2022 Christmas-III

**THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS THE MESSIAH**

Matthew 1:1-17

Key Verse: 1:1

“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David and the son of Abraham:”

Matthew’s Gospel starts with a record of genealogy, tracing the human ancestry of Jesus, which covers nearly 2,000 years. Have you ever traced your ancestry? Many years ago, I tried to trace my family origin as a project of my study in Graduate school. I had to travel to Korea to interview some of my relatives to get more information. But I couldn’t get far enough because most of them had already passed away. Yet, I still discovered something very interesting about my family history.

By the way, why are we interested in tracing our ancestry? Well, it’s primarily because of curiosity. We want to know who we are and where we came from. Genealogy helps us trace our human roots. It helps explain our family dynamics and the very blood that runs through our veins. In the process of tracing genealogy, we often discover things that had been hidden, the deep family secrets. But the discovery often unlocks the puzzle. Tracing ancestry is usually exciting. You feel like you are an archeologist or a detective. It also gives us identity and a sense of belonging.

The genealogy of Jesus in today’s passage contains many names unfamiliar to us. It may take a long time if we want to investigate all the facts and stories behind it. So, our study of Jesus’ genealogy this morning will be just the beginning of our exploration. Let’s see what we can discover in the genealogy of Jesus. (Pic#1) Are you ready?

Look at verse 1. “This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, and the son of Abraham.” This verse is the title that summarizes Jesus’ genealogy: Jesus the Messiah is the son of David and the son of Abraham. The name “Jesus” is not the title. It’s the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “Yahweh is Salvation” or “Yahweh saves.” The word “Messiah” is the title, equivalent of the Greek word “Christ,” which means “Anointed.”

When Matthew wrote his gospel narratives, Jesus was called the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. To qualify as such a huge title, Jesus had to meet the legitimacy of his claim. First, he had to be a Jew from David’s royal family. Matthew’s genealogy proves Jesus’ legitimacy as the Messiah because he descended from Abraham and from King David’s line.

Why are David and Abraham so important? They are important because of the covenant God made with each of them. (Gen. 12:2-3; 2 Sam. 7:12-16) What is a “covenant” anyway? Simply speaking, it’s a legal contract between two persons or two parties. When two persons marry, they establish a covenant to love and be faithful to each other until death separates them. God’s covenant with Abraham and David was more like a promise of commitment and blessing.

For example, when God called Abraham to leave his country and go to the land of promise, he promised him by saying, “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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 12:2-3) God also promised King David by saying, “When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Sam. 7:12-13) The covenants God made with Abraham and David were a fantastic promise which became the foundation of God’s redemptive work for all humankind.

According to the prophecies of the Old Testament, the Messiah would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), particularly through the Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14), of the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18), through the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), and of the family of king David (2 Sam. 7:12-13). Jesus qualified in every respect.

In verses 2-6, we see the names of Abraham’s descendants who had formed the nation Israel, notably David’s Kingdom. Look at verses 2-6. “Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife.” I like the name ***“Salmon”*** the most (Pic#2). Of course, Salmon was not a fish but a person. From Abraham to David was nearly a thousand years. During the famine in the promised land, Jacob and his children and grandchildren, about 70, went to Egypt and lived there for several generations. They were huge in number when they came out of Egypt through God’s miraculous leading. Yet, it was not easy for them to build a nation of their own in the promised land. They had to fight against native people on the land, and they also had to go through many internal conflicts among themselves. When David’s kingdom was finally established, it was a united yet tiny nation.

Before moving on to the next segment of the genealogy, we need to pay attention to something important. We notice the names of four women recorded in Jesus’ genealogy. It was unusual that women’s names were recorded in ancient genealogy. Who are they? (It’s a quiz.) Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Solomon’s mother, who had been Uriah’s wife. All these women were not Jewish by birth. Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth was a Moabite. Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, was recorded as the former wife of Uriah the Hittite. What kind of women were they? All these women, except Ruth, were involved in unlawful relationships.

Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute, conceived a child by her father-in-law, Judah, and bore twin sons, Perez and Zerah (Ge. 38:27-30). Rabah, the great-grandmother of King David, used to be a shrine prostitute in Jericho. What about Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother? David committed adultery with her. And when David discovered she was pregnant, he secretly killed her husband to cover up his sin. Even though David was called a man after God’s own heart, his life and the royal family became a source of scandals, including incest, murder, jealousy, emotional cut-offs, and dysfunctions. Since their stories were written in the Bible, their immoral behaviors were not a secret. Yet, they were not something you want to talk about. It makes you feel uncomfortable. It seems that Matthew put their names on purpose. What purpose? We will think about it later.

In verses 7-11, we see what happened to the kingdom of David afterward. The unity of David’s kingdom didn’t last long. It lasted only about 40 years. David’s kingdom was divided between the North Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah after Solomon. Unfortunately, both kingdoms were conquered and destroyed by foreign nations: The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrian empire in 720 BC, while the Southern kingdom fell to the Babylonia empire in 587 BC.

The names in verses 7-11 are the names of the kings in the Southern kingdom of Judah. Look at verses 7-11. “Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam, the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.” After the death of king David, his kingdom got worse. The kingdom has become from bad to worse every decade. Why? There may be many reasons. The main reason is the bad influence from the previous generation to the next generation. Humanly speaking, the kingdom of David was not so glorious. Kings and royal family members, along with their people, were dragged into exile in Babylon (Pic#3). Shameful tragedy!

Look at verses 12-16. “After the exile to Babylon; Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.” After the restoration from exile, neither the Northern kingdom of Israel nor the Southern kingdom of Judah had ever been restored, even though many Israelite leaders tried to rebuild their kingdom. The names recorded in this segment were not the names of kings. We don’t know anything about these people except Mary and Joseph. Their names are not found anywhere in the Bible except in Matthew’s Gospel. Of course, they were no longer considered a royal family. They were just ordinary people who had been oppressed and crushed repeatedly by the heavy yoke of foreign rules, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. They were bruised and broken people. Where could these people find comfort and hope? Can wealth and success truly give them comfort and hope?

After all, what happened to God’s promise to his servant King David and Abraham? Many people must have laughed at the people of Israel, saying, *“Where is the promise your God made for you guys?”* Seriously, did God forget his promise? Or did he change his mind? What do you think? No. God neither forgot his promise nor changed his mind. It’s hard to believe that God was with them, whether they were in the promised land or in exile. But that was true. God was with them always. After all, God sent Jesus as the Messiah according to his promise.

Look at verse 16. “And Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.” It’s interesting to note that Joseph was described not as the father of Jesus but as “the husband of Mary, who was the mother of Jesus.” It shows that even though Joseph was a descendant of David, he was not the biological father of Jesus. He was just a legal father who adopted Jesus as his son through his marriage to Mary, who conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit, which we will learn in the following passage, 1:18-25. Even though Jesus came to this world through the family line of David and Abraham, he was not just human. He was fully divine. He was born of a woman, the Virgin Mary, and through the Holy Spirit (1:18).

Look at verse 17. “Thus there were fourteen in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.” This verse is hard to understand. We are unsure where Matthew came out with the number 14. Some Bible scholars think that the number 14 comes from the numeric equivalent of the Hebrew consonant **“D-V-D.”** The letter “D” stands for the number 4; the letter “V” stands for the number “6.” **So D(4)+V(6)+D(4)=DVD (14) and 14+14+14=42.** Well, it’s still difficult to understand for those unfamiliar with the original Hebrew language. But it seems that Matthew was trying to say that the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, was the fulfillment of God’s promise in His perfect timing. **Quiz:** Please, complete the sentence: *Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew’s gospel seems to show God’s ( ).*

Some may wonder why Jesus’ genealogy of Matthew’s gospel differs from Luke’s. It’s controversial to many people. But I think it’s simple. Both records are truthful. They are different because Matthew’s gospel, written for an audience of Jewish people, traced Jesus’ ancestry up to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. In contrast, Luke’s gospel, written for an audience of non-Jewish people, traced Jesus’ ancestry up to Adam, the first man on earth. Also, Matthew traced Jesus’ lineage through the line of Joseph, while Luke traced Jesus’ genealogy through the line of Mary. Both Joseph and Mary were David’s descendants but through different sons of David (Solomon and Nathan). (pic#4) Even though their genealogies differed, they were truthful to the historical facts.

By the way, we know that history and genealogy go together. It’s no wonder why Matthew began his gospel with a record of Jesus’ genealogy. The genealogy of Jesus gives the identity and legitimacy of Jesus as the Messiah because he is the son of David and the son of Abraham. Jesus didn’t appoint himself as the Messiah. His legitimacy as the Messiah is based on God’s promise and historical facts.

Let me close my sermon today. These days, because of the availability of DNA, we can trace our ancestry much better than before. We will be excited to find that some of our ancestors were famous and influential people in history. And we would feel very proud of ourselves. Yet, when we find that we are related to some notorious people of the past through family lines, we may feel embarrassed even though what happened to them is not our responsibility. However, we cannot deny that the things in one generation are passed down from generation to generation, called the *“Multigenerational Transmission Process.”* Whether we like it or not, genealogy reveals that we are the product of our family line. We are not alone. We are the family. Family tells us a lot about ourselves. Someone said, *“Christ Jesus lives in your hearts, but your grandpa lives in your bones.”*

But we don’t want to be bound by the negative patterns handed down to us by our ancestors. Is it possible? How? That’s a good question. 1 Peter 1:18-19 states, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” It’s possible in and through Jesus the Messiah, the blood of Christ Jesus shed for us on the cross.

It’s amazing to see the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, also came into a messy family line through Abraham and David and other messy ancestors. Thus, Jesus embraced all human races whhh his grace and mercy. Indeed, Jesus understood what it means to be human and sympathized with our messiness, weaknesses, and all kinds of idiosyncrasies. Yet, he was not bound to the negative multigenerational process. He didn’t follow the sinful and harmful way of life handed down from his ancestors, including his human parents. He himself became a new beginning.

We are justified by God’s grace through our faith in Jesus Christ, who shed his blood for our sins. We will not be punished for the sins we have committed because of Jesus’ sacrifice. Yet, that’s not the end of our salvation but just the beginning. The Christian life is not easy because it requires spiritual self-discipline. We must constantly struggle to renew our minds and change our behaviors, which we may call “t**he process of repentance”** through which we can bear the fruit of the Spirit.

We don’t need to remain victims of the past or any circumstance. There is a new beginning for everyone who is in Christ Jesus. We can live a new life and become a new creation in Christ Jesus. The genealogy of Jesus declares the identity and legitimacy of Jesus as the Messiah. It also reveals God’s faithfulness. Through our faith in Jesus, we belong to the genealogy of Jesus Christ. What a great blessing it is to be in Christ Jesus. Praise God the Father, who is faithful and trustworthy. Merry Christmas!