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Matthew 1:1-17 Whose Son, is HE?

Matthew 1:1-17, *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

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

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

¹²And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. ¹³Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵Eliud 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.

one of those the parts of the Bible that we skip over
Other oft-skipped parts would be the first several chapters of the book of Numbers, or the Table of Nations in Genesis 10.

Why did Matthew begin with all these names?

V 1, *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

Now these words can mean a record of genealogy in introducing the genealogy to follow, but they also serve as an introduction to the whole gospel of Matthew and in God's providence to the whole New Testament itself.

Just as the Old Testament begins with the book of Genesis, so the New Testament begins with "the book of genesis of Jesus Christ."

Here then begins the story of Jesus, and Matthew's genealogy provides the perfect bridge from the Old Testament to the New.

There are four ways to view this genealogy.

1. You could just see it as a long list of names.
2. You could look a little bit closer and see that the names are divided into three sets of fourteen.
3. If you look at the beginning of each of those sections, you will see that they are headed up by three major persons or divisions in Israel's history – Abraham, David, and the exile.
4. If you looked carefully you would notice that there are four women named in the course of the genealogy.

There are four ways of looking at the genealogy, and four things we can learn by looking at each of them.

Jesus' birth is rooted in history,
Jesus' birth is rooted in God's sovereignty,
Jesus' birth is rooted in God's promises, and
Jesus' birth is rooted in God's grace.

Everyone has a past, and Jesus is no exception. So, let us take a closer look at his genealogy.

1. Jesus' birth is rooted in History

First, Jesus' birth is rooted in history. If there is anything this long list of names teaches us, it is that Jesus had a past. He did not just come out of nowhere. Jesus' birth is rooted in history.

A. The importance of genealogies (1 Chronicles 1-9)

Genealogies are extremely important in many cultures. Even in our culture more people are interested in researching their family history. Internet tools are available to help you trace your family line.

Learning your family history gives you a new sense of identity. We often call it roots, and it is fascinating to find your place in history. Some of us even record our family trees in our Bibles, which is interesting because Matthew recorded Jesus' family tree in all our Bibles!

Genealogies were especially important to the Jewish people. They were maintained by the Sanhedrin, and until the records were destroyed in 70 A.D., every Jew could tell you their lineage and which tribe they came from.

It was not unusual to begin a book with a genealogy. For example, the Jewish historian Josephus began his autobiography with his genealogy.

If you have ever read the book of 1 Chronicles, the first nine chapters are all one long genealogy!

Genealogies are important, because people are important, and each person is important to God.

B. Establishes Jesus' true humanity (Matthew 1:1-16)

By beginning his gospel with Jesus' genealogy, Matthew establishes Jesus' true humanity.

Jesus is no demigod from pagan mythology but a real man with a family tree.

He is a real person with parents, and grandparents, and brothers and sisters and cousins. There are forty-six names from the past listed in Matthew's genealogy.

It is interesting, the genealogy runs all the way up to Joseph, and then switches tracks at the last minute to Mary!

V 16, *And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

Over and over again in the genealogy, we read "this person was the father of that person. That person was the father of this person."

But when we come to Joseph, the father language is conspicuously missing. That is because Jesus was born of Mary, but merely adopted by Mary's husband, Joseph.

So why even have this long genealogy leading up to Joseph if Joseph was not Jesus' birth father?

Because “by Palestinian law, the head of a family was no less the father of his adopted children than of those children that he had procreated.”

So, Jesus’ adoptive relationship with Joseph places him in a real relationship with all the people who came before him. Jesus’ birth is rooted in history.

According to Numbers chapter 26 and chapter 35, you had to know your tribe, you had to know your family, and you had to know your father’s house so that you could identify yourself in the right location in the land.

So, a pedigree was very important, tribal identification essential. Under certain circumstances, according to the Book of Ruth, chapters 3 and 4 transfer of property required accurate knowledge of the family tree. God wanted to keep tribal land within the tribe, and so there had to be pedigree to make some business transactions with land.

Another interesting thing is indicated to us in **Ezra 2**.

When the Israelites return after their Babylonian captivity, many of them were claiming to be priests and they were claiming to be the tribe of Levi.

God was very serious about who was a priest. Anybody who tried to play the role of a priest and was not was in great danger.

So, when these people came back and tried to claim the right to the priesthood, they had to be proven.

Ezra 2:62, *These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled.*

If their name was not found, they were excluded from the priesthood. So, they needed to know their pedigree for the exchange of land for their tribal location and for their priestly identification when they returned from captivity.

Even when the New Testament begins, what is it that Joseph and Mary were going down to be registered according to their own ancestry in their own place, because they were still identifying people in that manner.

Luke 2:1-4, *And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,*

Those identifications were still in existence at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ.

By the way, the writings of Josephus, the ancient historian, support the use of ancestral files as a part of Jewish culture around the time of Jesus Christ.

So, this was a very common thing. The Jews were keen on everybody having their pedigree and knowing exactly to whom they belong.

2. Jesus' birth is rooted in God's sovereignty

Jesus' birth is rooted in God's sovereignty. Matthew demonstrates this by dividing Jesus' genealogy into three sections of fourteen names each.

A. The use of selective genealogies (Genesis 5 & 11; Matthew 1:1,8,11)

Before we look at the meaning of Matthew's divisions, we must first look at the use of selective genealogies in the Bible.

The Bible often uses selective genealogies to condense historical accounts and to highlight the most important names.

For example, the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 are both broken into groups of ten names each.

We need to remember that the ancient world used the word "father" not only to mean father, but it could also mean grandfather or great-grandfather or even ancestor.

We see an example of this in Matthew in verse one where Jesus is called “the son of David, the son of Abraham.” (Matthew 1:1) Now we know that this is not just three generations.

Abraham was not David’s father, and David was not Jesus’ father.

But in verse one Matthew highlights the most important names in the sequence.

That is just the way genealogies worked in the culture, and that’s just what the word father meant in the culture. Everyone knew what Matthew meant. Matthew was simply showing that Jesus was descended from David who was descended from Abraham.

There are other examples of selective names in Jesus’ genealogy as well.

V 8, *Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah*

Jehoram was actually the great-great-grandfather of Uzziah.

Matthew skips over three generations here, leaving out Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah.

Matthew does it again in verse 11.

V11, *Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.*

Jeremiah 22:30, *Thus says the Lord: 'Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.'* ”

None of Jeconiah's offspring will ever sit on the throne of David. That was the curse on Jeconiah of Jeremiah.

If Jesus had been the real son of Joseph, he never could have sat on the throne of David.

He would be under the curse. Yet, he had to be the legal son of Joseph to have the right.

So, God had to devise a plan by which he would be the legal heir to the throne, but that he would not be in the line of David descending through Jeconiah.

God did it by the virgin birth, bypassing the actual blood line of Jeconiah and yet carrying the royal right to reign and descending the blood through the side of Mary.

How God guarded every single detail.

The virgin birth solved it.

The reason for the genealogy is to present the fact that this is the one who has the right to reign.

It may take me a long time to unscramble the significance of this, but all the Jewish people had to do was read it and they got the message.

They knew their Old Testament.

They knew the curse on Jeconiah.

They knew their pedigrees.

Matthew is establishing that he has the right to be king.

Josiah was actually the grandfather of Jeconiah, and Matthew skips over King Jehoiakim.

This can seem confusing to us because we think of genealogies as inclusive.

We want to make sure we list every single name. But for the Jews it was okay to highlight the most important names and to list grandfathers or ancestors instead of just fathers.

Perhaps the closest parallel we have in our own culture is when we call Mahatma Gandhi “the father of our country.” We do not mean that Gandhi was a particularly prolific Dad, but that he was the founder of our country, and so we use the word “father” in a different way.

Even Apostle Paul uses the similar way.

Romans 11:1, *I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

Now all of this has changed today. Jews today do not know this. They have absolutely no record of their tribal ancestry today.

AD 70, every record has been destroyed!

None is left. They cannot trace it at all. It is completely vanished. No Jew existent in the world today could ever prove himself to be a son of David.

If anybody comes along claiming to be the Messiah, he will never be able to prove it. There are some Orthodox Jews who still believe the Messiah is going to come, but the problem is there will never be any lineal way to prove that.

What does this mean?

Jesus Christ is the last verifiable claimant to David's throne. If he is not the Messiah, nobody else can ever lay believable claim to it.

That is it!

B. Three groups of fourteen generations (Matthew 1:17)

But in this genealogy, we have what we call a descending record leading through Joseph to Jesus. A descending record. It comes right on down from David and Abraham, descending through Joseph to Jesus.

In the New Testament, Jesus' genealogy is also recorded in the third chapter of Luke. But the genealogy in Luke is the reverse. It is an ascending genealogy. It starts with Jesus and goes back through Mary. So here you have a genealogy coming down through Joseph and there you have a genealogy going back through Mary. One begins with Jesus, the other ends with Jesus. It just goes both ways, and it all comes out the same in the end.

Now there are some other distinctions between this one and the Luke genealogy.

Matthew is showing the legal descent of Jesus as the King of Israel.

Luke is showing the blood line.

What is the difference?

The difference is this. The royal line always was passed through the father. It always came through the father.

But Jesus had no human father.

So, in order to have the blood line to reign, he had to be a descendant of David through his mother, as well.

The line of Mary is also the line of David.

So, through Mary comes the line of David and through Joseph comes the line of David. Through Mary he has the blood of David, and through Joseph he has the right to reign that belonged to David, even though Joseph was not his father in terms of actuality he was his legal father.

Matthew follows the royal line through David and Solomon, David's son.

But David had another son was Nathan. Mary's line came through Nathan. So, what you have is one line coming down through David, and then it goes this way through Solomon and this way through Nathan.

Through Nathan you come to Mary and through Solomon you come to Joseph.

Both of them of the seed of David.

Both of them passing on royal blood.

So lineally blood line he is of David. Legally as heir to the throne he is of David, both by his mother and his father. He is the actual seed of David through Mary. He is the legal heir of David through Joseph.

So why then does Matthew divide his genealogy into three groups of fourteen generations?

V17, *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.*

Matthew is speaking theologically here. He is showing that God is sovereign over the stages of Israel's history.

The time from Abraham to David was a time of rising power as God's people multiplied and came to the Promised Land and the kingdom was established.

The time from David to the exile was a time of declining power as the nation of Israel was divided and rebelled against God and was eventually dispersed in the exile.

The time from the exile to Christ was a time of rebuilding as a remnant returned to the land and the sacrifices at the temple were reinstated and the people waited for the coming Messiah.

Matthew is speaking theologically. He has selectively highlighted various names in the genealogy to balance the sections out to fourteen names each.

The number fourteen was very significant in Judaism. Hebrew letters were assigned numerical values, and every good Jew would know that fourteen was the numerical value of King David's name. (D = 4, V[W] = 6, D = 4).

Fourteen is also double the number seven which is the number of completeness in Scripture.

So, three groups of fourteen equals six groups of seven, which would mean Jesus was born at the beginning of the seventh seven, a fitting and climactic place for the Messiah's birth.

In other words, for Matthew three times fourteen equals God's sovereignty. Matthew is showing that God was sovereign over all the persons and events leading up to Jesus' birth, and that Jesus is the climax of Israel's history. It all leads to Jesus. Jesus' birth is rooted in God's sovereignty.

3. Jesus' birth is rooted in God's promises

Matthew has not only divided his genealogy into three sections, but each section has to do with a specific person or event in Israel's history.

What is significant about each person or event is that God made specific promises to all three?

All three of those promises had to do with the birth of a son.

Sounds a little like Christmas, doesn't it?

A. God's promise to Abraham:

God's promise to Abraham.

Genesis 22:18, *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

God promised Abraham that he would have a son and that through his son all nations would be blessed.

Now in one sense that son was Isaac. Isaac was a miracle child. His mother was barren, and both his parents were in their nineties when he was born.

Yet Paul in the New Testament shows us that this promise was really fulfilled in Christ.

Galatians 3:16, *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.*

The miraculous birth of Isaac in the Old Testament foreshadows the miraculous birth of Jesus in the New Testament.

So, Matthew's genealogy both begins and ends with the miraculous birth of a child in fulfilment of God's promises.

B. God's promise to David:

God also made a promise to David about a son.

2 Samuel 7:12-16, *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ’*

This promised son was Solomon, but Solomon turned away from God and did not sit on the throne forever. So, this promise also awaited future fulfillment in Christ.

Matthew began his gospel

V 1, *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

Matthew not only uses the word “king” more than any other writer in the New Testament.

He also speaks of the “son of David” more than any other writer in the New Testament.

Jesus is both,

- ✓ the promised son of Abraham and
- ✓ the promised son of David.

C. God's promise to the exiles:

– a child will be born (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-9)

The third section on the exile.

God made promises to Abraham and David about a son, he also made promises to the exiles about a son.

Isaiah 9:6-7, *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

The book of Isaiah was written to warn God's people about the coming exile and to give them comfort during the exile. The exile was the lowest moment in Israel's history.

They suffered the loss of Jerusalem, the loss of the temple, and the loss of their freedom.

It seemed like all God's promises had been lost. But Isaiah prophesied about this child to be born whose government and peace would never end.

Earlier he spoke about a virgin giving birth to a child.

Isaiah 7:14, Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Although Matthew will speak more specifically about the virgin birth in the second half of the chapter, he has already hinted at it in the genealogy in verse 16 where Joseph was named, not as the father of Jesus, but as "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." (Matthew 1:16)

Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that all nations will be blessed through him.

Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise to David that a king will rule forever on his throne.

Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise to the exiles that a child will be born who will reign overall.

Jesus' birth is rooted in God's promises.

4. Jesus' birth is rooted in God's grace

We learn this from the women Matthew includes in the genealogy. It was highly unusual for any woman to be included in a Jewish genealogy. Yet Matthew includes four.

If you asked any good Jewish person what four women would most likely be included in an Old Testament genealogy, the answer would easily be Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah. They were the wives of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Matthew lists

- Tamar,
- Rahab,
- Ruth and
- Bathsheba.

Four women with questionable backgrounds.

Everyone has a few nuts in their family tree. Jesus had some skeletons in his family closet.

Let us take a brief look at each of these women and their questionable backgrounds.

A. Tamar: incest (Genesis 38:1-30)

Tamar had incest in her background. Judah was her father-in-law. When Judah lost his wife, Tamar slept with Judah and gave birth to twins. Those twins were Perez and Zerah, and through Perez the messianic line continued.

Jesus had incest in his family line.

B. Rahab: prostitution (Joshua 2:1-24, 6:22-25)

Rahab was a prostitute who lived in the city of Jericho. She became the mother of Boaz, the great-grandfather of King David.

Jesus had a prostitute in his family line.

C. Ruth: from Moab (Deuteronomy 23:3-6; Ruth 1:1-7)

Ruth was from Moab.

Deuteronomy 23:3, *“No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.”*

Yet God had mercy on Ruth. She not only came to Israel, but she also married Boaz and became the great-grandmother of King David.

Jesus had foreign blood in his family line.

D. Bathsheba: adultery and murder (1 Samuel 11:1-27)

Although Matthew does not actually name her but instead calls her “Uriah’s wife.” (Matthew 1:6) This reminds us not only of David’s adultery with Bathsheba but his murder of Uriah to cover up the sin.

Jesus had adultery and murder in his family line.

What are to make of these four women in Jesus’ genealogy?

Jesus’ birth was rooted in God’s grace!

Jesus’ family line was populated not with righteous Jews but with sinners like you and me.

Not only that, but all four women were non-Jews:

Tamar was a Canaanite.

Rahab was from Jericho.

Ruth was from Moab.

Bathsheba was married to a Hittite.

This teaches us that Jesus came for all people from all nations – just as God promised Abraham so many years before.

Matthew 9:13, *But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

Romans 8:3, *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,*

Hebrews 2:11, *For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,*

Christ is the kind of person who is not ashamed of sinners in fact, He even puts them in His family tree!

Jesus came not for the righteous but for sinners.

Jesus' birth was rooted in history.

Jesus' birth was rooted in God's sovereignty.

Jesus' birth was rooted in God's promises.

Jesus' birth was rooted in God's grace.

Conclusion:

It is important for you to realize that your life also is rooted in history, in God's sovereignty, in God's promises, and in God's grace.

Your life is rooted in history (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12)

You too have a genealogy. You are descended from Adam. We are all sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. Unfortunately, that is not a good thing. Because when you trace your lineage back to Adam, your history includes Adam's sin, the original sin which affects everyone in his line, including you.

Psalm 51:5, *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.*

You might wonder why David would consider himself sinful at birth, even before he was old enough to commit a sin. The answer is because he was descended from Adam.

Romans 5:12, *"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."*

We are all descended from Adam, and so we all share in Adam's sin. Your life is rooted in history.

Your life is rooted in God's sovereignty (Psalm 139:16; Acts 17:26)

Your life is also rooted in God's sovereignty. God is sovereign over all the minute details of your life.

Psalm 139:16, *"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

Acts 17:26, *"From one man [God} made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."*

Your life is in God's hands. Your life is rooted in God's sovereignty.

Your life is rooted in God's promises (John 6:37; Acts 2:38-39)

We are all sinners by birth, but God's promises are greater than your sin.

John 6:37, *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."*

Later, Peter preached to the crowd on Pentecost.

Acts 2:38-39, *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you*

will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children.”

The promise is for you and for all who will believe. Your life is rooted in God’s promises.

Your life is rooted in God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5)

Ephesians 2:8-9, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

Titus 3:4-5, *“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.”*

God’s message for you through Jesus’ genealogy is a message of hope and peace.

Jesus Christ has come.

He is the son of David, the son of Abraham.

He is the fulfilment of all God’s promises.

Jesus extends the promise of salvation to all who believe in Him.

