

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

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[0:00] We don't hear this phrase a lot anymore, but I'm going to guess that Brother Ralph did more so years ago, but we are people of the book.

Or we're supposed to be people of the book. That name means we believe in the inerrancy, the authority, and the inspiration of the Bible as God's word.

And you all know that as Christians we are to be a praying people. Praying is talking to God. And we're to be a people who study his word, who read his word, and take it in every day.

And that's how God speaks to us. And it transcends generations. What he had to say to the first century church, he has to say to us today.

And it transcends all time because it's perfect. It's from God. As Christian people, we tend to focus on the New Testament. Nothing wrong with that. We are never to ignore the Old Testament.

[1:24] Those ancient books reveal much to the church, even in the 21st century. We read the great history of Israel in the Pentateuch. We praise God through his Psalms.

We acquire wisdom in the Proverbs and other writings of Solomon. And all of the books of the Old Testament tell us of the coming of the Messiah.

Remember old Dr. DeHaan, who said that Jesus is in every verse in the Old Testament. And sometimes he's out front. Sometimes he's in the shadows. But until we find him, we haven't understood that verse of Scripture.

He is throughout the Old Testament. But we tend to focus most of our attention on the New Testament. We study the words and works of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels.

The book of Acts tells us of the founding of the church. The letters of Paul and John and Peter and James and Jude and the writer of Hebrews, whomever he may be, lay out for us the blueprint for Christian living.

[2:41] And finally, we come to the book of Revelation, the book of last things, and we read future history as if it has already occurred. Everything in there is going to happen.

And we get to read it. Joe Cola, a pastor at First Wesleyan, came up to me the other day with all the turmoil at the police department. He says, how do you do it? How do you get by day to day?

And I said, I've read the end of the book. I know how it all comes out. I mean, that's the only explanation I have. There are two chapters in the New Testament that we as Christians tend to skip over or give them at best only a cursory reading.

Both chapters are actually part of the Christmas story. And so I thought it would seem fitting tonight to talk about those two chapters. I mean, it is Christmas, I hope, because we've got lights up and the tree and everything.

The two ignored chapters that I'm talking about are Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3. It is there we find the genealogies of Jesus Christ.

[3:58] Now, one thing we are struck with almost immediately is the fact there are two genealogies in the New Testament, Matthew and Luke.

But why wouldn't there be? Many years ago, my earthly father wrote two books on the genealogies of my family. He took the Hollands and related families back to England, Scotland, and Ireland.

He took the Sheltons, my mother's maiden name, and related families back to Ireland, but also back to the Cherokee people coming out of the Carolinas on the Trail of Tears.

Well, the Lord Jesus has two genealogies. Matthew takes Jesus back through his adoptive father, Joseph.

In fact, the book of Matthew is not the real name for the book of Matthew. The scriptural name is the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

[5:04] That's the real name. The genealogy found in Luke traces Jesus back through Mary, his mother. Another contrast is the fact that in Luke's genealogy, we move backward from Jesus to Adam, who is described as the Son of God.

In Matthew, he writes his genealogy moving forward, beginning with Abraham to Joseph, and then in exquisite accuracy, the scripture says, and Joseph, the husband of Mary.

It didn't say, and the father of Jesus. It says, and the husband of Mary. In the book of Matthew, and that's what we'll call it tonight, the book of Matthew is very Jewish.

If you haven't figured that out, it's very Jewish. In it, Matthew seeks to establish that Christ Jesus is Son of God and Son of Man, the long-awaited-for Messiah.

Matthew starts with Abraham, who established, by divine decree, the racial line that we know today as Jews.

[6:25] That started with Abraham. We read about that in Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 to 3. Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

A lot of nations need to read that verse of Scripture, by the way, including ours. Now, as you know from your studies of the Old Testament, Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees.

Ur of the Chaldees. He was a Chaldean. That is the area today we know as modern Iraq, just south of Babylon. I tell my Jewish friends that the founder of the Hebrew nation was an Iraqi, and that typically starts a rather lively conversation.

Jesus descends from the racial line of the Hebrew people and was himself a Jew. We all know that. Again, I tell my Jewish friends that I pray every day to a Jewish carpenter, and that starts a rather lively conversation.

[7:57] Matthew takes the Hebrew line of Jesus, starting with Abraham and terminating with Joseph. That line, of course, travels through David.

Both lines will go through David, because certain promises were made to David about the Messiah would sit on his throne. So both lines travel through David.

We call that, by the way, the royal line. It's the royal line. The legal line. Jesus inherited the legal right through Joseph, even though Joseph was an adoptive father.

Mary, of course, is the physical line. Her blood flowed in Jesus' veins. So there we see another contrast.

Now, we all know that Jesus had no blood relationship with Joseph. He adopted Jesus.

[9:01] Mary was a virgin and conceived her child by the power of the Holy Spirit who came upon her. Now, you cannot imagine. And it's a debate in the church.

Well, was she really a virgin? Maybe she and Joseph. I mean, they were kids, you know, and how kids can be. You cannot imagine how important it was that Jesus had no blood flowing through his veins that came from Joseph.

It was vitally important. What made it important was Jesus' tenth great-grandfather. Now, we can't be dogmatic about that.

Quite frankly, in the genealogy, some generations were skipped. The Jews were great on mathematics and symmetry, and they wanted 14, and there were some that perhaps were skipped. But around his tenth great-grandfather, there was a man called Jeconiah or Jeconiah. He also went by Jehoakim or Kaniah.

[10:07] We've got all these names, and I'll probably mispronounce all of them. His presence in the genealogy of Jesus presents a most interesting dilemma.

There is a dilemma for us. Writing of Jeconiah, the prophet Jeremiah quoted God thusly. Thus says the Lord, Write this man down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days.

For no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah. Jeconiah. God cursed him. God placed an eternal curse on this guy.

Pretty dramatic. Now, he did have children, but none that would ascend to the throne of David. God made that very clear.

The curse forbade any descendant of Jeconiah from ever sitting on the throne of David, meaning the Messianic line leading to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11:18] In other words, the Messiah could not descend physically from Jeconiah. He could not have the blood of this evil man flowing through his veins.

To do so would have abolished a command, a truth that God had given. And that will never happen. That will never happen. Well, why was this guy so evil?

First of all, he only ruled a few months. He wasn't in power very long. In his brief time as the ruler, he infuriated God on a number of occasions.

It didn't take him long. One thing he did is he massively increased the taxes of the Hebrew people. He leveled all kinds of taxes. And the reason he did so is he wanted an elaborate palace built for himself to honor him.

Well, you can see a problem right off the bat. Actually, it turned out that people worked to build the palace without pay. He didn't pay them. And so he was a scam artist.

[12:28] He was stealing money from the people. He was taken into captivity by the Babylonians by the sovereign hand of God. And he lived out his life as a prisoner.

And God makes a special footnote and says that when he died, his body was not buried but left for scavengers.

I mean, this guy really upset God. He really upset God. So evil was this man in the sight of God that God cursed him, declaring that none of his offspring would sit on David's throne.

And that curse continued down to Joseph, the husband of Mary. And Joseph descended from this guy. Joseph was a descendant of this guy.

So how could Jesus then be the Messiah when his father, Joseph, was under this curse? And the answer is, Joseph was not involved in the bloodline of Jesus since Jesus was born of a virgin.

[13:35] And we need to put to rest this debate in the church. You know, not our church, but some churches. You know, well, was he really virgin born? I mean, the rumor went around in his day that it was a union with a Roman soldier.

That would be very abhorrent to a Jew. That rumor hasn't died. You can go among the Orthodox in Israel today and hear that rumor. He was virgin born. He was virgin born.

He did not have the bloodline of this evil, evil man. Now, Mary did not trace her genealogy through Jeconiah.

She was in the line, but Jeconiah came through David, through Solomon. If you can picture that, you've got David here, and he has Solomon.

And then if you go down far enough, you run into this evil king that God cursed. But Mary, her ancestry stopped. Over here you've got David.

[14:37] She's related to David. He had another son named Nathan. That's Mary's descendant. And it doesn't go through this guy, Jeconiah, through the evil king that was overthrown by the Lord.

So, it misses the bloodline of that evil, evil guy, and thus the scriptures were fulfilled. The curse was bypassed.

Now, the genealogies present a marvelous Christmas story concerning the grace of God in the birth and the lineage of the Lord Jesus.

His ancestry, to put it mildly, is actually quite surprising, shocking to some people. We tend to think in terms of Jesus descended from pure Jews, all upstanding citizens, but such is not the case.

He had a number of skeletons in his closet, I guess we would say. By far, the most shocking thing about the genealogy of Christ is the mention of four women in his direct line.

[15:55] Now, the reason that's shocking is it is not only unusual to find women listed in a Hebrew genealogy, but these women are particularly noteworthy because they contrast so dramatically with this idea about absolute purity and the righteousness of the anointed one of God, Jesus Christ.

First of all, all four of these women have something in common. They were all outcasts. Every one of them. And yet they're the grandmothers, with a bunch of greats added on, of Jesus.

The physical descendants of Jesus. And they were all outcasts. Yet they made it into the family album of the Lord. Now, what can we learn from that fact?

They stand as a strong assurance of God's grace to sinners like you and me. But he had sinners in his genealogy.

Now, there are only four women mentioned in this genealogy, and I want you to see who they are. Woman number one, the scripture in Matthew says, And Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar.

[17:15] Remember Tamar? Tamar is the first lady, I'll call her that, mentioned in the genealogy of our Lord. Her children were Perez and Zerah.

Well, what about Tamar? What kind of lady was Tamar? Let me introduce you to her from Genesis. And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold, your father-in-law goes up to Timnah to shear his sheep. Well, who was her father-in-law? Her father-in-law is Judah. Her father-in-law is Judah. Remember that guy? Judah. He's the head of the tribe of Judah, descended from Jacob. Remember, Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah. Jesus comes through Judah. And here's her father-in-law. Now, Tamar was married, and her husband said, I don't have any kids. So God struck him dead. And as was the custom, she married the guy's brother. And he said, I don't have any kids either. And God struck him dead. [18:27] You'd think they would learn after a little while. So here she is, a double widow. Lost two husbands. So here's what she does.

And she put her widow's garments off from her. Her husband had died. And she covered herself with a veil, wrapped herself, she gets herself all dolled up, and she sits in an open place, unheard of in that culture, by the way to Timnah.

For she saw that her daughter, that her friend Shelah was grown. She was not given unto him as his wife. When Judah saw her, this is the focus, when Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot. She dressed like a harlot. Dolled herself all up, sat in the public square, unthinkable, unthinkable that a woman would do that. So she's out there as a prostitute.

She had covered her face, as prostitutes did. And he turned unto her, by the way, and said, Come, I pray thee, let me come unto thee. And he knew not that she was his daughter-in-law.

[19:41] And she said, Why, what wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? Now there's a price. There's a price to be paid. She says, I don't do this for nothing.

He says, I'll send you a kid from the flock. She's going to give him some livestock. And she says, Well, that's great, but you've got to give me a pledge. How do I know you're going to show back up with this kid?

Can you give me, so to speak, a check, and I'll know that it's from you, and I'll hold that check until you send it. And he said, What pledge shall I give you?

And she said, Your signet ring, your bracelets, and the staff in your hand. Now that's big in Hebrew culture. That's everything.

That's your ancestry. That's your future. Those things are very meaningful. He gives them to her, and he laid with her, and she conceived a child by him.

[20:44] So we have this nice lady, Tamar. She was involved in harlotry and incest. And you say, Mercy, what is she doing in the Messianic line?

She's one of Jesus' great, great, great, great, great grandmothers. A harlot. Listen, you want to hear the worst part? Out of that conception, we also have the birth of twins, Perez and Zerah.

And Perez is in the Messianic line. He's in the genealogy. One of her boys. And let me introduce you then. If you trace Perez down, you come to verse 5, And Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab.

Is that name familiar to everybody? Boaz's mother was Rahab. And when you say the word Rahab, what two next words come to mind? Rahab the harlot.

I mean, it's just natural. Rahab the harlot. Rahab was a Canaanite woman. She was unclean, outcast, Gentile, pagan, and idolaters.

[21:58] A bad lady. She was a professional prostitute and a madam. She had a bunch of girls that worked for her. Joshua tells us about it, and we don't need to look at it. The scriptures say that when the spies came into Jericho, they went there and they hid out in the harlot's house, a woman by the name of Rahab.

So we have this harlot and prostitute that is one of the great, great, great, great grandmothers of Jesus. Of Jesus. But look, from her comes Boaz.

Boaz. You know something about Boaz? He was a godly man. He broke that chain. He was a godly man, and what a godly man he was.

He was a type of Christ in that he was the kinsman redeemer. I encourage you, it's only a few chapters like four, read the book of Ruth this week and learn just how godly Boaz was.

I studied that over the holiday, over the Thanksgiving holidays. Well, there's a third lady that's going to come. Boaz had a son named Obed, and Boaz was married to whom?

[23:13] To Ruth. It's a beautiful story in the scriptures. And we say there, well, Ruth was not a prostitute, and she was not. She was a really lovely lady.

She herself was not guilty of incest. You know what Ruth was? She was a Gentile. That means that to the Jews, she was an outcast.

I'll tell you something even more frightening. In Genesis chapter 9, we read this, And Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain and his two daughters with him, for he feared to dwell in Zoar, and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

Now here we have Lot, the nephew of Abraham. We have Lot, and his home has been wiped out. Remember that? Sodom and Gomorrah.

His home has been destroyed. His wife has been turned into a pillar of salt. He's lost everything except these two daughters, and they're living in a cave.

[24 : 23] They're living in a cave. And the firstborn of his daughters said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there's not a man in the earth to come unto us after the manner of all the earth.

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve seed from our father. Wow. Unimaginable.

They're going to get their father drunk and try to get their father to produce seed in them. Even among pagans, that is considered gross immorality.

They commit the sin of incest with their own father. They made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he perceived not when she lay down nor when she arose.

He was so drunk, he didn't know what was going on. We preach against drinking, don't we? For good reason. Just use this story.

[25 : 25] It came to pass, on the next day, the firstborn said to the younger, Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let's make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him that we may preserve seed from our father.

They made their father drink wine that night also. It's tragic, he did not have enough backbone to defend himself against two daughters making him drunk.

Say, hey, I don't want to get drunk. I don't want to get drunk. The younger arose, lay with him, and he perceived not when she lay down nor when she arose. Thus, were both the daughters of Lot with child, impregnated by their own father.

And the firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab, the same as the father of the Moabites unto this day. The Moabites were bitter enemies of Israel.

Bitter enemies of Israel. And you want to know who Ruth was? Ruth was a Moabite woman. She was a Moabite. She was descended from an incestuous relationship going all the way back to Lot and his daughters.

[26 : 42] She herself was a pure lady. She was the wife of Boaz. And you want to hear something wonderful? She became the great grandmother of David. Of David.

Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth and Obed the father of Jesse. And Jesse was the father of David the king. And of course, we know Jesus physical line came from David.

But she was born of a tribe of people who were guilty of incest. And in fact, in Deuteronomy 23.3, the whole Moabite nation was cursed by God.

In that part of Scripture, God literally cursed the entire nation. And here God picks up a cursed lady, cursed through her ancestors, born of incestuous relations and places her in the genealogy of the Son of God, our Creator.

She's in the genealogy. Now that's interesting, those three ladies. It's really interesting. But this is only three. There's one more. We have four ladies in the genealogies.

[27 : 50] So let's meet the next lady. And David begot Solomon of her that had been wife of Uriah. And we know that story, don't we?

Bathsheba. That's Bathsheba. And when you go to 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12, read about it. She was on the rooftop bathing. David the king was on his rooftop looking down at her.

David says to a servant, I want that woman. He's the king. Get him what he wants. The servant goes and fetches her, brings her to him. He knew that she was married.

And he knew that her husband at that moment was fighting a war for King David. He was in mortal combat defending David's kingdom.

And David knew all that. she was brought to the king who had a relationship with her and he got her pregnant. He got her pregnant. Well, you remember the story.

[28:54] David tried every way in the world to make it appear as if her husband had done that. He brought him back from the front lines, tried to get him to go home.

He wouldn't. He slept on the ground. You know the story. You know the story. Finally, failing in all that, David sends him back to the front lines carrying a scroll with a seal to give to the general.

He carried his own death warrant. This is the man that the Bible says is after God's, the apple of God's eye, after God's own heart. And in repentance he was.

But this is how far David had gone down. So in this, they produce a child. They produce a child. The child will ultimately die, but then they will later produce Solomon after Uriah is killed.

David was an adulterer. And Bathsheba was an adulteress. So we've got two prostitutes, a woman whose ancestral line is the one of incest, and we have an adulteress.

[30:00] Probably not something you want to sit around the hearth and brag about on a cold winter day. These are the only women mentioned in the genealogies of the king of kings.

And yet, look at their backgrounds. Look at their backgrounds. Now, what do you think the message is? What can we learn from? What's the application? God is a God of grace.

He is a God of grace. Are you glad about that? You know, we need to be glad about that. I'm glad about that. Grace. And you know, this genealogy was a literal knockout punch by Matthew against the Jews of his day.

They hated the Gentiles, first of all. They didn't want anything to do with Gentiles. And by that, they were antagonistic. These are the Jews that were antagonistic, legalistic. They were hateful.

And Matthew knocks them for a loop. they were very keen on pedigree and the line of purity and all of the heritage stuff.

[31:14] Who did you descend from? What tribe are you of? That was really big to them. And so, Matthew introduces the Messiah as descending from two harlots, one adulterous, and one the product of incest.

these are in the messianic line. This was the line of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Let it be known to Israel and anybody who listens, Jesus Christ is a friend to sinners.

He had him in his own family. And now he is our father and our brother and he still has him in his own family. because we are spiritual descendants of Abraham.

He is the friend of sinners and he himself said it, I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And that means you and I have been called to repentance.

Now, this is the genealogy of the Christmas child. This is the baby that we celebrate in this season. The baby born in a stable. Hollywood really cleans that up.

[32:24] We've all, a bunch of us have been in stables. The manure, the smell. Little baby boy born in a stable. A baby placed in a food trough.

That's what a manger is. A baby who grew up and was the Messiah of God who embraces sinners and admits them into the kingdom of God.

And aren't we glad about that? Aren't we glad?