

## The Family of Faith

Lesson for December 17, 2023

### Unit I: Profiles in Faith

**Adult Topic:** God Brings “Outsiders” In

**Background Scripture:** Matthew 1:1-17; Genesis 38; Joshua 2, 6:22-25; 2 Samuel 12:24;  
Ruth 4:13-22

**Printed Text:** Matthew 1:1-17

**Key verse:** “*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.*”  
(Matthew 1:1, NIV)

Even that first famous Adams generation (children of 2nd President John Adams, 1735-1826) had more than its share of black sheep. John and Abigail's eldest child, Abigail, married a wastrel and at her death left her children to their care. Son Charles married the sister of his spendthrift brother-in-law, dissipated family funds, died of alcoholism and left his widow to the care of his parents. Son Thomas Boylston also became an alcoholic, again bequeathing his children to the care of the family. Though John Quincy (1767-1848) turned out well, he and his unhappy wife Louisa hardly went unscathed. Their first son was an alcoholic and committed suicide at the age of 31. Their next son was expelled from college, failed in business and died of an alcohol-related illness. Only their youngest son, Charles Francis (1807-86), reacted against the family pattern by his exemplary sobriety, his prudence in business and fervent dedication to his wife and children. He spent years writing the biography and editing the words of his grandfather John Adams. But he concluded, "The history of my family is not a pleasant one to remember. It is one of great triumphs in the world but of deep groans within, one of extraordinary brilliancy and deep corroding mortification."

Charles Francis Adams, grandson of 2<sup>nd</sup> President John Adams, son of 6<sup>th</sup> President John Quincy Adams, in *U.S. News and World Report*, Dec 12, 1988

This week's lesson looks at the family history of Jesus. Like that of every family, Jesus' genealogy has some “sinful, stained, and unworthy outsiders”. (Townsend Press Commentary, 2023-2024, p. 152)

## Key Terms

1. **Begat** (verse 2) – Brought forth; produced offspring. Brought into existence by the process of reproduction.
2. **Christ** (verse 1) – The word "Christ" is a title derived from the Greek word *christos*, which means "anointed one" or "chosen one". It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Mashiach*, or "Messiah".
3. **Hezekiah** (verse 10) – He is considered a very righteous king in both the Second Book of Kings and the Second Book of Chronicles. He is also one of the more prominent kings of Judah.
4. **Judah** (verse 3) – Derived from the Hebrew name *Yehuda*, Judah means “praise,” or “praised.”
5. **King** (verse 6) – Ruler of an independent state, especially one who inherits the position by right of birth. In the Hebrew Bible, Judah is the fourth son of Jacob and Leah and the founder of the Tribe of Judah.

## Lesson Background

While Matthew did not sign his own name to “his” gospel, the early church uniformly attested to the apostle’s authorship of the book. As early as AD 140, a Christian named Papias wrote that Matthew had compiled the sayings of the Lord in Hebrew (presumably before Matthew translated them into Greek for a larger audience). Matthew’s name appears in all the biblical lists of the twelve apostles, though Mark and Luke refer to him as Levi. His history as a tax collector distinguished him from the other apostles.

The book of Matthew is the most Jewish-centric of the four gospels. The apostle regularly invoked the writings of the Old Testament prophets in an effort to illustrate Jesus’s identity as Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. The largely Jewish character of the book also suggests it was written at a time when much of the evangelism by Christians was directed more exclusively at Jews, something that became less and less common as the decades passed.

Matthew wrote his account of Jesus’s ministry to show that Jesus was and is indeed the King, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. He reflected this concern in his opening line, “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). From there, Matthew consistently took his readers back to the Old Testament, providing Old Testament testimony regarding the birth of Jesus, Bethlehem as the location of Jesus’s birth, the flight to Egypt, Herod’s slaughter of the infants, and the beginning of Jesus’s ministry. In a world where many in the Jewish community had claimed the role of Messiah for themselves, Matthew’s commitment to grounding the life of Jesus in the Old Testament raised Jesus above the multitude of these false messiahs. The apostle painted a portrait of our Lord that highlights His uniqueness among all others to ever walk this earth.

## Lesson in Depth

### I. Christ's Genealogy: God's Grace (Matthew 1:1-6)

The genealogy of Christ opens by connecting Jesus to the family line of the promised Messiah. "The first two words of Matthew, *biblos geneos*, may be translated 'record of the genealogy,' 'record of the origins,' or 'record of the history'" (Carson).

The genealogy of Christ opens by connecting Jesus to the family line of the promised Messiah. "Jesus" (Greek *Iesous*; Hebrew *Yehoshua*) is His earthly name, meaning, "the LORD is salvation." Christ is the title most often linked to His name in the New Testament. So, it is technically, "Jesus the Christ." By tracing Jesus' ancestry back to King David, through the line of Davidic kings, Matthew connects Jesus with His royal heritage. The Hebrew *Jeshua* means "the Lord is Salvation".

**The Son of David, the Son of Abraham:** In this overview of explaining the lineage of Jesus, Matthew clearly and strongly connects him to some of the greatest men in the history of the Old Testament. Matthew begins his account of the life of **Jesus Christ** with the record of the lineage of Jesus from the patriarch **Abraham**.

**Son of David:** A messianic title used as such in only the synoptic gospels. Throughout his work, Matthew presents Jesus as the kingly Messiah promised from David's royal line (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would be the **Son of David**; in the very first sentence, Matthew points to Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

**Son of Abraham:** Takes His royal lineage all the way back to the nation's inception in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3). Matthew not only connected Jesus to David, but back yet further to **Abraham**. Jesus is the Seed of Abraham in whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). That this generation of Jesus Christ begins with Abraham, because he is the father of all believers as we read in (Galatians 3:29).

*"And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ make up spiritual Israel, the (spiritual), descendants of Abraham, because of their faith. Genesis 17 states that these spiritual descendants of Abraham would be so many, they will be impossible to number.

**Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren:**

This genealogy starts with the three Old Testament patriarchs, whom the blessings were passed down through. "Isaac" means laughter. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. "Jacob" meant trickster, and God changed his name to "Israel", which means having power with God.

This Israel was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. This Judah (God be praised). Jesus is shown as being the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The promise of Jacob was the leadership of the 12 tribes would come through Judah (Genesis 49:3-12).

**Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah:** Four women of “questionable” qualifications appear in this genealogy in addition to Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. It was not customary to list the names of women in a genealogy; therefore, the inclusion of these names must be deliberate on the part of the author. Tamar was the mother of two illegitimate sons (Pharez and Zerah) by her father-in-law, Judah. Rahab was the converted prostitute of Jericho and the mother of Boaz.

Ruth, the wife of Boaz, was a godly foreigner (Moabitess). The wife of Uriah is Bathsheba, who later became the legitimate wife of David and the mother of Solomon.

**And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon:** This line of descent, from Nahshon to David, is also given by Luke (Luke 3:31, 32), and is derived from (Ruth 4:18-22).

Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab. Jesse was the father of David the king. This is not an exhaustive genealogy. Several additional generations must have elapsed between Rahab (in Joshua’s time) and David (verse 6), nearly four centuries later. Matthew’s genealogy (like most of the biblical ones), sometimes skips over several generations between well-known characters in order to abbreviate the listing.

**And Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse:** Jesus was descended in the flesh from Boaz (a Jewish man), and Ruth, a Moabite (a Gentile). This actually makes Jesus both Jew and Gentile. Rachab is Rahab the prostitute.

**And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon:** “David” (the beloved of God) was in the ancestry of Jesus. God promised David that his descendant would come and rule. A very strange thing is that Jesus, through the flesh, was a descendant of David, but in the Spirit was David’s God. David called Him Lord.

We also see in the verse above; just how forgiving God really is. David had Uriah killed so he (David), could have Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife. David’s and Bathsheba’s first child died, but God blessed them later with Solomon. God’s people are not perfect, just forgiven.

## II. Christ’s Genealogy: God’s Purpose (Matthew 1:7-11)

**And Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa; And Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram; and Jehoram begat Uzziah:** Matthew skips over Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, going directly from Jehoram to Uzziah. Using a kind of genealogical shorthand, he seems to do this intentionally in order to make a symmetrical three-fold division in verse 17.

**And Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah;” “And Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah:** Uzziah (Isaiah 6:1), and Azariah (2 Kings 14:21). Three generations are omitted at this point. Matthew omits the names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, and then omits Jehoiakim after the name of Josiah.

**And Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:** Josiah became the father of Jechoniah. Again, Matthew skips a generation between Josiah and Jechoniah (1 Chronicles 3:14-16). Jechoniah is also called Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:8), and sometimes Coniah (Jeremiah 22:24). Jechoniah's presence in the genealogy presents an interesting dilemma. A curse on him forbade any of his descendants from the throne of David forever (Jeremiah 22:30). Had Jesus been the "natural" son of Joseph, He could not have reigned on David's throne. However, since His natural lineage is through Mary, and His legal authority is granted through His adoptive relationship to Joseph's line, this curse does not apply to Him.

### III. Christ's Genealogy: God's Salvation (Matthew 1:12-17)

**And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechoniah begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zerubbabel:** Zerubbabel is the last character in Matthew's list that appears in any of the Old Testament genealogies.

**And Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob:** Notice the difference in the spelling of the names here and in the Old Testament. Most of this is caused because of the difference in the Greek and Hebrew languages.

**And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ:**

**Joseph the husband of Mary:** the wording carefully avoids giving the impression that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus. As the husband of Mary, he was Jesus' legal father and the one through whom He had a right to David's throne. Every emphasis of the text at this point reinforces the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ.

Joseph was legally but not physically the father of Jesus (verses 18-25). Though a carpenter in Nazareth (13:55), he was a legal heir of King David (verses 5:16, 20). He was a just and God-fearing man who faithfully carried out God's commands regarding Mary and the birth of Jesus (verses 19-25).

Joseph is mentioned in Scripture only in the Gospels and only in relation to Jesus Christ's childhood. The subsequent silence of Scripture suggests that Joseph died before the time of Christ's public ministry.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a godly young woman (Luke 1:28), but not without sin, either original or actual sin, since she herself refers to her own need of a Savior (Luke 1:47). She was betrothed (a Jewish custom legally equivalent to marriage), to Joseph of Nazareth. During this time the Holy Spirit supernaturally caused her to conceive Jesus apart from any human fatherhood (verses 18, 20, 23; Luke 1:31-35), and she remained a virgin until after the birth of Jesus (verse 25).

Mary probably grew up in Nazareth. Following her formal marriage to Joseph and awaiting the birth of Jesus, she and Joseph went to Bethlehem due to a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. Everyone had to go into their own city. When they got to Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus. and shortly moved into a house until they could travel.

It was there that the wise men came and visited from the east. Soon an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt, which they stayed there until the death of Herod. After spending a short time in Egypt, they then returned to Nazareth. (See Matthew 13:54-56; Luke 2:51).

Except for the birth narratives, Mary is seldom mentioned in Scripture, even in the Gospels. She is last mentioned shortly before the Day of Pentecost (in Acts 1:14).

**So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations:** “Fourteen generations” is the literary grouping used by Matthew to emphasize the three major periods of Israel’s national history: theocracy, monarchy, hierarchy.

The significance of the number 14 is not clear, but Matthew’s attention to numbers, a distinctly Hebrew characteristic, is evident throughout the gospel. The systematic ordering may be an aid for memorization. Note that Matthew counts Jeconiah in both the third and fourth groups, representing both the last generation before the Babylonian captivity and the first generation after.

This was the beginning of Jesus the Christ, the specially Anointed One of God. All others who came, were leading up to the Messiah.

## Lesson Summary

Matthew’s chief aims in including the genealogy are hinted at in the first verse— namely, 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. The principal thrust of the genealogy ties together promise and fulfillment.

This passage teaches us:

1. **God’s plan is bigger than our understanding:** The genealogy of Jesus Christ is a testament to God’s sovereignty and His plan for salvation. It shows that God works through ordinary people and circumstances to accomplish His purposes, even when we don’t understand how or why.
2. **God’s grace is available to all:** The genealogy of Jesus Christ includes both Jews and Gentiles, men and women, saints and sinners. It shows that God’s grace is available to all who believe in Him, regardless of their background or past.

3. **God keeps His promises:** The genealogy of Jesus Christ highlights the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. It shows that God is faithful to keep His promises, even when it takes centuries to do so.
4. **Jesus is the Savior of the world:** The genealogy of Jesus Christ establishes His credentials as the Messiah and the Savior of the world. It shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's plan for salvation and that He is the only way to eternal life.