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Day 292 - October 19

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## Jesus the Christ (5 BCE – 30 CE)

### *The Genealogies of Jesus*

Readings: *Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23b-38*

### *Reflections:*

#### *The Genealogies of Jesus*

- The two genealogical records in Matthew and Luke focus primarily on establishing Jesus' credentials as a descendent of David, Abraham and in the case of Luke, Adam. This proof of being a legitimate descendent was crucial to the Jews and to confirming the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah.
- There were many prophecies that the Jewish people held onto that required the Messiah be of royal descent:
  - Of Adam and Eve - Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
  - Of Abraham – Genesis 12:3 "...and all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you."
  - Of Jacob – Numbers 24:17 "...a star will come out of Jacob; a scepter out of Israel."
  - Of the tribe of Judah – Genesis 49:10 "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his."
  - Of Jesse – Isaiah 11:10 "In that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious."
  - Of David – Jeremiah 23:5-6 "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord our righteousness.'"

- Called David – Ezekiel 37:24 “My servant David will be king over them, and they will have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.”
- Of the throne of David – Isaiah 9:7 “Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”
- It is easy to see from these prophecies why it was so critical for Matthew who was writing to the Jews and Luke who was writing to both Jews and Gentiles to clearly establish Jesus’ royal ancestry.
- Matthew refers to Jesus right off the top as the son (or descendent) of David and Abraham. He then outlines the genealogy from Abraham to David, David to the Exile and then the Exile to Joseph. He does this to remind the people of their history even as he outlines the genealogy.
- Matthew does something shocking in his genealogy: he includes five women. Women were virtually never included in a patriarchal society. More importantly, these five women were all in some way represented God’s scandalous grace:
  - Tamar (Genesis 38) – this is an incredibly scandalous story of a woman who deceptively seduces her unjust father-in-law by posing as a prostitute so that her blood line is carried on. The twins born to her from conceiving with her father-in-law become descendants of David’s lineage.
  - Rahab (Joshua 2 and 6) – this is the story of a Gentile prostitute that helps the Jewish spies escape Jericho and in return for her trust in God, is spared along with her household. Again, prostitutes were to be stoned to death, not rescued. She is welcomed into Israel as a history and she is woven into the lineage of King David and ultimately the Messiah.
  - Ruth (Ruth 1-4) – this is a story during the time of the Judges when Israel was living completely self-centered and sinful lives. It is about a Gentile woman who models more covenant faithfulness than virtually anyone in Israel. Her covenant faithfulness opens the way for her to marry a godly Israelite husband, Boaz. This went against the commandments in Scripture for Israelites to not intermarry and this is particularly shocking during a period of time when Israel as a nation was sinning so greatly by actively being involved with Gentile idolatry. It is interesting that in Ruth 4:12 that the Elders of the town pray that Ruth would be blessed like Tamar. Even within the story of Ruth itself the writer wants to capture the scandalous nature of Ruth.
  - Uriah’s wife (2 Samuel 11 and 12) – Matthew doesn’t even call her by her name, Bathsheba but just refers to her as Uriah’s wife. This underscores the adultery

and murder David committed. Solomon the son of Bathsheba was the promised fulfillment to the prophecy given to David. This story is incredibly scandalous. David's royal wife Michal is barren because she despises his passionate love for God. God then tells David he will have a son even though he has no wife that can have a son. David commits adultery and murder to take Bathsheba as his wife. This is the wife that has the promised son.

- Mary, the mother of Jesus – It is clear from Matthew's account that clearly Jesus' conception and birth occurred in such a way as to suggest that Mary had committed adultery. Joseph as righteous man was going to divorce her quietly so as to not cause her shame. It will take an angelic appearance to lead Joseph to remain with Mary and play the role of earthly father to Jesus.
- Matthew wants to remind all of his Jewish readers right up front that the history of God working in Israel is full of scandal where women, Gentiles and even what appears to be sexual sin can be used by God to advance his purposes for salvation. This genealogy reminds all readers to be careful not to judge by appearances but to realize that God cares more about the heart than about what people think.
- Luke's genealogy is shorter and goes right from Joseph back to Adam. This approach both affirms Jesus' ancestry as well as sets up the statement, "the son of God." Luke here alludes to the idea of Adam being the son of God and so sets the stage for people to consider Jesus as the second Adam, the Son of God.
- There is a question about why the two genealogies are different. There are three options. First, it was common not to include all the generations in a genealogy and so many of the differences may represent the practice of omitting some generations. Second, some have argued that one is the genealogy of Mary and the other Joseph. This is based on the phrase in Luke, "He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph..." Some scholars suggest this is Luke's way of saying that this is really the genealogy of Mary, his primary source for the birth narratives. Last, it just might mean that in the history of oral tradition, Matthew had been told something different than Luke. Luke apparently researched this with Mary where Matthew may have picked it up as a disciple of Jesus.
- The bottom line for both genealogies is that Jesus had all the credentials to fulfill Messianic prophecy. As we will see, the writers will return to this theme many times as they seek to show over and over again how Jesus fulfills all of the prophecies and aligns with many of the images of the Old Testament, even as his life and teachings scandalize the religious leaders of his day.