

## THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Matthew 1:1-17

Key Verse: 1:1

"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David,  
the son of Abraham."

Matthew's Gospel is one of the Synoptic Gospels. While Mark saw Jesus as a servant, and Luke, as an ordinary man, Matthew saw that Jesus is the King, the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. In Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is amply repeated compared with the other Synoptic Gospels. Proportionally, there are also many parables concerning the kingdom of heaven. This might be the reason Matthew traces the root of Jesus through Jesus' genealogy. Matthew recorded his Gospel exclusively for the chosen people Israel. The genealogy of Jesus included the Jewish patriarchs and kings and the stories of several women. When we study the genealogy of Jesus, the family tree of Jesus is deeply planted in the faithfulness of God, from the beginning to the end. Matthew enjoins how God faithfully kept his promise to send a Savior of the world, and that the members of Jesus' genealogy were from God's point of view all faithful people.

### I. Jesus Christ, David and Abraham (1,2)

First, the character of the genealogy of Jesus. Look at verse 1. "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." When the world was first created, it was good; it was paradise in which man lived for the glory of God and enjoyed utmost happiness. But through one man Adam's disobedience to the holy command of God, sin and death came into the world (Ro 5:12). Since then, man lost paradise. The world became like hell. What did God do in this situation? God, in his great mercy, made a new plan of world salvation. God promised to send a Savior from the offspring of a woman (Ge 3:15). He is Jesus. Before his coming, God established two ancestors of faith, Abraham and David. There are many patriarchs and kings who could have been included in the genealogy of Jesus. But Matthew chose three persons--Abraham, David and Christ--as three posts and main characters in the genealogy, because God gave each of them special promises and made them covenant people (Ge12:2,3; 2Sa 7:12-16; Mt1:21). God helped them to live as a covenant people, who believed his promises that God would send a Savior of the world (Ge15:6; Ro4:3).

Second, God chose Abraham to be a blessing. God called Abraham with a great purpose for him. God wanted to make him into a great nation. Even if Abraham had 120 sons, they would not be enough to make a nation. But God promised Abraham to make him into a great nation when he did not have even one son to inherit his name. What a difficult promise to believe!

When God called Abraham, he also wanted to make him a source of blessing so that all peoples of all nations would be blessed through him (Ge 12:3). At that time Abraham was very fatalistic due to his childless problem. Because of his burden of life he could be a burden to others, not to mention be a blessing to others. But God promised to make him a blessing. In the time of Abraham, there were so many people

who burdened others with their selfishness and ego-centricity until the people around them became too sorrowful to live in the world. At that time, the power of sin ruled the world. In that hopeless time, God called Abraham and said, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you...and you will be a blessing" (Ge 12:2). To Abraham, who was already 75 years old, it was too great a promise. Anyway, God promised to give him so many sons that they would eventually establish a nation. Abraham had no idea to have that many sons; he just wanted one son to inherit his name. As his name, "Abram," "noble father," suggests, he only wanted to be an ordinary man, never be a great man. Even though God's promise did not match his calculation, he did not have any second thought. He simply accepted God's promises, because he honored God as God.

Since then, ten years had elapsed and God had not given him even one son. To Abraham, living a life of faith seemed to have been only for the sake of suffering. After living by faith for ten years, he was weary and tired. One day Abraham was sitting crouched in his tent in despair. God visited him and took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them...So shall your offspring be" (Ge 15:5). Wow! This time God's promise was too big to believe. But Abraham simply believed God's promise because he honored God as God. God recognized him as a man of faith who had a right relationship with him (Ge 15:6) and established 12 patriarchs of faith through one man, Abraham.

After 25 long years had elapsed, finally God gave Abraham a son, Isaac, as his heir. God also changed his name from "Abram," meaning "noble father," to "Abraham," meaning "father of many nations." God made him a blessing to all peoples of all nations because he simply believed God's promises. Abraham's simple faith was the quality that made him the ancestor of faith.

Third, God called a shepherd boy David. Around 1,000 B.C. God called David, a shepherd boy, who was the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse. When God called David, he had a great purpose for him. It was to establish through him a kingdom of priests, that is, a shepherd nation, and a model of the theocratic kingdom of God. 2 Samuel 7:12b says, "I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom."

In fact, David was a shepherd as the youngest son of his father. When he was shepherding his father's sheep, many times brutal animals came to maul and eat the sheep. But David fought them, risking his own life. Also, he was a shepherd for his people. For the sake of his country, he risked his life and fought the Philistine general Goliath and defeated him with one slingshot. Once, when he was running for his life as a political criminal, many needy people--around 400 of them--came to him for help. David was in a helpless situation, but he shepherded them as if they were his own children. Because of his shepherd's heart, he was known as a man after God's own heart (Ac 13:22). When God called David to establish a united kingdom of Israel, he had to fight so many battles and wars. His mission demanded his life every day. But he obeyed God's purpose absolutely. David's absolute obedience was the quality that made him the second ancestor of faith.

In a time of prosperity, David should have maintained God's blessing. But he could not. Once, he sinned greatly against God. David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of his loyal general. In order to cover up his sin, David destroyed General Uriah, the woman's husband. Since a king was above the law, David had the right to do so. But David realized that he was not right with God. He realized that he had sinned greatly against God (Ps 51:4). David confessed his sins and repented his sin of adultery and murder with many tears, asking God's mercy and forgiveness (Ps 32:1,2). God was pleased with his repentant heart. God not only forgave his sin but also restored his joy in his soul.

Look at verse 2. "Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers." These three persons of three generations had ups and downs in their lives of faith, but basically they lived by faith in God's promises. Hebrews 11:9 says of Abraham, "By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise." Since God blessed them abundantly, they could have lived in mansion houses. But they did not do so. Three generations lived a tent life as the expression of their faith in God Almighty. They became a good influence to their descendants.

Fourth, Jesus is the perfecter of faith (Heb 12:2), while Abraham and David were models of faith. When God sent Jesus to the world, God had a definite purpose for him. Matthew 1:21 says, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." In order to fulfill God's will, Jesus had to die on the cross for the sin of the world. Although God made Jesus a ransom sacrifice (Mk 10:45), Jesus obeyed unto death, death on the cross. Jesus became a sacrificial Lamb for the sin of the world. On the cross, while his mother and the others cried endlessly, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a).

## II. Women of faith (3-6)

First, Tamar. Like other Jews of that time, Matthew also had no regard for women. But Matthew could not but include five women of faith in the genealogy of Jesus. Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah (3a). Judah had three sons by a Canaanite woman. Er, his first son, the husband of Tamar, died. Judah's second son, Onan, married the widow Tamar. But he also died. Then Judah sent Tamar to her father's house to wait for his third son, Shelah, to grow up. When Shelah grew up, Judah reneged on his promise, for he was afraid that his third son, Shelah, might die too. Then one day Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute and conceived twin sons by Judah, who was seeking comfort after his wife died. Tamar bore twin sons, Perez and Zerah. In this way she bore heirs for her dead husband, Er. If she could pass on her husband's name, she didn't mind sacrificing herself. She was truly faithful to her dead husband. Because of her faithfulness, the lineage of the patriarchs was maintained. God honored her faithfulness and included her in the genealogy of Jesus.

Second, Rahab. Look at verse 5a. Rahab was a Gentile prostitute who

lived in the walls of Jericho. But by faith she welcomed the spies of Israel when they came to Jericho to spy out the land (Josh 2:1-21; Heb 11:31). It was because she had heard that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. She had the absolute fear of God, the God of Israel, whom she believed to be the Creator of heaven and earth. Because of her personal faith in the Creator God, the army of Israel could conquer Jericho, the first invincible fortress in the promised land. Later, Rahab became the mother of Boaz and the great-great-grandmother of King David. She was also included in the genealogy of Jesus.

Third, Ruth (5b). She was a Moabitess, a Gentile woman, and the second daughter-in-law of Naomi, a Jewess who came to live in Moab to obtain provisions and whose two sons Mahlon and Kilion died young. Naomi said to the two daughters-in-law, "Orpah and Ruth! I am too sorrowful even to look at you. Go please, go please." But Ruth gave up her second chance to marry and decided to follow her mother-in-law back to the foreign country Israel, while the other daughter-in-law Orpah went away to remarry. God honored Ruth's faithfulness as a precious factor in the history of God and made her the great-grandmother of King David. God also included her in the genealogy of Jesus.

Fourth, Bathsheba. Look at verse 6. "...and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife." In this chapter Matthew gives the title "king" only to David, though there were many kings in the genealogy, in order to stress the fact that the Messiah would come through David's line. Matthew also recorded Solomon's mother not as "Mrs. David," but as one who "had been Uriah's wife," exposing David's great sin. When David was in his dottage, his first son, Adonijah, plotted to seize the throne. At this crucial moment Bathsheba remembered what David had promised her. With faith she went to David and entreated him to make her son Solomon king, according to the promise God had made to David (2 Sa 7:8-17). Because of her faith, the promise of God was maintained, and she was included in the genealogy of Jesus.

Fifth, Mary the mother of Jesus. Mary was a country girl. When she heard of God's great purpose for her (Lk 1:26-33), by faith she gave up her beautiful dream of marriage and obeyed God's words (Lk 1:38). God was pleased with her obedience, and she was included in the genealogy of Jesus.

### III. Our God is a faithful God (7-17)

First, the division of the kingdom of Israel. Verses 7-15 speak of two tragic events in the history of Israel. The first tragic event was the division of the nation. The immediate cause of this division was Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, who was insolent and treacherous to his people (1 Ki 12). But the real cause was in Solomon himself. At the beginning of his reign, Solomon obeyed God. But later, when he had firmly established his kingdom, Solomon began to indulge in corruption by having too many foreign women through royal marriages (1 Ki 11:1-6). Solomon was overly confident about himself; he thought he could control all the women under his reign. But he could not; instead, he was influenced by them. As a result, he began to worship many foreign idols. Thus Solomon became unfaithful to God and a bad influence to his

people. Because of this, God caused the nation to be divided into two. This division between Northern and Southern Israel caused incessant war, which made the people miserable. Throughout history, immorality has been the root cause of the destruction of any nation or civilization. God can use people who have moral standards in God.

Second, the Babylonian captivity. The Babylonian captivity was the second tragic event. Whenever God blessed his people, they would abandon God and his high calling to be a kingdom of priests. They also would seek after material prosperity and physical pleasure like the Canaanite people (Jer 25:6-11). They needed divine discipline. So God sent them into exile in Babylon to purify them. The period of exile was a time of great distress for the people of Israel. Their captivity in Babylon is the exact description of man's suffering with no choice. But God made them suffer to purify them from their sins. This was God's divine love. In this genealogy, the history of Israel, with its ebb and flow, shows the triumphs and tragedies of man like the undulating waves of the sea. But the history of God flows steadily, fulfilling God's promises, moving forward to the coming of the Messiah (22). To God, his chosen people were totally useless because of their unfaithfulness. But God was faithful. God never changed his promises. God kept his promise to his people for three times of 14 generations. If we count one generation as 30 years, God persevered with his people's unfaithfulness for 1,260 years. Finally, according to his promises, God sent his one and only Son as the Savior of the world. He is Jesus Christ. Though he is the Almighty God, he humbled himself and came to this world to save his people from their sins (Jn 1:14).

In this passage we learn God's faithfulness. In spite of the fact that his people sinned, God had never abandoned them. God was with them faithfully to the end. We also learn that those who were included in the genealogy were those who pleased God by their faithfulness. Let's pray that we may please God with our faithfulness so that we may also be included in the genealogy of Jesus.