

Matthew 1:1-17

"A Dysfunctional Family Tree"

The gospel of Matthew serves as a bridge. If we were to jump from Malachi (the last book of the OT) into the book of Romans or Acts we'd be bewildered & confused to say the least. But Matthew builds the bridge that leads us out of the Old & into the New Testament.

He will quote *from* or allude *to* the O.T. some 129 times (more than any other gospel writer). It's interesting that Matthew is the only gospel writer who was an apostle yet we don't have a single word uttered from him in any of the records. Even in his personal account we have no record of anything he ever said. To me that's quite admirable seeing as how we have a tendency to want to include ourselves & our list of accomplishments in the accounts of events we give. But Matt didn't write to tell us about himself, he wanted to speak of the words & works of J.C., demonstrating to us the fulfillment of prophecy proving that Jesus is in fact the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the foretold Messiah & Savior & sovereign King.

Sometimes people wonder, "Why 4 gospels"? I sometimes wonder, "Why not 40!" W/all the people that saw Jesus, heard Jesus, witnessed His works, I'd think there would be endless accounts of how He ministered. As a matter of fact that's how John ends his gospel record. He says, *"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen."*¹

But God wanted us to see Jesus from 4 different vantage points & each writer had a different audience in mind. So even though the gospel writers write of many of the same events they're each writing from a slightly different vantage point. *It would be like 4 of us standing on different corners of an intersection & seeing an accident take place. We all saw the same thing but from a slightly different vantage point therefore our account of what happened might highlight slightly different details. That's the gospel records.*

Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience, so he quotes the O.T. all the time, he points to the Person of J.C. as the coming King & promised Messiah. Mark writes w/a primarily Roman audience in mind, he speaks of Jesus as the suffering Servant. *Luke writes w/a Greek audience in mind & demonstrates that Jesus is the Perfect Man (The Son of man) & John writes w/the whole world in mind so He sets out to show the Deity of Christ, that He is the Son of God.*

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 21:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 1:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You might say that the gospels emphasize what Jesus said (Matt), what Jesus did (Mark) how Jesus felt (Luke) & Who Jesus was (John).

Something else you should realize from the onset of this gospel record is that it's not chronological in its nature, its topical. So just be aware of the fact that not everything we read happened in the order it's recorded...

Matthew begins his record w/a genealogy; something painful to many of us ☺. But to the nation of Israel genealogy was *huge*. It would demonstrate to which tribe you belonged, what portion of land belonged to you, if you were apart of the priesthood, if you had legal/biological rights to the throne... you had to be able to prove all those things. **No one was going to take your word for the fact that you should be on the throne of Israel. No one was going to take your word for the fact that you should be ministering as a priest in the temple. You had to be able prove your pedigree through the paper work.**

So Matthew records the genealogy of J.C. demonstrating his *racial* connection to Abraham & His *royal* connection to David. It's interesting that of all the ways the religious leaders challenged Jesus concerning His claims, the one area they *never* challenged Him in was His genealogy. It was public record, they could verify & ratify it & I have no doubt that they did. **However in 70 A.D. when Rome sacked Jerusalem, all of Israel's genealogical records were destroyed. There's only 1 Jew who has their genealogy preserved who can legally & biologically prove their right to reign over the nation & that is J.C. No one else can legally make that claim & have any proof to support it.** But here Matt records the genealogy of Jesus showing his racial connection to Abraham & His royal connection to David (Luke goes all the way back to Adam). So after Jesus came, God closed the door on anyone else who might try to make the claim.

Something else the genealogy does is validate the humanity & the reality of who Jesus is as a real Person. He didn't (as God) just magically or mystically appear on the scene as though He were like one of the mythical gods of Mt Olympus visiting the world of man. He was a real person, w/real roots who came into this world at a real point in time the same as everyone else. Notice.

Vs 1

So right off the bat Matt makes it clear that his point in providing this genealogy is to connect J.C. to 2 people specifically of Israeli history; king David & the patriarch Abraham. It's absolutely essential that Messiah be able to prove His familial connection to these 2 men because it's through these men that God made a covenant promising to bring *His Son*, through *their seed*.

It's found in Genesis Ch 12 when God calls Abraham & sets him apart unto Himself, not because *Abraham* is so great, but because *God* is so great & great is His *grace*. & So God says to Abraham, *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*² In other words, "Abraham I'm going to something so special *in* you, so unique *through* you that every tribe, tongue & nation on the earth will be blessed by it."

Fast forward a # of decades & Abraham miraculously has a son, Isaac. Years go by, he loves his only begotten son, the son of promise (God promised him a son, God gave him a son). God then says to him, "Abraham, take now your son, your only son Isaac whom you love & go to the place of which I shall lead you & offer him as a burnt offering." Abraham takes his son & goes to the land of Moriah & prepares to offer his son in obedience to the Lord. The angel of the Lord calls out *to* him, prevents him from going through with it & God affirms His covenant *with* him saying, *"By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*³

Let me ask you something, is there blessing in obedience? You better believe there is; God will bless obedience to His word. Of course in that act Abraham becomes a picture of the Father who would *not* w/hold Himself from the sacrifice of His only begotten Son whom He loved, so that we might be saved. What God prevented Abraham from doing, He would do out of His great love for us.

So God made a covenant w/Abraham that Messiah would come through him. It's therefore essential that whoever makes the claim of being Messiah be able to show His familial connection to Abraham.

But God also promised *David* that the One to sit on his throne forever would come through *him as well*. Perhaps you remember the scenario, there he was (David) & he was thinking about the palace that he was living in & he was staring out (or thinking about) the ratty old tabernacle that represented God's dwelling place & he thought, "This isn't right, I'm living in the lap of luxury & God's represented in a ratty old tent." So he called Nathan (the prophet) & said to him, "I want to build God a house..." Nathan said, "That's great David, do all that is in your heart."

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ge 12:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ge 22:16-18]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But that night God spoke to Nathan & said, “Go back to David & tell him that he can’t build Me a house, he’s a man of blood, & the one who builds My house will be identified not w/war, but w/peace. But tell David that I will build *him* a house, & I will set up his seed after him, & I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Sam 7)

So Messiah would be Jewish racially & He would be of the Davidic line of royalty & here Matthew is demonstrating that Jesus fulfills both of these O.T. prophecies.

So let’s look over this nearly impossible to pronounce names & then we’ll highlight a few things from it for the remainder of our time.

Vs 2-16

Now I’m sure you noted the pattern of this person begot that person all the way down the line until we get to Vs 16 where it shifts & says “Jacob begot Joseph, *the husband of Mary*, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.” **Matthew is very careful to make the distinction, though Jesus has a right to the throne by Joseph legally, He wasn’t his child biologically. Joseph was Mary’s husband of whom was born Jesus who is called the Christ (Btw Mary was David’s descendant as well, but through Nathan, not Solomon).** So Matt wants us to know that Jesus didn’t have an earthly father, He had an earthly mother, He had a *heavenly* Father (which Matt goes on to share in Vs 18-25 which we looked at last week).

Ok. Couple overarching points we want to draw out of this section. #1 As I was reading through the list, though there were a few names that probably stood out as familiar to you, by & large there are many people in this genealogy that are relatively obscure. **If you were God & were going to send Your Son into the world You might think you’d choose a noble line of accomplished & famous foundations. Jesus was content to come into this world *not* through the “Who’s who” list, but the “who’s he?” list. He would identify Himself w/*the everyday common man*.** He wouldn’t come from a noble line of unattainable glory w/which no one could identify. He would have roots like yours & mine, perhaps a great person or 3 in His list, but for the most part unknown, ordinary folks.

But beyond that Jesus would also have an incredibly dysfunctional family tree. Again you might think the Savior of the world would come from a problem free utopia of a family tree, but such is not the case at all.

This family tree is riddles w/sinners & time forbids us to consider the vast shortcomings represented in this line. We could speak of the many times Abraham faltered in his faith, how Isaac lied about his wife & favored Esau over Jacob even though God promised that the blessing would go *to* & come *through* Jacob.

But Jacob was a lying, conniving deceiver throughout the majority of his life. Judah had issues (we'll look one of them in a minute). Down in Vs 10 we see that Manasseh was in the bloodline of Jesus. **Manasseh was the most wicked king that Judah ever had, causing Judah to sin in ways worse than the Amorites whom God judged before they came into the land. He was guilty of atrocious abominations. In the end he repented but the things he did were unconscionable. Jesus had far from an aristocratic family tree, His lineage was laced w/radical sinners.**

Something else of note in this genealogy is the mention of women. Something virtually unheard of in Matthew's day yet here he mentions 4 (5 if you count Mary) & they're not the ladies you might think of as obtaining an honorable mention. It's not Sarah, or Rebekah, or Rachel; it's Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, & Bathsheba. All of which (as far as we know) were Gentiles & all of which reflect shameful, sexual sin/deceit & scandal.

Tamar played the part of a prostitute in order to deceive her father-in-law Judah so that he would lay w/her. She had been married to one of his sons named Er, but Er was wicked in the sight of the Lord so God killed him. But it was the custom (later a law) that if an older brother was married & died before he had a son to carry on his name that the next younger brother was to marry his older brother's widow & the 1st born son would be considered the older brother's so his name wouldn't die out. Well, Judah had his next oldest son marry Tamar & he was more than willing to have fun w/her but he refused to impregnate her so God killed him as well. Judah had another son but he wasn't sure about giving *him* to Tamar because so far each of his sons that have married her have died. So he's reluctant to give her the 3rd boy. **So he says, "You just stay a widow & when my boy gets a little older I'll give him to you."** She stayed a widow & Judah just forgot about it. **So one day he was headed off to town & Tamar dressed up as a prostitute and Judah saw her there & decided to take advantage of the fact that no one was around.** But he didn't have his wallet so she said she'd settle for his signet ring, your cord & your staff until he could pay up. (He didn't know it was her, her face was veiled).

A little time goes by & word comes to Judah that his daughter-in-law (Tamar) is pregnant. He says, "Bring her out here & burn her, she's been unfaithful!" **She says, "Um, tell Judah that I'm pregnant by the man who owns this ring, this cord & this staff..."** Judah was busted. Well she had twins (one of which was Perez as listed in Vs 3) & that's how she wound up in the family tree of Jesus! She played the part of a prostitute.

If that's not bad enough Rahab wasn't playing the part, she *was* a prostitute in Jericho. But when she heard of the God of Israel she believed *in* Him was saved *by* Him & grafted into the family tree of Jesus. When Jericho was destroyed she was spared because she hid a couple spies that had come in to spy out the city & a man by the name of Salmon took her to be his wife & they had a son named "Boaz".

Now Boaz married Ruth (a Moabites, who's entire line was born out of incest through Lot & one of his daughters), Ruth had a boy by the name of Obed, Obed had Jesse who was king David's dad. So David's great, great grandma was a prostitute, his great grandma came from an incestuous line & back a little farther in his family tree was a woman who deceived her father in-law playing the *part* of a prostitute. Pretty noble lineage right? No! This family tree is jacked up to say the least.

The 4th lady mentioned is in Vs 4, "Her who'd been the wife of Uriah." Remember her name? Bathsheba. She's the one who was out bathing on her roof every night in eyeshot of king David's terrace. Now David was supposed to be out to war, but he stayed home instead & this was the wife of one his elite soldiers, a Hittite by the name of Uriah; so he calls her to the castle, commits adultery w/her & she gets pregnant. Rather than confess his sin & beg forgiveness he calls Uriah home from the war, gets him drunk & tells him to go home & be w/his wife. He thinks that he'll be w/his wife, he'll think the baby is his & no one will be the wiser. One problem, Uriah was faithful to his king & to his fellow soldiers. He went to sleep on the king's porch. He said, "God forbid that I should go home & enjoy my wife when my friends are fighting & dying on the frontlines, I'm not going to do it."

So David writes a letter to his general Joab & has Uriah take it to him. It says, "Place Uriah on the frontlines in the heat of the battle then w/draw from him so that he dies." David murders him w/the arrow of another man's bow. He plays the part of the sympathetic king, takes Bathsheba this widow to be his wife & now he's a hero right? W/one exception, how many of you realize you can't hide you sin from God? God always knows the truth. Long story short God sends Nathan the prophet to David & confronts him w/his sin, David confesses, repents & is forgiven. But there were consequences to his sin & the son of that sinful situation would die. (Never deceive yourself into thinking that your sin only effects you, it doesn't. It hurts everyone around you as well)

However David had another son w/Bathsheba who's name was Solomon, who would build the temple of God. So we have in Jesus' genealogy, liars, deceivers, prostitutes, Gentiles, adulterers, murderers... On & on it goes.

Let me ask you a question, can you sin so bad that God can never use you?

Don't ever say that God can't use you because of what you've done. I don't care if it was 10 yrs ago or 10 minutes ago.

Tamar might say, "I've been a deceiver", Rahab might say, "I've got a bad reputation." Ruth might say, "I wasn't raised a Christian", Bathsheba could say, "But I've cheated on my spouse." David was guilty of murder. Manasseh was the single most wicked king Judah ever knew... Would I excuse any of those things? Never. Are they beyond the restoring touch of God's grace? No way. Paul said it like this, *"But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,"*⁴

Jesus is a Great High Priest who can identify w/you no matter where you've been or what you've done. He said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*⁵ It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done, God loves you, He wants to use your life for His glory. He knows how to draw a straight-line w/a crooked stick ☺.

In the veins of Jesus flowed the blood of the rich & poor, the moral & immoral, some from the "Who's who" most from the "Who's he?" to show that God so loves *the world*. He will take you just as you are, give you a new life & use you greatly for His glory, for w/God, nothing will be impossible.

Vs 17

He's not saying that there's only 14 generations between each of the references he mentioned, only that he listed 14 between each of them. It's not necessary for him to list each individual name, he only needs to connect the dots that make the links indisputable. His goal is to link Jesus to David & to Abraham & in so doing no one can dispute the legal right that belongs to Jesus to be the Messiah of Israel who is to inherit the throne of David.

Listen, Jesus had quite possibly the most dysfunctional family tree imaginable & yet God brought the Savior of the world through such line. No excuses for why God can't use your life, He's in the business of redemption, restoration & renewal... Next week begins a new year, a new beginning. I would challenge you to submit your life to God beginning now, offer Him your life (no strings attached) & say, "Lord, here I am, redeem me, renew me, refresh & restore me, use me for Your glory." Start right now, & God will do great things in your life. Amen?

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 5:20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [Lk 5:31-32]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You that You are in the business of taking broken & beat up lives & restoring them for Your glory. You give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, & the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Father we look forward to the new year w/great anticipation of a new work in our lives & in this place. Pour out Your Spirit upon us individually, as a body & do great things for the glory of Your name. We praise You for what You *have* done, but we know the best is yet to come. So forgetting that which is behind us we press on to that which lies ahead; have Your way in us.

A new year is on the horizon, it can begin with new life. The old will pass away, God will make you brand new. God loves you, Christ died upon the cross for you, He shed His blood for you & for me so that if we would simply believe in & receive Him we could be forgiven all our sin & be cleansed in the sight of God. Don't resist the Spirit drawing your heart to Himself, open your heart, turn from your sin & trust in Jesus.