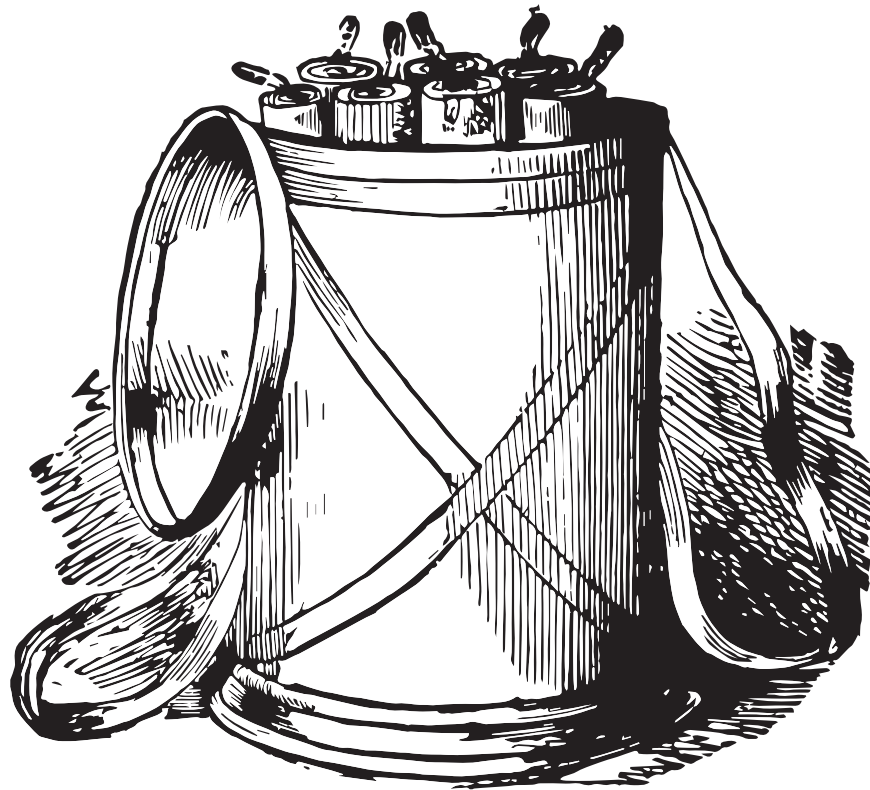


# The Genealogy Of Christ



*“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David,  
the Son of Abraham...” (Matthew 1:1)*

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# The Genealogy Of Christ

## Introduction

- I. The opening words of the New Testament give us the “genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1).
  - A. These words do not stand in isolation—they are the culmination of the entire Old Testament story.
  - B. Matthew claims that Jesus is the descendant of two of the most significant characters in Bible history: Abraham and David.
  - C. While most Bible readers today skip over the genealogy of Christ, Jewish readers in the first century A.D. would find this list to be of great importance.
  - D. The Bible places great emphasis upon the ancestry and genealogy of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:3-4; Heb 7:14).
- II. The genealogy of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is often neglected, and yet it is of vital importance to those concerned about salvation.
  - A. “Most contemporary Americans cannot give the maiden names of their great grandmothers or the vocations of their great grandfathers. They seemingly pay little interest to their family ancestry. However, it was not so with the Jew. To him, genealogies were *most* important. Among other things, the birthright, given to the firstborn son, involved a double inheritance, family leadership, vocational opportunities, and land ownership. That is why genealogies were found throughout the Old Testament. After the Babylonian exile, the lack of proof of a genealogical listing prevented some priests from performing their ministries (Neb. 7:64). Genealogical registers were so carefully maintained by families and tribes that a Jew in the first century could trace his lineage back two thousand years to the twelve sons of Jacob (cf. Luke 2:36; Phil. 3:5). These genealogical records were destroyed in A.D. 70 when the Romans ransacked Jerusalem and scattered the Palestinian Jews.” (Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth*, 150)
  - B. “The Gospel according to Matthew opens with Christ’s family tree. Today, by many readers such a list of names is probably considered sufficiently uninteresting to be skipped. We should bear in mind, however, that Matthew was writing primarily for Jews, as has been shown. This also accounts for the fact that he begins the line of descent with Abraham, and does not trace it back to Adam as Luke does. Now, for the Jews genealogy had never been lacking in significance. After the conquest of Canaan it was important in determining a family’s place of residence; for, by divine law, the occupation of the land was according to tribes, families, and fathers’ houses (Num. 26:52-56; 33:54). If one settled in a territory other than his own he might be called a deserter (Judg. 12:4). Under certain circumstances transfer of property required accurate knowledge of pedigree (Ruth 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1-10). Later, in Judah, royal succession was linked with Davidic lineage (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4). At the return from Babylon a person who claimed priestly prerogatives was required to prove priestly descent. Otherwise he was excluded from office (Ezra 2:62).” (Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 106)

- C. “God’s blessings were often passed on in the family line and these genealogies express the covenant connections of ancient Israel. Military duty was by families. Certain offices such as the priesthood, the Levitical work, and the kingship, were hereditary, and genealogies trace the perpetuation of these offices. Also, land tenure in Israel was carried on chiefly through male descent. Genealogies therefore certified the title to ancestral holdings. Finally, in a tribal or semi-tribal community, a man’s genealogy was his identification and means of location. It is roughly equal to the addresses of modern houses. People are located by country, state, city, and street. In a similar way, Achan, for example, was identified as of the tribe of Judah, the family of Zerah, the household of Zabdi, the son of Carmi (Josh 7:17, 18). Such a brief genealogy gave only the first two or three and the last two or three links of the man’s ancestry.” (Harris, “Genealogy,” *ZEB*, 2.714)
- III. Both Matthew and Luke record the genealogy of Christ, though not in the same order (Matt 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38).
- A. In the first seventeen verses of the gospel of Matthew, we are introduced to 46 people, covering nearly 2,000 years of Old Testament history.
- B. “Apparently in Matthew we have the actual genealogy of Joseph which would be the legal pedigree of Jesus according to Jewish custom. In Luke we apparently have the actual genealogy of Mary which would be the real line of Jesus which Luke naturally gives as he is writing for the Gentiles.” (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, comments on Matthew 1:1)
- C. “Matthew’s chief aims in including the genealogy are hinted at in the first verse—viz., to show that Jesus Messiah is truly in the kingly line of David, heir to the messianic promises, the one who brings divine blessings to all nations. Therefore the genealogy focuses on King David (1:6) on the one hand, yet on the other hand includes Gentile women...” (Carson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, comments on Matthew 1:2–17)
- D. “Matthew is interested in exhibiting symmetry, and so lists 14 individuals between Abraham, David, and the Babylonian Exile; thus a number of Judahite kings are omitted from the list to preserve the symmetry. Moreover, Luke and Matthew have a different list after David (except for two names). The lists likely serve different functions and should not be interpreted as contradictory. Departing from the tradition of tracing only male descents, Matthew’s genealogy contains four women, most of whom were not Israelites. These do not appear in Luke’s list.” (Chavalas, “Genealogy,” *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 490)
- IV. The Jews kept extensive genealogies, available in the public records, to establish a person’s heritage, inheritance, legitimacy, and rights.
- A. Flavius Josephus (c. AD 37–100) was a Jewish priest who led a revolt against Roman oppression in Galilee and later became an eyewitness to the siege of Jerusalem.
1. His name at birth was Joseph ben Mattathias, but many years later (and after becoming a Roman citizen) he adopted the Roman name of Flavius Josephus.
  2. He was captured by the Romans at the fall of Yotapata in ad 67, and held as a prisoner in Caesarea Maritima till AD 69.
  3. He returned to Jerusalem with Titus in ad 70 and had a “ringside seat” at the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.
  4. When Josephus wrote his autobiography, he began by giving his pedigree, and says, “Thus have I set down the genealogy of my family as I have found in the public records” (Josephus, *Life* 6).

- B. “The reason for this interest in pedigrees was that the Jews set the greatest possible store on purity of lineage. If in any man there was the slightest element of foreign blood, he lost his right to be called a Jew and a member of the people of God. A priest, for instance, was bound to produce an unbroken record of his pedigree stretching back to Aaron; and, if he married, the woman he married must produce her pedigree for at least five generations back. When Ezra was reorganizing the worship of God after the people returned from exile, and was setting the priesthood to function again, the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz and the children of Barzillai were debarred from office and were labelled as polluted because ‘These looked for their entries in the genealogical records, but they were not found there’ (Ezra 2:62). These genealogical records were actually kept by the Sanhedrin. Herod the Great was always despised by the pure-blooded Jews because he was half-Edomite; and we can see the importance that even Herod attached to these genealogies from the fact that he had the official registers destroyed, so that no one could prove a purer pedigree than his own. This may seem to us an uninteresting passage, but to a Jew it would be a most impressive matter that the pedigree of Jesus could be traced back to Abraham.” (Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1:15–16)
- C. “When it especially lay upon the Sanhedrin, settled at Jerusalem to preserve pure families, as much as in them lay, pure still; and when they prescribed canons of preserving the legitimation of the people (which you may see in those things that follow at the place alleged), there was some necessity to lay up public records of pedigrees with them: whence it might be known what family was pure, and what defiled. Hence that of Simon Ben Azzai deserves our notice: ‘I saw (saith he) a genealogical scroll in Jerusalem, in which it was thus written; ‘N., a bastard of a strange wife.’ Observe, that even a bastard was written in their public books of genealogy, that he might be known to be a bastard, and that the purer families might take heed of the defilement of his seed... It is, therefore, easy to guess whence Matthew took the last fourteen generations of this genealogy, and Luke the first forty names of his; namely, from the genealogical scrolls at that time well enough known, and laid up in the public *κειμηλια*, *repositories*, and in the private also. And it was necessary, indeed, so noble and sublime subject, and a thing that would be so much inquired into by the Jewish people as the lineage of the Messiah would be, that the evangelists should deliver a truth, not only that could not be gainsaid, but also that might be proved and established from certain and undoubted rolls of ancestors.” (Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, 2:8–9)
- V. Tax records were kept by the Romans during the first few centuries after Christ.
- A. Justin Martyr was the most significant of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century defenders of the gospel.
1. He was converted to Christ sometime after AD 130, and then spent the rest of his life defending the gospel.
  2. Later, Justin moved to Rome, founded a school, and wrote two bold *apologies* (i.e., defenses).

- B. Justin's *First Apology* was addressed to Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius, who ruled from AD 138–161.
1. He asserted that Christianity was not a threat to the Roman empire and should be treated as a legal religion.
  2. He also showed that Christianity was superior to paganism, that Christ fulfilled prophecy, and that paganism is a poor imitation of the true religion.
  3. This apology continues with a lengthy discussion of Old Testament prophecy as fulfilled in Christ, with remarks about philosophy along the way.
- C. One of the questions that pagans (both ancient Roman and modern American) often have concerns the *identity* of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
1. The question is: “How do I know that Jesus is not a fraud?”
  2. Justin posed this question to Emperor Antoninus Pius: “What should prevent that He whom we call Christ, being a man born of men, performed what we call His mighty works by magical art, and by this appeared to be the Son of God?” (Justin, *First Apology*, ch. 30)
  3. Justin then proceeded to prove the deity of Christ by making arguments based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets.
  4. One line of argumentation was that the birth records of Jesus were still available in Bethlehem, and His birth in that city was the fulfillment of prophecy.
  5. “And hear what part of earth He was to be born in, as another prophet, Micah, foretold. He spoke thus: ‘And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come forth a Governor, who shall feed My people.’ Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, in which Jesus Christ was born, as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing made under Cyrenius, your first procurator in Judaea.” (Justin, *First Apology*, ch. 34)
    - a) A Roman *stadia* was about 600 feet ( $\frac{1}{8}$  of a mile).
    - b) The distance between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is about 5.5 miles.
    - c) Justin refers to *Cyrenius*, who was the Roman procurator of Syria (Luke 2:1–2).
    - d) The governor of Syria is mentioned because the Roman province of Syria included Palestine under its jurisdiction at this time.
    - e) His full name was *Publius Sulpicius Quirinius*—he was a well-known Roman military and political figure.
    - f) Josephus mentions this same man (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.1).
  6. Anyone could easily make an inquiry from the tax records at Bethlehem to see if Jesus was born there!
  7. A quick check would not only reveal the Jesus was a real person, but that He was of the tribe of Judah, and born in the small village of Bethlehem!
- VI. In this study, we will notice what the genealogy of Christ proves.

## I. God Fulfilled His Promise To Abraham

- A. Matthew begins the genealogy of Christ by declaring Jesus to be a descendant of Abraham (Matt 1:1).
- B. God promised Abraham that through his seed, “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3; 17:4-8; 22:16-18).
- C. Abraham looked forward to the birth of the Messiah (John 8:56).
- D. “It is not an endless or needless genealogy; it is not a vain-glorious one, as those of great men commonly are... Of what avail are ancient pedigrees? It is like a pedigree given in evidence, to prove a title, and make out a claim; the design is to prove that our Lord Jesus is the son of David, and the son of Abraham, and therefore of that nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. Abraham and David were, in their day, the great trustees of the promise relating to the Messiah. The promise of the blessing was made to Abraham and his seed, of the dominion to David and his seed; and they who would have an interest in Christ, as the son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed, must be faithful, loyal subjects to him as the son of David, by whom all the families of the earth are to be ruled. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him (Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18), and to David that he should descend from him (2 Sam. vii. 12; Ps. lxxxix. 3, &c.; cxxxii. 11); and therefore, unless it can be proved that Jesus is a son of David, and a son of Abraham, we cannot admit him to be the Messiah.” (Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, comments on Matthew 1:1-17)
- E. Those who render obedience to Christ become “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:26-29).

## II. Christ’s Right To Be King On David’s Throne

- A. Matthew affirms that Jesus is also a descendent of King David (Matt 1:1, 6).
  1. The title “Son of David” is an important phrase in the gospel of Matthew.
  2. This title for Jesus occurs several times in his gospel (Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45).
  3. “At the very beginning Matthew establishes the two most significant points about Jesus’ family history: he was *the son of David* (therefore of royal lineage) and also a descendant *of Abraham* (he belonged to the people of God who had their origin with the great patriarch who moved out of ancient Ur and by faith followed the leading of God to a new land.) The title *son of David* occurs frequently in Matthew and stems from God’s promise to King David in 2 Samuel 7:12: ‘I will raise up your offspring to succeed you ... and I will establish his kingdom.’ In Jewish usage the title was messianic; that is, it pointed ahead to the coming of the long-awaited Messiah.” (Mounce, *Matthew*, 8)
  4. This is stressed on other New Testament passages as well (cf. Luke 1:32, 69; John 7:42; Acts 13:22-23; Rom 1:3; Rev 22:16).

- B. Near the end of King David's life, God promised to establish David's throne or dynasty forever (2 Sam 7:12-16; cf. Ps 89:29).
1. Unlike Saul, whose family line was virtually wiped out by the Philistines, some Israelites, and the Gibeonites (1 Sam 31:2; 2 Sam 4:5-6; 21:8-9), God would establish David's throne forever.
  2. The angel Gabriel promised Mary that Jesus would be given "the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32-33).
  3. This was not to be an earthly throne, a physical kingdom, as Jesus would explain for Himself in due time (John 18:36).
  4. The Jewish people, both the religious leaders and the ordinary people, constantly questioned our Lord's Davidic origin and even the legitimacy of His birth (John 7:25-27, 40-41; 8:41, 48).
- C. Both John 12:14-15 and Matthew 21:4-5 connect our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem to a prophecy in Zechariah about a coming king.
1. Five hundred years before Christ, Zechariah wrote that a king would arrive and avenge God's people by destroying their enemies (Zech 9:1-17).
  2. Christ fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah as He entered the city of Jerusalem just before His death (Matt 21:1-11; cf. Zech 9:9).
  3. Jesus rode down the hill into the Kidron Valley and approached the gates to the city as the people shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 'Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matt 21:9).
    - a) In Hebrew, *hosanna* means "save now."
    - b) The people were also quoting from Psalms 118:25-26.
    - c) Psalms 113-118 were traditionally sung at the Passover.
    - d) This was the cry of distressed and oppressed people crying to their king!
    - e) The people yelled the Scripture as a subtle acknowledgment that Jesus was their King.
  4. The people went even further, calling Jesus the "Son of David."
    - a) To understand this, we must envision Jesus riding down the Mount of Olives and into the Kidron Valley, where He would have passed the Gihon Spring, the coronation scene of another king, Solomon, the son of David.
    - b) Solomon rode a mule to the Gihon Spring, and there was anointed as the new king of Judah (1 Kgs 1:32-35).
    - c) The crowd received Jesus like a King.
    - d) They spread their cloaks in front of Him—like the friends of Jehu had done when he was proclaimed king (2 Kgs 9:13).
- D. Just prior to his death, the patriarch Jacob promised that the "scepter" would not depart from the tribe of Judah until "Shiloh" would come (Gen 49:8-10).
1. The "scepter" was a tribal staff that denoted tribal identity.
  2. The Hebrew word that is here translated as *scepter* (Hb. שֵׁבֶט; *šēbet*) is defined as, "rod, staff, a stick used to assist in walking, discipline, and guidance, often highly individualized and used for identification; of royalty: scepter; by extension: tribe, as a major unit of national group or clan (fig. identified with or under authority of a leader's staff), people, clan, family" (*Koblenberger/Mounce Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament*).

3. “The *scepter* will not depart from Judah, nor the *ruler’s staff* from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; the nations will obey him” (Gen 49:10 NET).
4. “This prophecy does not contain a promise of uninterrupted rule by Judah but rather the right to rule by Judah” (Gangel and Bramer, *Genesis*, 1.373)
5. As long as the “scepter” was in place, the Jews could govern themselves.
6. Centuries later, as the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, Balaam reluctantly prophesied the same thing (Num 24:17).
  - a) Though Balaam was a greedy prophet for hire, God nevertheless used him to make an accurate prediction of the coming Messiah.
  - b) The wise men who visited our Lord would likely have been familiar with Old Testament prophecy through interaction with Jews in the East, and they may have remembered Balaam’s prophecy (Matt 2:1–2).
7. The scepter of Judah remained in place even while the Jews were in subjection to the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, and the Romans.
8. Ancient Jewish scholars understood “Shiloh” to be a person and identified Him as Israel’s future Messiah (*b. Sanh.* 98:2).
9. First-century Jews saw the departure of the scepter around A.D. 11 when the Romans took away the Jews’ right to administer capital punishment.
  - a) “Forty years before the destruction of the Temple the right to judge capital cases was withdrawn...” (*y. Sanh.*, II:2 A)
  - b) This is in harmony with John 18:31.
  - c) One Jewish teacher, Rabbi Rachmon, said: “When the members of the Sanhedrin found themselves deprived of their right over life and death, a general consternation took possession of them; they covered their heads with ashes, and their bodies with sackcloth, exclaiming: ‘Woe unto us, for the scepter has departed from Judah, and the Messiah has not come.’” (as cited by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, 195)
  - d) If Jesus had been born a generation earlier, He would have met His death by stoning instead of a Roman crucifixion!
  - e) If He had born a generation later, the Temple would have already been destroyed (along with the official birth records of the Jews).
10. “Jacob prophesied that the power of kingship should not depart from Judah’s lineage ‘until Shiloh come.’ This phrase is admittedly difficult, but the general meaning of ‘shiloh’ is ‘rest, condition of peace.’ Therefore, until there should come one whose dominion should be one of peace, the rulership would not depart from the tribe of Judah. In a personal sense it refers to the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, who should come to establish a kingdom of peace. Hence, the promise to Judah was that from his seed should come that Prince of Peace who would be the great ruler of God’s kingdom. In later years Judah became the leading and ruling tribe of the nation, and through him came David, Solomon, and finally Jesus of the family of David.” (Hailey, *From Creation to the Day of Eternity*, 34–35)



- E. The early church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260/265 – 339/340), lived in Caesarea Maritima and later became a bishop in that city.
1. Eusebius cites a convert from Judaism named Hegesippus to the effect that Emperor Domitian (AD 81–96) ordered all descendants of David slain.
  2. The works of Hegesippus (c. AD 110 – c. April 7, 180) are now entirely lost, except for the eight passages that are quoted by Eusebius.
  3. Eusebius wrote, “But when this same Domitian had commanded that the descendants of David should be slain, an ancient tradition says that some of the heretics brought accusation against the descendants of Jude (said to have been a brother of the Savior according to the flesh), on the ground that they were of the lineage of David and were related to Christ himself...” (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3 Eusebius 19:1).
  4. Eusebius then quoted the passages from Hegesippus concerning this event (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3 Eusebius 20:1–8).
  5. “Tradition records that at least partial genealogical records of important (especially priestly) families were kept in the temple. Though the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, the claim for Jesus’ Davidic descent was made before 70, when it still could have been checked (Rom 1:3). Even after 70, tradition reports that the evidence for his Davidic descent was still sufficient to provoke trouble for some of Jesus’ relatives with the Roman government.” (Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 48)
- F. The New Testament affirms that at this very moment, Jesus Christ is reigning on David’s throne in heaven (Acts 2:29–36; cf. Rev 3:21).

### III. Christ’s Throne Is Not On This Earth

- A. In the Old Testament, we read of Jehoiachin, who was a very evil king, and the last king who sat on the earthly throne of David by divine authority (2 Kgs 24:8–9).
1. Jehoiachin’s original name seems to have been *Jeconiah* or *Coniah*.
  2. He ascended to the throne late in 598 B.C., and he only reigned for three months and ten days (2 Chr 36:9; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 10.98), before he was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
  3. The prophet Jeremiah promised that Jehoiachin would never have a descendant “sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah” (Jer 22:24–30).
  4. Although Jehoiachin had seven sons (1 Chr 3:17–18), his dynasty would not continue, in effect, leaving him without a successor.
  5. That put an end to David’s earthly throne; it became extinct in Jehoiachin.
  6. The earthly throne of David ceased, never to exist again on this earth.
  7. Jesus Christ is a descendant of Jehoiachin (Matt 1:12; cf. Luke 3:27; 1 Chr 3:16–17).
  8. Jesus, being of the earthly seed of Jehoiachin, cannot, therefore, according to Jeremiah, sit “on the throne of David” and rule “anymore in Judah.”
- B. Zechariah said that the Messiah was to “be a priest on His throne” (Zech 6:13).
1. Jesus could never be a priest while *on this earth* since He was from the tribe of Judah, not the tribe of Levi (Heb 8:4).
  2. However, Jesus is our High Priest in heaven right now (Heb 4:14; 5:6; 7:17, 21–28).
  3. Jesus is a priest while on His throne in heaven (Rev 3:21).

## IV. The Importance Of Gentiles And Women

- A. It seems like every scholar commenting on the genealogy of Christ marvels at the fact that the list includes the names of four questionable women—and in all likelihood, all four of them were non-Jews.
1. This is especially intriguing because Matthew and Luke omit some of the most famous matriarchs, such as Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah.
  2. “By far the most amazing thing about this pedigree is the names of the women who appear in it. It is not normal to find the names of women in Jewish pedigrees at all. The woman had no legal rights; she was regarded, not as a person, but as a thing. She was merely the possession of her father or of her husband, and in his disposal to do with as he liked. In the regular form of morning prayer the Jew thanked God that he had not made him a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. The very existence of these names in any pedigree at all is a most surprising and extraordinary phenomenon.” (Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1:16–17)
  3. “Ancient genealogies usually omitted women, but Matthew includes four women (1:3, 5–6). Three of these women were Gentiles (Gen 38:6; Josh 2:1; Ruth 1:4) and the other was at least associated with a Gentile (2 Sam 11:3)—though Matthew omits the four matriarchs prominent in Jewish tradition, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and (less relevantly here) Rachel. Thus he hints from the Old Testament that God has always planned a mission to all peoples (Mt 28:19).” (Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 47)
  4. “The inclusion of five women in Jesus’ genealogy—Tamar, Rahab (v. 5), Ruth (v. 5), Bathsheba (‘the wife of Uriah,’ v. 6), and Mary (v. 16)—is unusual, since descent was usually traced through men as the head of the family. Rahab and Ruth were Gentiles, and Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba were women of questionable character. The lineage is comprised of men, women, adulterers, prostitutes, heroes, and Gentiles—and Jesus will be Savior of all.” (Dennis and Grudem, *The ESV Study Bible*, comments on Matthew 1:3)
- B. Christ was a descendant of **Tamar**.
1. “Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar” (Matt 1:3).
  2. Tamar (Judah’s daughter-in-law) was a seducer and an adulteress (Gen 38:12–26).
- C. Christ was a descendant of **Rahab**.
1. “Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab” (Matt 1:5).
  2. Rahab had been a prostitute in Jericho (Josh 2:1–7).
- D. Christ was a descendant of **Ruth**.
1. “Boaz begot Obed by Ruth” (Matt 1:5).
  2. Ruth was a heathen woman from the land of Moab (Ruth 1:4), who became an ancestor of both King David and Jesus.
  3. Ruth belonged to an alien and hated people (Deut 23:3).
- E. Christ was a descendant of **Bathsheba**.
1. “David ... begot Solomon by ... the wife of Uriah” (Matt 1:6).
  2. Bathsheba was seduced from Uriah the Hittite by David (2 Sam 11–12).

F. Why were these women mentioned?

1. "If Matthew had ransacked the pages of the Old Testament for improbable candidates, he could not have discovered four more incredible ancestors for Jesus Christ." (Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1:17)
2. I believe these women are mentioned to show that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).
3. Jesus is the Savior of men *and* women, Jews *and* Gentiles!
4. "Women, especially those born Gentiles, were rarely included in biblical genealogies. The first four were Gentile women whom God honored by including them among the recorded ancestors of Yeshua the Jewish Messiah—through whom Gentiles, women and slaves are saved equally with Jews, men and free." (Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, comments on Matt 1:3)
5. "Each of them may be, or have been thought of as, a Gentile who joined Israel, and each of them marks a disruption in the ideal genealogy one would want for an ideal Davidic king. But each was committed to Israel. Tamar saw to the carrying on of the name of Er, according to Jewish law, by tricking Judah his father into marrying her. Rahab saved Joshua's spies and aided in the conquest of the land of Israel. Ruth bound herself willingly to Israel as Boaz's wife, and Bathsheba, who was seduced by David, bore his successor Solomon and intervened to assure Solomon's succession to the throne (1 Kings 1). Since first-century interpreters probably considered these women to be proselytes, they may have symbolized Gentile proselytes joining Matthew's group of Christian-Jewish followers of Jesus. They also prepare for the end of the genealogy where the succession suddenly shifts from Joseph to Mary and then Jesus." (Saldarini, *Matthew*, comments on Matthew 1:1-17)

## V. The End Of The Levitical Priesthood

- A. Jewish priests had to be able to *prove* that they belonged to the tribe of Levi (Num 18:1-7; Ezra 2:59-62; Neh 7:5, 61-64).
- B. "For our forefathers did not only appoint the best of these priests, and those that attended upon divine worship, for that design from the beginning, but made provision that the stock of the priests should continue unmixed and pure; for he who is partaker of the priesthood must propagate of a wife of the same nation, without having any regard to money, or any other dignities; but he is to make a scrutiny, and take his wife's genealogy from the ancient tables, and procure many witnesses to it; and this is our practice not only in Judea, but wheresoever any body of men of our nation do live; and even there, an exact catalogue of our priests' marriages is kept... but what is the strongest argument of our exact management in this matter is what I am now going to say, that we have the names of our high priests, from father to son, set down in our records, for the interval of two thousand years..." (Josephus, *Apion* 1:31-131, 136)

- C. During the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the official birth records of the Jewish people were destroyed.
1. After the Jews inside the city of Jerusalem refused an offer made by Titus, he declared “that he would henceforth spare nobody, but fight them with his whole army; and that they must save themselves as well as they could; for that he would from henceforth treat them according to the laws of war. So he gave orders to the soldiers both to burn and to plunder the city; who did nothing indeed that day; but on the next day they set fire to the repository of the archives, to Acra, to the council house, and to the place called Ophlas...” (Josephus, *War* 6:353)
  2. “Matthew most likely draws on some of the genealogies found in the Old Testament and uses similar wording (cf. 1:2 with 1 Chron. 1:34). For the listing of the individuals after Zerubbabel, when the Old Testament ceases, he probably uses records that have since been lost. Other sources indicate that extensive genealogical records were extant during the first century, with some of the more important political and priestly families’ records kept in the temple. The official extrabiblical genealogies were lost with the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, yet private genealogies were retained elsewhere.” (Wilkins, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 1:9–10)
  3. Since AD 70, when the Roman General Titus destroyed the official birth records of the Jews, no man has been able to prove his right to be a Levitical priest.
  4. The Levitical priesthood has ended and can never be restored.
- D. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is not based upon an earthly genealogy, but upon “the power of an endless life” (Heb 7:11–25).

#### Conclusion

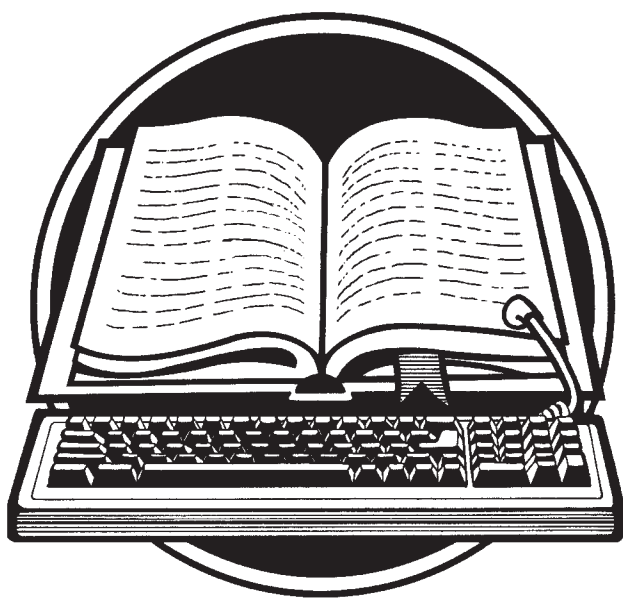
- I. “The genuineness, and unlikeliness, of this genealogy must have stunned Matthew’s readers. Jesus’ ancestors were humans with all of the foibles, yet potentials, of everyday people. God worked through them to bring about his salvation. There is no pattern of righteousness in the lineage of Jesus. We find adulterers, harlots, heroes, and Gentiles. Wicked Rehoboam was the father of wicked Abijah, who was the father of good King Asa. Asa was the father of the good King Jehoshaphat, who was the father of wicked King Joram. God was working throughout the generations, both good and evil, to bring about his purposes. Matthew shows that God can use anyone—however marginalized or despised—to bring about his purposes. These are the very types of people Jesus came to save.” (Clinton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 1:9)
- II. As Simeon held the Christ Child in his arms, he blessed God and said, “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel” (Luke 2:25–32).

- III. According to Jewish customs and law during the days of Jesus, after an individual was condemned to death, they would take him out to the place of stoning “outside the camp” (*m. Sanh.* 6:1-6; cf. Lev 24:14).
- A. On the way to the place of stoning, a herald would walk in front of the condemned and read aloud his genealogy.
  - B. “And a herald goes before him, crying out, ‘Mr. So-and-so, son of Mr. So-and-so, is going out to be stoned because he committed such-and-such a transgression, and Mr. So-and-so and Mr. So-and-so are the witnesses against him. Now anyone who knows grounds for acquittal—let him come and speak in his behalf!’” (*m. Sanh.* 6:1).
  - C. This helps us understand Isaiah 53:8, “And who will declare His generation?”
  - D. Apparently, at the death of Jesus, no one went before Him to read His genealogy—but no matter, for Matthew and Luke have left it for us in written form!

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