

The God Who Keeps His Promises

December 23, 2018

DAY 1: The coming!

1. The most well-known Christmas story is in Luke. When you come to Matthew, the gospel writer starts before the shepherds, before the angels, before the manger, before Mary and before Joseph. Matthew takes us all the way back to the patriarch Abraham, nineteen hundred years before the manger!

2. If you start at Matthew 1:1, you begin a long, seemingly tedious reading of genealogy. What is the point of a long, tedious genealogy? Christmas is not just about a birth. The bible pronounces a coming! The first notice recorded in the bible about the need for a Messiah starts even before Abraham, all the way back to Genesis 3!

3. As you read through the list, underline the characters with which you are familiar.

Matthew 1:1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² *Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,*

⁵ *Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,*

⁷ *Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa,*

⁸ *Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,*

¹⁰ *Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah,*

¹¹ *and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.*

¹² *After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eliud,*

¹⁵ *Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob,*

¹⁶ *and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*

¹⁷ *Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.*

3. Why do you think the bible goes into so much detail about the genealogy of Christ?

4. What strikes you from the list of characters?

5. What does this list say to you about God?

DAY 2: Good news, not “good advice”

1. In days of old, the “town crier” would announce the important news from a far land. The announcement could bring euphoria or despair. When a war finally ended, the announcement of an armistice brought euphoria, because there would be no more killing.

2. Most religions are viewed as “good advice.” “Do these five things, or stop doing these seven things and you’re life will be better.” Christianity is fundamentally not a religion of “good advice,” though the bible is filled with wisdom about how to live life. Christianity is fundamentally a message of “good news!”

3. It’s hard to imagine a way that God could have done anything more to prove the **historicity** of Jesus Christ than the way He did it.

*Matthew 1:1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of **Abraham**.*

4. He promised a Messiah through the line of Abraham, nineteen hundred years before Christ was born. Here’s a portion of what God promised to Abraham (Genesis 12 and 15)

Genesis 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

5. King **David** is promised that his lineage would continue *forever!*

2 Samuel 7:16 “...Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

6. Generation after generation is recorded of the line of Abraham, fourteen generations down to King David. From King David, fourteen more generations continue down to the time of the exile to Babylon. Fourteen more generations continue down to this verse...

Matthew 1:17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

7. There is another striking aspect that the gospel is historical, and not myth. There is one wing of the non-Christian, atheistic crowd that claims that all of Christianity is a myth. “The stories of the bible are simply fairy tales.” If these same people did some *historical and archeological* research about the number of ancient biblical manuscripts that have been discovered in stark contrast to the very slim number of documents found that verify some of the most famous writings of antiquity, perhaps they would re-examine their conclusions. There’s nothing like honest research to blow up our pet theories.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: The “dysfunctional” genealogy

1. Another proof of the history of Jesus Christ is found in the list of women included in the genealogy.

2. Matthew, a Jew by birth and upbringing, wrote his gospel first and foremost to the Jewish audience, a highly pharisaical people. If you were seeking to persuade a highly biased audience of the authenticity of Jesus being the Messiah, you certainly would not include five women’s names in the genealogy, not in THAT culture, not in THAT time.

3. The first one he mentions is Tamar.

*Matthew 1:3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was **Tamar**, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,*

4. Judah committed incest with Tamar. It’s shocking to Jewish culture that Tamar would have been included in the genealogy, as clearly she did not need to be. And Judah, one of the patriarchs has his incest exposed in the genealogy of the Messiah!

5. The second woman mentioned is Rahab who not only was a Gentile but was also a harlot. Third is Ruth who was a Gentile, a Moabite, not a Jewess.

*Matthew 1:5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth**, Obed the father of Jesse,*

6. The fourth woman referred to is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah with whom David committed adultery.

*Matthew 1:6 ...and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, **whose mother had been Uriah's wife**,*

7. You may wonder why Bathsheba is not named. What *is* expressly referred to is David’s “murder-for-hire” plot following his adultery.

8. The fifth women mentioned is Mary.

*Matthew 1:16 ...and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of **Mary**, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*

9. For all of antiquity, famous men have included famous people in their genealogies and omitted the notorious. Not here!

10. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: Not the “all-star” team

1. Along with some of the worst of the sins of famous people, is the following list, including King David and the kings of Judah.

Matthew 1:6 ... and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa,

⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah,

¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

2. There is something striking about this genealogy. For centuries past, your genealogy defined who you were. Often, famous people would boast about particular relatives of their past, and neglect saying anything about any of their more nefarious or sleazy relatives.

3. This list includes the kings of Judah, some who were stellar, and many who were not only wicked, but evil.

4. Some of them had long reigns of leading the nation in a terrible direction.

5. A few led them in a terrible direction and then, late in life, repented, and sought to undo the terrible damage they had inflicted on the nation.

6. What's most striking to me is that a handful of the “good” kings of Judah, who had stellar reigns for the vast majority of their time as king, torpedoed their faith late in life.

7. Remember that in history, the genealogies of kings, a “best foot forward” list is the norm. Not so here.

8. This genealogy is the story of the good, the bad and the ugly. And it's just this feature that also gives credibility to the historicity of Jesus Christ. If you were making up a fairy tale story of a magnificent king, you surely wouldn't lead off the first gospel with this list of people!

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: What the genealogy means for us

1. This list of characters provides me a lot of comfort. It is not a list of God's "All-Star" team.
2. It is not a list of the forty-two spiritually "best and brightest." It is not a "Who's Who" of the spiritual elite.
3. It is a list of people, some of whom had not just grievous flaws, but grievous sins.
4. The genealogical list is an invitation list to those who may think they've gone too far away from God, done too much evil, made terrible decisions that eliminate them from any consideration from God. Well, if you think that about yourself, then take some time to look up some of these people in Matthew's genealogy.
5. This genealogical record points you to the wonder of God's grace, open to anyone who will simply repent of what they've done, seek mercy, ask for forgiveness, and welcome the risen savior as the new Lord of their life. It could not be any simpler.
6. This list also reminds us of the faithfulness of God to His promises. It's one thing to make promises to people. It's another thing to keep them.
7. God's consistent promise, over two thousand years of revelational history is astounding. What He promised to do in Genesis 3, what He promised to Abraham and the patriarchs, what He promised to David was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
8. What strikes you about our look into the genealogy of Christ as recorded in Matthew?