

## *The Church of the Servant King*

### Thursday Night Bible Study

#### *The Gospel of Matthew*

#### CHAPTER 1 - GENEALOGY

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#### Verse 1 - Introduction

- Genealogies were very important to Jews.
  - They proved that one was a Jew (thus the need to trace one's lineage back to Abraham).
  - They identified the tribe to which one belonged (thus established one's responsibilities and one's relationship to certain prophecies, e.g. Levites as the priestly tribe, Judah as the ruling tribe, etc.). See Genesis 49:8-10 that confirms Judah's position among the tribes and see such passages as Exodus 6:25; Lev 25:32; Josh 21:3, 41 cf. Num 8:6; Ezra 2:61, 62, & 70 as examples of passages addressing the priestly role of members of the tribe of Levi.
  - Genealogies were rarely comprehensive and only traced a few lines of descent. Most followed the male lineage.
- Mentions David first before Abraham. Very important to understand why.
  - Jesus' legal right to the throne of Israel came through David (see 2 Samuel 7:12-13 – the so-called "Davidic Covenant").
  - Joseph, Jesus' legal human father, was a descendant of David.
  - Jesus' right to be King of Israel is essential to His Kingdom-centric message to Israel which is a theme of the Gospel narrative.
  - Jesus' claim to be the Messiah is related to His legal right to the throne.
- David in Hebrew is דוד which consists of the 4<sup>th</sup> letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Da'Leth), followed by the 6<sup>th</sup> letter (Waw), followed by the 4<sup>th</sup> letter (Da'Leth). When summed, 4 + 6 + 4 = 14. Matthew's genealogy lists 14 individuals, three separate times. Some ingenious symbolism.
- It is necessary to mention Abraham to establish that Jesus was a Jew, but it also relates Jesus to the "seed" portion of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham.

#### Verses 2-17 – the Genealogy

- To mention women in a Jewish genealogy is unusual. Five women are mentioned:
  - **Tamar** (v. 3) – See **Genesis 38**. After Jacob's sons had sold Joseph into slavery to the Midianites, Jacob's son Judah married a Canaanite woman identified as the daughter of Shua. Judah had three sons by this wife, i.e. Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er married Tamar, another Canaanite woman, but the Lord later killed Er because of his wickedness (Gen. 38:7). Onan refused to fulfill his *levirate* marital responsibilities (a custom later incorporated into the Mosaic Law in Deut. 25:5-10) and the Lord killed him (Gen. 38:10). Judah then refused to give Tamar to his other son, Shelah (Gen. 38:14), so Tamar eventually deceived Judah after his wife's death by pretending to be a harlot (Gen. 38:15-16). Judah eventually confessed the fact that Tamar had been more righteous than he had been for he had withheld his son from her as was her due (Gen. 38:26). Tamar conceived twins by Judah – Perez and Zerah. Perez is mentioned in the lineage of David in Matthew 1:3 and Tamar is also mentioned. Thus, **Tamar became a member of the family of promise even though she was a Canaanite and had played the harlot.**

- **Rahab** (v. 5) – See **Joshua 2**. The first city to fall to the Israelites as they marched into Canaan was Jericho. Joshua had sent two spies into Jericho to reconnoiter the city in advance of the attack. It is likely that Rahab had resorted to prostitution to provide for herself after her husband's death since her husband is not mentioned. She was a believer in the God of the Israelites and her testimony in Joshua 2:8-13 not only provides evidence of that fact, but it also illustrates how the exploits of the Israelites were used by God to evangelize Gentile peoples. After the conquest, Rahab bore a child, Boaz, by Salmon (Ruth 4:21 cf. Matt 1:5). Thus, **Rahab became a member of the family of promise even though she had been a harlot and a Gentile because like Tamar she had demonstrated a righteous behavior and attitude toward the children of promise and their God, i.e. the Jews.**
- **Ruth, the Moabite** (v. 5) – See Ruth 1:4. After the untimely deaths of Naomi's husband and Naomi's two sons while she and her deceased husband had lived in Moab to escape a famine in Judah, Naomi gave her two daughters-in-law the right to return to their own families as she journeyed back to Judah. One returned to Moab, but Ruth proclaimed her faith in the God of the Jews and of Naomi. God later honored that faith by providing for Ruth in her widowed status. Boaz fulfilled his *levirate* responsibilities under the Mosaic Law (Deut 25:5-10) and thus became a type of Christ as a kinsman-redeemer even though he was not the nearest relative (Ruth 4). Christ is the kinsman-redeemer of Gentiles even though He was a Jew and had a lineage separate from the Gentiles. So, **Ruth, a woman who as a widow was rejected and consigned to a life of oppression and hardship in ancient society, would be included in the genealogy of Jesus because of her faith.**
- **Bathsheba**, the wife of Uriah the Hittite (v. 6) – See 2 Sam 11:1-12:23. Bathsheba was not only an adulteress, but she had participated inadvertently in the murder of her husband, Uriah, at King David's command. Even though David confessed his sin, his first born son through Bathsheba would die (2 Sam 12:19). The next son was Solomon, through whom the promised Messiah would come. So, **Bathsheba, an adulteress with David**, is included in Matthew's genealogy as the mother of one of Israel's most prosperous kings and wife of Israel's most revered kings.
- **Mary**, the mother of the humanity of Jesus (v. 16) – Even though the virginity of Mary is unquestioned today by Christians who accept the Biblical account, such an idea was not only questioned, but explained away in Jesus' day by those who did not accept His claim to be the Messiah/King of Israel. He was considered a bastard child, born out of wedlock by those opposed to Him.
- Therefore, Matthew included these women in the genealogy to demonstrate that Israel's history was scattered with revered women who were tainted by sin and not of the Jewish race. All four of the women mentioned before Mary were either prostitutes, adulterers, or widowed. At least Mary was Jewish. All had been the recipients of the sovereign grace of God in spite of their sin. No doubt, they provided a great example for Israel to follow if she would only accept God's gracious offer through Jesus.
- When the fifth woman, Mary is mentioned in the genealogy, an important change occurs. Up until Mary, the genealogy repeatedly consisted of the phrase, **the father of** someone. At this point Matthew changes and says, **of whom was born Jesus** in reference to Mary. The prepositional phrase "of whom" is a feminine relative pronoun (ex *hs* or *es*). The Greek construction clearly indicates that Jesus was the physical Child of Mary but that Joseph was not His physical father.
- Jeconiah (a.k.a. Coniah and a.k.a. Jehoiachin) succeeded his evil father to the throne of Judah shortly before the Babylonian captivity. Due to his evil character like his father, Jeremiah pronounces a curse from the Lord upon Coniah in Jeremiah 22:30 that this man should be considered as if childless. Yet Jeconiah is included in the genealogy of Matthew and had seven sons (1 Chronicles 3:16-18).

Question: Is this a contradiction in the Bible?

Answer: No. Jeconiah's sons never occupied the throne, thus Jeconiah (Coniah) was treated as if childless. However, the legal right to the throne did pass through his sons. Jesus obtained the **legal** right to the throne through Coniah's son, Shealtiel. Luke's Gospel makes it clear that Jesus was a **physical** descendant of David through another son of David (Nathan – Lu 3:31) while Jesus' human father was a descendant through a lineage that traced back to David and included Coniah – a necessity for Jesus' legal right to the throne. Had Jesus been a **physical** descendant of Coniah, He could not have a claim to the throne.