

December 11, 2022

## “The Genealogy of Jesus” Matthew 1:1-17

FCF: Lack of appreciation for Jesus’ origins

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) Taking to heart the significance of Jesus’ beginnings  
(magnet) can give us the new beginning we need and long for.

### SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

A family tree is a strange way to start a story. I remember as a child enduring my parents’ pursuit of the names of ancestors, stopping at rural cemeteries to get rubbings from gravestones. Admittedly, such things do interest me a bit more now. But would you start a story this way?

It may seem a bit dry and boring to us but it wasn’t in the ancient Near East. Such lists were highly valued, especially when they showed the purity of a lineage, when they proved your identity, when they demonstrated your credentials. That’s what we have before us this morning.

We’re continuing this Advent exploration series in Matthew’s Gospel. And as we do so, we’re going to read and consider this fascinating list of names as we find in Jesus’ genealogy.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [Matthew 1:1-17](#)

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

### SERMON INTRODUCTION:

The story is told of a man at a Christmas party who sees a woman there, a guest of one of the attendees. He is smitten and wants to meet her. Not thinking, he walks up and asks, “Could you tell me what kind of men you like?” She is taken back by his directness but replies (**READ**):

I love American-Indian men. They are mysterious. I love their lineage, their bond to nature. They are majestic with such history. But, as I think about it, I also deeply appreciate those of the Jewish heritage. They have led an enormous legacy of endurance under trial, tradition and courage. And you know, being from the South, I like the southern redneck. He’s so basic, and not complex. So gutsy and direct.

And then she says, “By the way, what’s your name?” Thinking quickly on his feet, the man replies, “Tonto Rosenberg, but my friends call me Bubba Joe.” Introductions are important.

Introductions are important. This introduction Matthew gives at the start of his Gospel would have been important to his readers. So we dare not skip over it. Taken as a whole, this lineage would have resonated deeply. And, rightly understood, it should resonate with us as well. Let me put it this way. Taking to heart the significance of Jesus’ beginnings can give us the new beginning we need and long for. The story of His beginnings points the way to our own.

How so? By considering three questions - each of which is addressed in this list of names. First, who has come? Second, why has He come? And, third, for whom has He come?

### I. WHO HAS COME?

First, who has come? (**READ Matthew 1:1**) Three names of enormous importance.

#### A) *Jesus Christ*

##### 1. Jesus

First, Jesus Christ. “Jesus” (Yeshua) was an everyday name, meaning “Yahweh saves.”

##### 2. Christ

He is Christ. That is not His last name but a title. Messiah, anointed - set apart for a special task.

*B) Son of David*

1. Emphasis

Son of David - there's a good deal of emphasis here. In v.6, David is not just "a" but "the" king. The list itself is made up of three groups of fourteen names. The numeric value in Hebrew of "David" is fourteen. His is the fourteenth on the list. The early readers would have seen all this.

2. Identity

But who is "the son of David"? David was the warrior king of Israel. And there were ancient promises and prophecies that a descendant of King David would come to restore the kingdom.

*C) Son of Abraham*

1. Prominence

Abraham was the first and greatest of the patriarchs, the father of the Jewish people.

2. Promise

Over 2,000 years before, the Lord had promised that He would bless Abraham and, through him, one would come who would be a blessing to all the nations. You hear something building here.

Who has come? Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. Any one of these is stunning. But taken together they form a three-dimensional picture of staggering implications.

*Application:*

If we would but slow down long enough to take this in, it would fill our hearts with awe. If we would pause, breathe, and contemplate these things, it would make us a people of wonder.

"Who's coming for Christmas?" we ask. Perhaps we'd do well to ask, "Who came and set it all in motion?" (READ Matthew 1:1) Imagine the most glorious sunrise, a view of the ocean, a starry night, or mountain vista - something that took your breath away. Picture the most impressive feat, amazing achievement, or astonishing rescue. All such are but pointers to this.

Taking to heart the significance of Jesus' beginnings can make us a people of awe.

## **II. WHY HAS HE COME?**

But why has He come? What is His purpose and mission? It's implied throughout.

*A) The Lessons*

1. From Sarah

We'll start with lessons, things we learn from how Isaac came to be. Abraham was 100 and his wife, Sarah, was 90. Unusual circumstances for a birth. It set the tone for what was coming.

2. From Mary

Think of Mary and that miraculous conception. What might this tell us about Jesus' mission?

*B) The Introduction*

1. A new genesis

Then there is that introduction again - "the book of beginnings." This is harkening back to the first beginning, to Genesis. The idea being that with this arrival, there is a new beginning.

2. His generation

But skip to v.16 and Jesus' generation (**READ Matthew 1:16**). The cadence is interrupted. It's not "Joseph the father of Jesus." Joseph is mentioned but not as the father. What's the point?

C) *The Titles*

Something is going on here with the lessons, the introduction, and the titles.

1. Reminder

Remember that this is Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. Hugely important.

2. Implication

But what are the implications of these titles? We need the Lord to save us. We need a king to come and make things right. We need the great promises of God. The *who* informs the *why*.

Why has Jesus come? To bring back the estranged. To befriend the lonely. To heal the sick. To pardon the guilty. To free the prisoner. To find the lost. To raise the dead. All of it.

*Application:*

He came for us - as us for us. What should that stir within us? What would be a mark of someone who had embraced this? Humility. Not so much thinking less of ourselves but thinking of ourselves less. A grounding in the deepest truths of reality - who we are, what He has done.

How is that relevant at Christmas? We are surrounded by messages of what we deserve. Or of what we can give to others. But truly, if this genealogy has any merit, we don't deserve anything. And we have nothing to give anyone. Now I'm not suggesting you rescind your wish list or return all you've already bought. But this is something that affects the spirit of it all.

Taking to heart the significance of Jesus' beginnings can make us a people of humility.

**III. FOR WHOM HAS HE COME?**

One last thing - for whom has He come? Who does He have in mind in this rescue?

A) *The Outsider*

1. The unknowns

Think of the groups of people represented here. First, the outsiders. Starting with the unknowns. Abiud, Azor, Achim, Eliud, Matthan - these names show up nowhere else. This is all we have.

2. The women

Then there are the women. Women in that time were overlooked and had no legal standing. Most here were Gentiles, non-Jews. It's really surprising that they would be included in this list.

B) *The Flawed*

1. The foolish

So we have the outsiders. And then the flawed. Half the kings here were men of faith. But several were quite foolish. Jehoshaphat entered an alliance with wicked men. Hezekiah showed off the treasures of Israel to their enemies, who were happy to take note and later plunder them.

2. The proud

Then there was proud Uzziah, daring to usurp the role of priest and entering the temple to burn incense on the altar himself. Even the very best of these kings in this list had flawed records.

### C) *The Notorious*

#### 1. The kings

Which then brings us to the notorious, the scandalous. Ahaz worshipped the gods of Assyria, engaged in human sacrifice, killed one of his sons, stripped the gold and silver from the temple and gave it to other kings, defiled the altar, installed pagan shrines. Then there was Rehoboah, Jeconiah, and Manasseh - the last of whom is written ([READ 2 Kings 21:9, 16](#)). Quite a list.

#### 2. The women

Then we have to go back to the scandals tied to some of the women. Tamar - seduced her father-in-law. Rahab - a prostitute from Jericho. Bathsheba - taken from her husband by David. Ruth - known for her love but also a Moabitess - a line from the incest of Lot and his daughters.

Quite a list. For whom has Jesus come? We can see it in the line of those from whom He has come - the outsider, the flawed, the notorious. None of whom could lay any claim on Him.

### *Application:*

Jesus came from and for people like them, for people like us. And that is a source of great hope. Think of the colors of the season - the red of blood, the green of life. Bells ring forth the news. Light breaks into the cold darkness. Gifts are given picturing grace we have received. Everyone is welcome to the celebration. Even the naughty and the nice. Even folks like us.

Taking to heart the significance of Jesus' beginnings can make us a people of hope.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Knowing who has come should fill our hearts with awe. Knowing why He has come should fill our hearts with humility. Knowing for whom He has come should fill our hearts with hope. Those are sweeping claims and could only be true because we are speaking of Jesus.

The transformation that can bring to our lives is echoed in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. His very name meant literally "to squeeze." ([READ](#)):

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire, secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.

But then what happens? Through a miraculous intervention by those three mysterious spirits over the course of one very strange night, a transformation then begins to take hold ([READ](#)):

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath, and making a perfect Laocoon of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo there! Whoop! Hallo!"

The change may be that dramatic. And how can this be? The message is that powerful.

That message, that story, begins with a genealogy. Who has come? Why has He come? For whom has He come? Taking to heart the significance of Jesus' beginnings can give us the new beginning we need and long for. The story of His beginnings points the way to our own.

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