



Part 4: A Long and Messy Salvation Matthew 1:2-17

We must engage the genealogy the way the original hearers did.
This is a cross-cultural experience of understanding Jewish genealogies at work.

I. Genealogies often weren't entirely literal, but rather were structured to make a point.

Additional Bible Background: Take a look at Luke's genealogy: they do not match. This is not because one was incorrect or being deceptive, but rather because the Jewish people did not primarily give genealogies for the sake of historical accuracy. Instead, they were making a point and setting a tone for what came next. Let's look at some examples of this in today's passage...

A. Patterns of 14: This genealogy is structured around three "eras" of salvation history for the Jewish people.

- It begins with the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This represents the original covenant to the Jewish people and the promises given to Abraham (Go listen to Adam's sermon two weeks ago for more information on this). The way Mathew counts it, this is 14 generations to get to King David.
- The second movement is from David to the Exile: This represents the second move of salvation history and the second covenant given to David around his kingship (Listen to Jasona's sermon for more information on Jesus fulfilling this role of King). Again, this era of history, as Matthew records it, is 14 generations.
- The last move is from the exile to the coming of Christ. This movement also has 14 generations. This is significant in two ways. 1) It symbolizes that the Jewish people are "due" for another covenant (another move of God in their midst) if the pattern is going to keep. Jesus brings the "new covenant"! 2) This creates 6 groupings of 7 (two in each "era" of history"). This would place Christ's era as the 7th grouping of 7. The number 7 in Hebrew culture meant completion of fulfillment.

This communicates that Christ is not only bringing a “new” covenant, but the final covenant which will fulfill the others and bring God’s work to completion on the earth.

- There were not literally 14 generations in each phase of Israelites history. We know this from other genealogies in scripture. Rather Matthew included specific people on purpose in order to create this symbolism. This will make his inclusion of women: specifically gentile women and women with a sexually suspect past, particularly jarring. He did not HAVE to include them (women were not customarily in genealogies at all) but went out of his way to include these women specifically.

B. Hebrew Gematria (Aka. Extra nerdy bible background): Letters in Hebrew have numerical value. It would be like if we thought of “A” as 1, “B” as 2, etc. If this were the case, our word “Cab” would have a total value of $6 (C=3)+(A=1)+(B=2)=6$. This is called “gematria”. The letters of David’s Name (only three letters in Hebrew: Dalet, Vav, Dalet) have the numerical value of 14 when added together. In this way, Jesus comes at the end of the third “David”. Three also suggests a number of perfection in Hebrew symbols, Jesus is set forth as the “true and better” king David.

II. The purpose of this genealogical recount was both biographical and theological.

- This symbolism had two purposes. The first and most obvious is biographical. Genealogies tell us about the person being described. They provide their “pedigree”, so to speak. Of first importance to the Jewish people is whether someone is truly Jewish and the purity of this bloodline. By starting with Abraham and the patriarchs, Jesus is established as a true “son of Abraham”- a true Jew. However, as we will see, Israel’s bloodlines are not as pure as they would like. This pedigree also indicated a person’s capabilities. For instance, a King might highlight great leaders in his lineage, a prophet might highlight other prophets, a priest, great priests, etc. While Luke’s genealogy of Jesus highlights the prophetic role of Christ, this genealogy highlights the great leaders/kings with whom God made covenants.
- The second is theological: Genealogies were theological because the Jewish perspective on history was infused with God’s sovereignty. While an individual might see their marriage as their choice or their parents’ choice, a genealogy showed that God was sovereign over the movements of family history: marriages, children, tragedies and blessings. God was creating a larger story from the individual events in people’s lives. This second point is particularly important as we see women and gentiles included in the family line, as well as the highlighting of various “scandals”. Matthew is not simply saying these things happened, but that God was sovereignly working through them to bring about redemption.
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III. Matthew Subverts Jewish Expectations for the Messiah

- Verse 2, Tamar: The presence of a woman would tell the reader that Matthew wanted to get their attention, as they would not normally be included. To a gentile reading the passage, they would immediately wonder “Tamar must be a really special and righteous woman to be included in this genealogy”. But the truth subverts any expectation for the “pedigree” of the messiah.
Read Tamar’s full story in Genesis 38.
- Background to her story: It was customary for the next of kin to marry a widow if her husband has died during her childbearing years. This is to make sure that widows would be cared for and have the hope of still bearing children. This would mean that if a woman’s husband died, and her husband had a brother, he would be obligated to marry her. However, any children they might have would not be legally his. Instead, those children would carry on his deceased brother’s name and inheritance. This was costly to the brother (they would otherwise receive a larger inheritance from their father, but instead it would pass to their “brother’s” offspring), but customary and expected for a person of honor to take this responsibility. Tamar’s first husband was put to death by God because he was so evil- we know no other details. Her second husband, who should have taken the responsibility of trying to provide her with offspring, and therefore an inheritance), instead avoids his responsibilities. He sleeps with Tamar but attempts to not impregnate her so that he can keep the inheritance for himself. God puts him to death for denying her justice. Judah refuses to see that his first two sons have died because they were evil, and instead assumes that Tamar is the cause of the death. He lies to Tamar, saying she can marry his third son, but has no intention of doing so. Seducing Judah is a clever but deeply scandalous way for Tamar to get justice. Not only is Tamar sexually transgressive (sleeping with her father-in-law and prostitution), but she publicly shames Judah. She proves with his seal and staff that Judah, who should have been a man of God, was guilty of sexual sin with (who he thought was) a pagan prostitute. The result is Tamar gets double what she was owed: two sons and double the inheritance. But Israel will forever have this scandal marring their early history and bloodline.
- Verse 5: Rahab. This story is more familiar to us. Rahab is the Canaanite prostitute from Jericho who hid the Israelite spies. She was saved because of her great faith. Scripture honors her faith, but the Jews would have had mixed feelings about her due to her sexual past and gentile heritage (Jews we warned to specifically NOT marry Canaanites). Read her full story in Joshua 2 and 6.
- Verse 5-6: Ruth. Again, a much more familiar story, which can be read in its entirety in the book of Ruth. Ruth is a much more positive figure to the Israelites, given that an

entire book of scripture is dedicated to her. In particular, like Rehab, Ruth had the faith to change her loyalty from the gods of her people to Yahweh. However, she is a Moabite. Based on this lineage, David is at most 3/4 Jewish, and that means their great king was born out of the faith of gentiles.

- Verse 6: Uriah's wife. We know her as Bathsheba, and her story is recounted in 2 Samuel 11-12. Matthew highlights the scandal and shame of David's sin by avoiding using her name: she is referred to only as another man's wife. What we often miss in the story of Bathsheba is that she is not a sinful woman- in fact, she is taking part in the purity rituals of the Israelite people when David "sends messengers to get her". Bathsheba is vulnerable without her husband there to protect her and is sexually exploited by David. This is reiterated by the prophet Nathan's depicting her as an innocent lamb who is slaughtered. David used his power to exploit Bathsheba and covers his sin with murder. Nathan says that because of this great sin "the sword will never depart" from the house of Israel.

Instead of a spotless pedigree or a highlight reel, Matthew holds up before the Israelites the parts of their story they wish most to forget.

Christ unites himself to all of Israel's history- not just the best parts- so that he can bring redemption to it all. He does the same for us.

"For that which (Christ) has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is saved."- Gregory of Nazianzus, 329 AD

Will you give Christ access to all of you, so he may heal all of you?

What areas of our lives need to be brought to Christ for our healing?

Our Sin

Our Wounds

Our False Identities

Small Group Questions

- Preparation: Take some time before small group to read through the sermon notes on the genealogy to enrich your conversation.

- What has your interaction been with this passage in the past? (Skimmed over it? Never read it? Studied in depth? Why do you think that is?)
- What was one thing that you learned or that stood out to you about the genealogy of Christ?
- Put yourself in the shoes of an Israelite reading this passage. What emotions would have come up for you as you read it?
- What is your own emotional reaction to truth that God united himself to every part of you and your story, not just the good parts?
- The sermon discussed the categories of sin, wounds and false identities to discuss those things that we keep hidden from God. As small group leaders, use your best judgement based on your small group's trust level to discuss any of the following questions.
 - For Israel, their ethnicity, their societal power, and their ability to follow rules were their sources of false identity and hope. What do you think the most common ones are in the American church? What are some false identities that you struggle with, and where do they show up?
 - Our wounds (the ways we've been hurt) tend to manifest as inward shame and hatred, or in outward dysfunction with others (anger, control, detachment towards those we love). Can you think of a wound in your life that Jesus has healed? How did it change your relationship with yourself and others? Is there a wound that you sense needs Jesus's presence? What type of healing relationships do you need right now? (Prayer ministry, community support, therapy, etc.)
 - We tend to either make allowances for our sin or to hide it in shame. Do you see one or the other of these tendencies in yourself? What keeps you from bringing these things to God?
- Consider providing space that is gender specific for prayer at the end of your time to promote vulnerability. Also offering to get together 1:1 with people regarding anything that came up in small group. I (Katie) can also direct you towards prayer ministry or counseling resources.