliverer who would take away their sins, conquer their enemies, and usher in his kingdom. God raised up prophets to continually call his people to turn from their sins and trust in the promise of his coming. After the ministry of the prophet Malachi, however, there came 400 years of silence in which no prophet spoke for God to his people.

During that time, the religious leaders and teachers began to put their hope in their own goodness, morality, and obedience to God's laws. They grew increasingly legalistic in their behavior and also increasingly judgmental of other races and cultures, believing they were better than other people, and were blind to their own sin of self-righteous pride.

MATTHEW THE AUTHOR - Into this people and time, Jesus was born to a virgin teenager from a dumpy rural town. Later, one of the disciples who traveled with Jesus was a Jewish tax collector named Matthew. People considered Matthew the equivalent of an IRS agent with a part-time job as a terrorist because he collected taxes for the oppressive Roman government and obtained his salary by extorting excessive amounts from the poorest and most vulnerable people. He went from crook to Christian and followed Jesus' ministry, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back into heaven. After, the Spirit of God inspired Matthew to write the book of the Bible bearing his name.

A CURIOUS INTRODUCTION

Matthew opens his eyewitness account of Jesus' life with a list of names: the genealogy of Jesus' family on his adoptive father Joseph's side. Matthew wrote his Gospel in large part for the Jews to prove that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who fulfilled all of the Old Testament promises.

Therefore, he begins his gospel by stating that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's covenant to David, which promised that the Messiah would be a king who ruled over an everlasting kingdom,

and the fulfillment of God's covenant to Abraham, which promised that all people would be blessed because of the Messiah.

One intriguing aspect of Matthew's genealogy is the inclusion of prostitutes, pagans and polygamist, et... which was uncommon.

- Solomon who had a 700 concubines and backslid of God
- Manasseh who practiced witchcraft, worshiped the stars and a sacrificed his own son

Even more intriguing is the type of women who are mentioned as members of Jesus' family, namely Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary.

Messed up people in Jesus Genealogy

1. **TAMAR SLEPT WITH HER FATHER-IN-LAW** - MATTHEW 1:3; GENESIS 38

- Judah had chosen Tamar as a wife for his son, Er. But Er was such a wicked man that God killed him. Judah then ordered Er's brother, Onan, to marry the widow in order to produce an heir, as was the legal custom of the time. Onan was happy to have sex with Tamar repeatedly, but he refused to impregnate or marry her, and so she was forced to live as a widow.
- Eventually, Judah's wife died, and Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute and waited for her father-in-law by the side of the road. Judah picked her up and had sex with her, impregnating her with twin boys. Judah still didn't know the identity of the prostitute when he found out that Tamar was pregnant, so he ordered that she be put to death. In a great Jerry Springer-like plot twist, however, Tamar revealed that Judah was grandpa-daddy, so he cancelled the death sentence.
- Judah sleeps with the woman engaged to his son ... while she's disguised as a prostitute. Their son is in Jesus' genealogy.

2. **RAHAB WAS A LYING PROSTITUTE** - MATTHEW 1:5; JOSHUA 1-2, 6:17; HEBREWS 11:31; JAMES 2:25

- The name Rahab means *pride, insolence, savagery*. She was a Canaanite, people who were great enemies of God and his people. Vocationally, she was a prostitute, but is best known for being a good liar.
- God had promised he would deliver Rahab's city of Jericho to Joshua. Joshua sent two spies from Shittim to Jericho for reconnaissance. The spies were pursued by enemy soldiers, but Rahab hid the men in her home, lied to the soldiers, and spared the lives of God's spies. She then converted to Jehovah and eventually became the great-great-grandma of King David.

3. **RUTH WAS THE RESULT OF INCEST** - MATTHEW 1:5; GENESIS 19:30–38; RUTH 1–4
 - Ruth was a Moabite, an entire race of people who came about through incest. A man named Lot thought the world was about to end, so he headed for the hills (literally) with his two daughters. There weren't any other men in the mountains, so his daughters got their father drunk and had sex with him, and the Moabite people came out of those children conceived by Lot's daughters.
 - That whole people group came from Abraham's nephew Lot, who was raped by his daughters (Gn 19:30–37). Moabites weren't even allowed in the Lord's assembly (Dt 23:3).
 - The Moabite people carried that stigma into Ruth's day, but she converted to Jehovah after her Jewish husband died, and she became one of the godliest women in the Bible. She got married again, this time to a godly man named Boaz, and became King David's great-grandma.

4. **BATHSHEBA COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH KING DAVID** - MATTHEW 1:6; 2 SAMUEL 11
 - Uriah the Hittite, a soldier in King David's army, was married to a beautiful woman: Bathsheba. Uriah went off to battle while David remained safe at home. While David was strolling on his rooftop one day, he saw Bathsheba bathing. He was so taken with the woman that he had her brought to his palace, where he seduced her. She later informed David that she was pregnant.
 - After a botched attempt to cover up the scandal, David conspired to abandon her husband on the front lines so that he would be murdered by the enemy. David's plan was successful, and Bathsheba the adulteress became the wife of King David and mother to King Solomon.

5. **MARY HAD A BAD REPUTATION** - MATTHEW 1:16, 1:18–2:23
 - Mary was a godly young woman who was betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph when God spoke to her and told her that she would give birth to Jesus. At first, Joseph was grieved. Understandably, he believed she had been unfaithful to him. But then an angel appeared to him and explained that Mary was still a virgin and that her child was the Savior born in fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14.
 - Joseph obeyed the Lord, married Mary, and adopted Jesus and became his dad. Throughout their life, however, people doubted Mary's story, and many wrongly believed that she was a sinful, perverted, unfaithful liar.

CONCLUSION:

After a long line of sinners, Jesus came to live without sin, though he was tempted to sin in every way that we are. Upon his death, all of the sins of his people were placed upon him, and he died to pay the penalty for our sins. His resurrection was the defeat of sin and death.

By opening his book with an honest account of Jesus' heritage, Matthew, the extortionist-turned-pastor, is telling us that there is room for all of us in God's family, by grace. There is room for men and women, rich and poor, young and old, moral and immoral, Jew and Gentile, perverted and virgin, religious and irreligious, liars and truth tellers, murderers and their victims in the family of God, by grace. There's room for you no matter what you've done or what your family history may be.