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Bloodlines: The Genealogy of Jesus / Genealogy; Genealogy of Jesus Christ; Exile; Redemption / Matthew 1:1-17

In Matthew 1:1-17, we learn that the exile forms an important part of the genealogy of Jesus because it highlights his mission of redemption for those who are separated from God.

Introduction

In mid-March, *BBC News* reported that the United Nations investigators asserted, “Russia's forced deportation of Ukrainian children to areas under its control amounts to a war crime... The UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine said there was evidence of the illegal transfer of hundreds of Ukrainian children to Russia... Ukraine government figures put the number of children forcibly taken to Russia at 16,221” (see <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64985009>).

Any parent would be shattered to have his or her child forcibly taken and relocated to another country. It is unbearable to think about. But it is happening.

But this atrocity is not unique.

Throughout history, it was common for victorious armies to force vanquished people to leave their homeland and go and live in the victorious army's country.

The *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* defines “exile” as the “mass deportation of large population groups practiced in ancient times usually for political purposes, frequently to destroy the power of an enemy nation and to prevent rebellion” (Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Exile,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988], 732).

In the Old Testament, there were two main exiles. You may recall that after King Solomon died the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms. The descendants of the twelve tribes of Jacob split into two kingdoms. The ten tribes in the north became known as the kingdom of Israel. And the two tribes in the south became known as the kingdom of Judah.

In 722 BC, the kingdom of Israel was taken into exile by the Assyrians. (We studied this in our recently-completed sermon series on the book of Amos.) The people of Israel never returned to their homeland.

In 586 BC, the southern kingdom of Judah was taken into exile by the Babylonians. The temple in the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. The *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* suggests that “the total number of captives taken in all the deportations from Judah probably did not exceed a total of 70,000 men, women, and children” (Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Exile,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988], 734). That is still a lot of people who were deported from their homes.

After about fifty years in exile, some Jews returned to Judah in 538 BC. They started rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. They also reconstructed the temple. That was completed in about 516 BC when more Jews returned to their homeland.

The exile was a very dramatic and painful experience for the people of God. It was a major pivotal point for the people of God.

Matthew wrote about the exile—he called it a “deportation”—in the opening section of his Gospel. Today we are going to learn that the exile forms an important part of the genealogy of Jesus.

Scripture

Let’s read [Matthew 1:1-17](#):

¹ 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.

Lesson

In [Matthew 1:1-17](#), we learn that the exile forms an important part of the genealogy of Jesus because it highlights his mission of redemption for those who are separated from God.

Let's use the following outline:

1. What is the Exile?
2. What Does the Exile Mean for Us Today?

I. What Is the Exile?

First, what is the exile?

Matthew wrote in [Matthew 1:17](#), "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.”

Professor Don Carson writes, “It was customary among Jewish writers to arrange genealogies according to some convenient scheme, possibly for mnemonic reasons” (D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 68).

Various proposals are given for why David set up the genealogy of Jesus in the way he did. I won’t bore you with the details of each proposal. But I will give you Dr. Carson’s summary statement, with which I agree:

The simplest explanation—the one that best fits the context—observes that the numerical value of “David” in Hebrew is fourteen.... By this symbolism, Matthew points out that the promised “son of David” (1:1), the Messiah, has come. And if the third set of fourteen is short one member, perhaps it will suggest to some readers that just as God cuts short the time of distress for the sake of his elect (24:22), so also he mercifully shortens the period from the Exile to Jesus the Messiah (D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984], 69).

I also want to point out to you that in Matthew’s summary in verse 17, “the deportation to Babylon”—which is of course the exile to Babylon—figures prominently.

There is something about home that is important to all of us. Some anonymous poet once wrote, “Though we may roam, / Be it ever so humble, / There’s no place like home.” And that is so true, isn’t it?

Home is where everything is just right. Home is where our loved ones live. Home is where we are surrounded by people we love and trust. Home is where there is a feeling of security and safety.

Now, while some people get to experience a home like this, many do not. And some—like the 16,221 Ukrainian children—are forced to leave their homes and go and live in a foreign land. We call this going into exile.

In exile, everything is disoriented. You are in a strange and unknown place.

This is where the people of Judah found themselves. They were conquered by Babylon. They had been deported to Babylon to live there in a strange and foreign land, far from home.

So, they had to ask themselves, “How did we end up here? And is there any hope of going home?”

The whole story of the Bible is designed to answer these questions.

Let’s look at it briefly. If you go back to the beginning of the Bible, where did Adam and Eve live?

Adam and Eve lived in a perfectly beautiful and idyllic garden. That was their home. They enjoyed wonderful fellowship with God. There was no sin. They enjoyed their work. They enjoyed each other. There was a beautiful harmony in all that they did.

There was just one condition for them to continue living in their home. And that was that they trust God and obey just one command: not to eat of the fruit of the tree.

But they blew it. Adam ate the fruit of the tree, as did Eve. So God banished them from the garden, their home.

Adam and Eve were sent into exile. They were sent away from their home to live in a new place that was not their home.

The account of Adam and Eve points to the story of the Jews in the promised land.

God promised to give his people land on one condition. The people of God were to be faithful to obey the terms of their covenant relationship with God.

Sadly, the people of God were not faithful to the covenant. And so, in 586 BC, the people of God were deported and sent into exile in Babylon.

Now, there is a parallel between the exile from the garden and the exile from Judah. In Genesis, as the population grew in numbers, so did sin. Eventually, the rebellion of the people against God climaxed in their building of a tower (see [Genesis 11](#)). We call that the tower of Babel and it was located in what later came to be known as Babylon. That was the same place that the people of God were sent to in 586 BC.

But that is not all. When God called Abram to leave and travel to the promised land, do you know where Abram was from? Yes, he was from Ur of the Chaldeans (see [Genesis 11:28](#)). Do you know where that is? It is in Babylon.

That kernel of truth was designed to give the people of God hope centuries later when they were living in exile in the very place where Abram was born.

Eventually, some of the exiled people of God were able to leave Babylon in 536 BC and travel back to the promised land. By 516 BC, all the rest of the people of God returned to the promised land from their exile in Babylon.

But they were not quite home yet. The people of God still acted in the same disobedient ways as their ancestors.

Over the years, various oppressive empires ruled over them. God sent prophets to his people and they told the people of God that their exile was not yet over.

“Well,” someone might ask, “how could the prophets say that the people were still in exile when they were at home?”

That is a really important question. As the Old Testament unfolded, the Babylonian exile became an image of something more universal.

The Babylonian exile taught people that they have a feeling of alienation and a longing for something more, no matter where they live.

Can you relate to that?

You may have a great home. You live in comfort and security. But you still make sure that your doors are locked at night. You dare not let your children wander outside without supervision. You live in a world that is scarred with pain and brokenness. You live in a world of suffering and sin.

So, in the Bible, the exile is a picture of our human condition. All of us struggle with disobedience to God and we constantly break the covenant with him.

And even though we go to God and confess our sins, we long for a time and place where we will have a permanent home that is free from sin and corruption and suffering and death.

That brings us to our second question.

II. What Does the Exile Mean for Us Today?

And second, what does the exile mean for us today?

The Old Testament pointed to the hope that one day God would send a king who would deliver his people once and for all from the Babylonian exile in which we all find ourselves living.

This is what Matthew hints at in his genealogy of Jesus because Jesus is the king sent by God to bring redemption for those who are separated from God.

Do you see that Jesus himself was in a sense an exile too? He left his home in glory to come and live in this world of sin and corruption. He wandered about without any place on this earth that he could call home. Why?

First, because he knew that his permanent was yet to come. And second, he came to rescue sinners like us so that we could live with him in his beautiful Father's home.

When Jesus was in the Upper Room with his disciples on the night of his betrayal, he had a Passover meal with his disciples. He also taught them many important things, most of which are recorded for us in John's Gospel. Jesus indicated to his disciples that he would be leaving them. Jesus meant that he was going to be with his Heavenly Father in glory. Let's pick up the dialogue in [John 13:36](#):

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

^{14:1} "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will

come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” ([John 13:36-14:3](#)).

Jesus knew that all people have lost their way. He knew that all people struggle with sin and disobedience. He knew that all people struggle and strive to create false homes based on the things that give us satisfaction and enjoyment. He knew that we all live in an exile of our own making.

Jesus continued saying to his disciples in the Upper Room in [John 14:4-6](#):

⁴ “And you know the way to where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Jesus was saying that there is only one way to the Father. And that one way was through Jesus. But what does that mean?

It means that we must believe that Jesus fully obeyed God his entire life and that he paid the penalty for all our sins. It means that we surrender to Jesus as the king sent from God to rule and reign over our lives and this world. It means that we turn from our sins and wicked ways and live for him. It means living as citizens of the kingdom of God.

But that is not all. Jesus wants us to show others the way to their true home as well. The same Peter who asked Jesus where he was going later wrote a letter that began like this, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion...” ([1 Peter 1:1](#)). Peter wrote this letter to the “elect exiles.”

In one sense, he may have meant that they were not living in the promised land because he went on to list all the places they were presently living.

But Peter also likely meant that they—like all elect believers—have not yet arrived at the home that Jesus went to prepare for them.

Later in his letter, he told them how they were to live in this world. He wrote in [1 Peter 2:11-12](#), and I am going to distill the essence of what he was saying, “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to... keep your conduct among the

Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Peter acknowledged that all believers are “sojourners and exiles” in this world. We have not yet arrived at our true home.

And then he urged believers to “keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.” That is how believers must live in a world of unbelievers.

What does such living by elect, exiled believers produce?

Two things will happen at the same time. Look how Peter put it: “... so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” Unbelievers will “speak against you” and they will “glorify God” when Jesus returns.

Notice that Peter did not say that if you conducted your life honorably, then unbelievers will glorify God.

Nor did he say that if you conducted your life honorably, then unbelievers will speak against you.

He said that both things will happen.

So, as believers, we are called to keep our conduct among Gentiles honorable. That will result in misunderstanding. You will be accused. People will think you are strange. They will accuse of being evil.

And yet, unbelievers will also glorify God on the day of visitation.

Practically, that means that some people will be mad at you for living as a consistent Christian. And other people will be drawn to the beauty of God that they see in you and eventually come to believe in Jesus.

Conclusion

Therefore, let us commit ourselves to see people who are separated from God restored to a right relationship with God.

Dr. Henry Okullu, bishop of Maseno South, wrote in *Church and Politics in East Africa* (Uzima Press, 1974):

“The former President of Uganda, Milton Obote, declared on the day Uganda attained its independence in 1962 that had it not been for the revolutionary teaching of the Church, Uganda would not have achieved its independence when it did. He went on to emphasize that the Church could not now sit back and congratulate itself and see what it had set in motion—nationalism—take its own course without guidance” (Henry Okullu, *Church and Politics in East Africa* [Uzima Press, 1974], 2).

President Obote was grateful for the Church of Jesus Christ proclaiming the truth of the gospel. It had such a profound effect that the country of Uganda gained its independence. But he wanted the Church to keep proclaiming the truth of the gospel so that more and more people would be restored to a right relationship with God.

If you are not yet a Christian today, will you turn to king Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Believe in him and repent of your sin.

And if you are a Christian, remember that you are an exile. You are not yet home. Let me encourage you in the words of Peter, “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to... keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” Amen.