

Advent: Sin is the Point!

Matthew 1:1 ESV (Pg. 471) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, 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 Ram, **4** and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab 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 David the king. 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 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 Shealtiel, and Shealtiel 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 Christ. **17** So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. **18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

- I. When Matthew presents the story of Jesus to the Jewish world, he begins with a genealogy. From the beginning of the Jewish nation, detailed genealogies were kept to establish a person’s heritage, inheritance, legitimacy and rights¹.
 - A. It’s interesting that the Greek word for genealogy is “Genesis”, a word that means “beginning”. That’s why Genesis is the name of the Bible’s first book.
 1. The book of Genesis records the beginning of creation; including the origin of the universe, the earth, humankind. It includes the origin story of human sin, with the promise of redemption by God. Genesis also introduces us to the people of God, set apart from the others to be his very own possession.

2. Similarly, Matthew 1 shows us a new beginning for all of creation. The redemption of mankind is at the threshold, and a new King named Jesus is set to establish a new kingdom, in fact, the very Kingdom of God on earth!²
- B. All of this is introduced by the lengthy genealogy we read earlier. It not only details Jewish history, but lets us know what all history is truly about. History is not primarily about the Greeks or Romans, or how Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492. The centerpiece of all human history is none other than Jesus!
 1. From the garden of Eden a promise was made that the “seed of the woman” would one day crush the head of the serpent. All the priests and prophets of the Old Testament looked forward to that coming day. Every nation and king, good or wicked, was an unwitting tool that God used to move the story along until the promises were fulfilled at a bloody cross and empty tomb.
 2. **Galatians 4:4 ESV** But when *the fullness of time had come*, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Since the day of fulfillment, though some reject and others accept the reality of it, all of history is placed in context by the response of men and women to the promises that have been fulfilled in Christ, and the redemption granted.
- II. Matthew’s genealogy would also be significant to the Jews in another way; the heading in verse 1 says that Jesus was the Son of Abraham, and the Son of David. We may read those words and think vaguely of a couple of Old Testament characters, but Christ’s connection to them would be most important to the Jews.
 - A. Abraham was told by God: **Genesis 22:17 ESV** I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, **18** and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”
 1. To announce that Jesus is the Son of Abraham meant that all the promises associated with Abraham’s offspring were about to be fulfilled in Christ.
 - a) It was a promise that his family would be as numerous as the sand of the seashore, not limited to the borders a tiny middle-eastern country. The Gentiles would one day be included with in the people of God!
 - b) They were promised that they would be victorious over their enemies, not left under the heel of other conquering empires like Rome and Babylon.
 2. This is summed up in a promise that the nations of the earth (again, not just Jews) would be blessed in Abraham’s offspring. Through Christ, these promises have been fulfilled! Abraham’s family includes everyone who calls on the name of the Lord. Through Christ, we are victorious over our cruelest enemies; the devil, sin and death. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile³.
 3. To say Christ is the Son of Abraham would have communicated a lot!
 - B. Christ was also “David’s Son”. God had promised David **2 Samuel 7:16** And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. David was Israel’s most revered King, and he was promised by God that someone from his family would always reign.

1. But for almost 500 hundred years, no heir of David had ruled. The people had sinned for decades, and therefore God had sent them into exile for 70 years. When they returned from Babylon, they were oppressed by several empires (Persians, Greeks, Romans), and they had no king of their own.
 2. For Matthew to declare that Jesus was the Son of David didn't mean that he was merely a descendant of the King, but that he was "the" Son of David, who would return to the throne and reign forever in righteousness, fulfilling all of the covenant promises God had made to his people so long ago.
- III. After Jesus' lineage and heritage is validated, we are given a list of 42 names as landmarks of Covenant history. It includes the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, faithful Ruth, and kings like Solomon, all leading to Joseph who would be known as Jesus' earthly father. Let's take a closer look at this list of names.
- A. Let's begin where Matthew ends: **"So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations."** What is the significance of these three sets of 14 names?
1. First, the list has a couple significant gaps of several hundred years; but this is not an error or an oversight. There are several reasons for the omissions.
 - a) Matthew is moving through the highlights of Jewish history and not intending to give an exhaustive list. If you asked me about American Presidents, I might mention Washington, Lincoln, Kennedy and Obama, but not Garfield or Fillmore, to give you a quicker overview of 200 years.
 - b) Secondly, Jews would sometimes summarize genealogical lists like this for ease of memorization. And it could be intentional symbolic symmetry.⁴
 2. In the complexity of Jewish thought, a numeric value was given to the consonants in a word (gematria), so David's name without vowels would be D (4)-V(6)-D(4) (4+6+4=14), and David's name is the 14th on Matthew's list. This could further emphasize Christ's connection to the Davidic promises⁵.
 3. But also consider another numerological pattern: There are 6 sets of 7's in 42. 6 is the number of man in Jewish thought, and 7 is the number of perfection, and as such, it is associated with God. Matthew may have been pointing to the fact that Jesus was both perfectly God and perfectly man.
- B. But we mustn't miss the main points of Matthew's inclusion of this genealogy. First (as we have mentioned), to validate the legitimacy of Christ's Lordship based on the promises and covenants given to the Jewish fathers. Second, it was to show that Christ was not a myth or a legend, but someone who was born into, worked within, and supremely impacted actual human events. Look at the list of names and seriously consider with me who is included in it...
1. First, the list includes 5 women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, Mary). This should be very comforting to you ladies! In the first century, women were segregated from the men in temple worship (just as the gentiles were!). Their testimony were never considered credible in the Jewish courts of law.
 - a) But yet in the middle of such a culture, God elevates 5 of them to be recognized as important players is the fulfillment of his promises.
 - b) Though Jewish culture shamed God's daughters, **Psalm 34:5 ESV Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.**

2. But these women weren't named in the list because they were hall of fame believers! Tamar is remembered for having an incestuous encounter with her father-in-law while pretending to be a prostitute! Rahab was a prostitute! Both she and Ruth were gentiles. Bathsheba committed adultery with King David. Mary was an unwed pregnant teenager. All of these women would certainly be considered the black sheep of most of our families!
 - a) But Tamar bore the sons that insured the line of Judah, the tribe from which Jesus ascended. Rahab joined herself to God's people when her city (Jericho) was about to be sacked, saving her family.
 - b) Ruth, the Moabite, also embraced the people of God and became the grandmother of King David. It was Bathsheba's son, Solomon, who, though he was not the firstborn, was chosen by God to become king of Israel. And Mary, pregnant by God's working, brought forth Jesus!
 3. And it wasn't just the women who were rascals, even many of the kings on the list were no gold medal winners! Solomon was a sex addict and eventually an idolater because of it. Rehoboam was a petulant fool. Ahaz offered his son as a human sacrifice. Manasseh, Amos and Jeconiah all led the people into terrible idolatry that eventually led to their exile.
 - a) And the "good" kings themselves were terribly flawed. We all know David's story, but Asaph, Uzziah and Hezekiah, though generally righteous, made grievous errors, sinning at some point in their stories.
 - b) The list begins with the Patriarchs of Israel. Surely they were better people! Nope. Abraham, twice pimped his wife out to save his skin. Isaac did the same and showed favoritism to one of his kids, causing all kinds of problems. Jacob was always cheating somebody out of something!
- IV. You might ask, "Why would Jesus want all the dirty laundry of his family written down forever in the Bible? Surely he would have a more G-rated lineage for us to examine. What does this say about Jesus, having come from such a bunch of outcasts?" But I want you to realize their sin isn't a glitch in the story, it's the point!
- A. Generation after generation of God's people, though having the covenants and promises, were tripped up, robbed, and many of them destroyed by their own wayward hearts, idolatry, and spiritual adultery. Sin had done them in.
 1. But all through their history, God sent them prophets who called them to repent, and to reiterate promises of a coming One to eternally deliver them.
 2. These promises began in Genesis, and continued to be delivered by the prophets through the period of the good and evil kings, and even kept coming throughout (and shortly after) their sorrowful exile in Babylon.
 - B. Then...nothing! God was silent for over 400 years in one of the most tragic times in Jewish history while Greeks desecrated the Temple, hoisting blasphemies on them. Then came the cruel, oppressive, high-taxing Romans.
 1. The Jews still had the recorded words of the prophets, but surely must have wondered at times if God remembered their sorrows. It had been so long!
 2. Then one day out of nowhere, an angel visits a virgin teen-aged girl with a message from Yahweh! **Luke 1:30b ESV** "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. **32** He will be great and

will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end...**35b** The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

- C. After all the waiting, and the longing, the time had come! One would sit on David's throne, and reign over the house of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob forever! Moreover, he would be revealed as holy, literally the Son of the most High God!
- D. "And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'" A similar message was given to Jesus' hesitant earthly father. "call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
 - 1. Jesus name in Hebrew was Yeshua, or in english, Joshua. In the Old Testament, Joshua was God's choice to lead his people out of their sinful wanderings in the desert and into the land of God's promises. His name literally meant "Yahweh Saves". Joseph would have gotten the connection.
 - 2. But Matthew spoke of "The book of the genealogy of Jesus **Christ**..." What does the title Christ (Greek: Christos) mean? It is the equivalent of the Hebrew "mashiakh" (Messiah) which means anointed (chosen) one.
- E. So Jesus Christ appears, the anointed deliverer! But from what shall he save and deliver his people? The Romans and other Gentiles, waiting to take advantage of God's people? They had had military victories before and times of great national peace and prosperity. They never lasted for one simple reason... the people would always eventually break covenant with God through idolatry.
 - 1. So instead of battling the fruit of their national heartache, Jesus sets his sights on the root of their problems: "he will save his people from their sins."
 - 2. Sin, and its conspiring agents, the devil and death, would be dealt with by the greatest King, mightiest Warrior, and most effective Deliverer Israel could ever imagine. Sickness would dissolve in this presence, demons would shriek and beg when he showed up, the poor and the marginalized would be given hope, and even the dead would rise! Yahweh himself was here!
- F. Joseph was told that Christ's birth would fulfill a 600 year old prophecy from the lips of Isaiah: "'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)" God with us, not distant, not regarding us as our sins deserve, but with us, comforting us, forgiving us, helping us, accepting us, relieving us, and re-making us into his image.
- V. This is the joy of the advent season! We all know it's certainly not a fat man delivering toys, but a Holy God delivering souls! Jesus told the disciples, **Matthew 13:17 ESV** For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.
 - A. But you have been blessed to live in the time where that which was anticipated has come to pass; that which was earnestly longed for has been fulfilled! Christ

has come, he has completed his work, delivered his people, and has set down at the right hand of the Father, enthroned in righteousness and glory forever!

1. Let us not forget that this Christmas! Let's not be distracted by all the busyness and materialistic "white noise" surrounding this season.
 2. Instead of getting bent out of shape because you think a godless culture has kicked Christ out of Christmas (what did you expect them to do?), be found worshipping! **1 Peter 3:15a NIV** But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.
- B. And don't forget that we too are waiting, just as the Jews did between Abraham and Christ, But we aren't waiting for Jesus to save us from our sins (he's already done that once and for all!), we are waiting for him to return, put an end to our enemies forever, recreate and resurrect our bodies, and reign over the universe from earth eternally, as we praise and serve him, always beholding his beauty!
- VI. Today, let's let the table remind us of a few things. As we eat actual bread and partake of an actual cup, let's remember that Jesus entered human history in an actual human body, fully experiencing human joys and suffering. Let's remember that that actual body was torn and shattered, and the blood flowed freely for one purpose: to save his people from their sin. Let's not forget that he has risen and is reigning, and has promised to share this cup with us one day in the new kingdom!
- A. **Matthew 26:26 ESV** Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." **27** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, **28** for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29** I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."
- B. Benediction: **Titus 3:4 ESV** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, **6** whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, **7** so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

¹ ESV Study Bible, Large Print ESV Bible; note on Matthew 1:1-17; Pg. 1959 © 2008, Crossway, Wheaton IL.

² ESV Study Bible, Large Print ESV Bible; note on Matthew 1:1-2:23; Pg. 1959 © 2008, Crossway, Wheaton IL.

³ Romans 1:16

⁴ ESV Study Bible, Large Print ESV Bible; note on Matthew 1:17; Pg. 1960 © 2008, Crossway, Wheaton IL.

⁵ *ibid.*