

## **The King's Jewish Roots**

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

#### **Introduction**

The Bible presents Jesus as the object of all human history. The Jewish Scriptures filled with history and poetry and prophecy point to Jesus. Who is Jesus? What is it about this man; his ministry and activities that our attentions and affections are drawn to Him? Matthew's gospel presents Jesus as the long awaited fulfillment of the ancient promise for a King and Messiah. More than any other Gospel Matthew's focus is that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promises and that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for both Israel and the world.

*"...the genealogy of Jesus Christ is not barren ground for preaching and teaching. It yields rich fruit for the person who will seek out Jesus' roots" (see The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible; p.11).*

What ripe fruit might we find? Providence, mercy, grace.

St. John of Damascus wrote; "Providence is the care God takes of all existing things." Augustine; "Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to his love, and the future to his providence." Wiersbe: "Providence is God's control of circumstances so that His will prevails and His purposes are fulfilled."

Satan's plan was to thwart the plan of God; prevent the Messiah from coming. Cain kills Abel. Abraham disobeys God and Sarah is almost lost and the promised Seed ruined. At one time the royal seed was all slain except for young Joash (2 Kings 11). The genealogy is not simply a list of names but a testimony of God's faithfulness in making promises and keeping promises; in preserving the children of Abraham; as the channel through whom Christ comes into the world (see Wiersbe OT Outlines p. 15).

The genealogy is divided into three historical sections; from Abraham to Jesse; from David to Josiah; and from Jeconiah to Joseph. The first period covers the Patriarchal period to the reign of David; the second covers the tumultuous kingdom period; and the third preserves the record of royal descent during the exile (586 B.C.) to Joseph.

#### **The King's Royal Ancestry (v.1)**

*Matthew 1:1 (NKJV)*

*1The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

Matthew's account begins with two critical historical figures; David and Abraham. David is Jesus' royal father. Abraham is Jesus's racial father. Genealogy means 'origin'. To the first century Jew this was very important. A genealogy proved the person was an Israelite; identified tribal association; which qualified certain Jews for religious duties or in this case substantiate claims as King. Abraham precedes David by a thousand years—and David precedes Jesus by almost a thousand years.

King Jesus was to come and occupy the throne of David and reign over the nations for ever. The King from Heaven; sent by Heaven for fulfill the covenant given to Abraham.

In Mark's gospel his audience is primarily Roman and presents Jesus as the servant.

In Luke's gospel his audience is primarily Greek and presents Jesus as the perfect Son of Man.

In John's gospel there is a universal appeal and Jesus is presented as the eternal Son of God.

## **The King's Jewish Roots**

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

Since Matthew's gospel is primarily Jewish in appeal and character Jesus is presented as Christ the King.

Why do we say the gospel is Jewish in both nature and character?

- \* It is written by a first century Jewish tax collector named Levi (see Matt. 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32; Mark 2:13-17).
- \* Because of its location in our Bible; the first gospel—the bridge between Old Testament and New Testament.
- \* And because of its proliferation and inundation from the Jewish writings; 53 quotations from the Old Testament; 76 references to OT passages; a total of 129 either direct or indirect citations. Matthew quotes from 25 of the 39 ancient Old Testament books. Matthew uses the term 'fulfilled' at least 12 times.

The gospel refers to Jesus as the Son of David and is filled with references to “the kingdom of heaven”—a Jewish concept; and can rightly be called “The Kingdom Gospel” or the Gospel of the King! The Jewish character of this gospel is also found in the material unique to this gospel; Christ's genealogy to Abraham (vv.1-17); the information about Joseph—Jesus' earthly step-father and husband of Mary (1:18-25); the mission of the disciples to the lost sheep of the Children of Israel (chapter 10); the Lord's stinging rebukes to the religious leaders (chapter 23) and several kingdom parables in chapters 20-23 (see Wiersbe's Outlines of the New Testament; pp.12-13).

Matthew arranges his gospel to point to one central reoccurring theme; Jesus is the King of the Jews; rejected by His people; crucified for the whole world; now alive in Heaven!

Jesus in fulfillment of 1 Chronicles 17:14 and other passages announces the kingdom is at hand; and because He the King has come (Matt.4:17); He states the Laws of the Kingdom (Matthew chapters 5-7); He fulfills prophecy (Matt.21:5). Some of the features of Christ's rejection include the religious leaders attributing Jesus power to Satan (Matt.12:24); refusing to accept His Deity—calling Him prophet or carpenter; seeking His death; denying His message; refusing to believe in Him.

In the first 10 chapters we have the revelation of the King; He reveals Himself to the Jews as to His person (chapters 1-4); His principles (chapters 5-7); and His power (chapters 8-10).

Does Jesus have the credentials to substantiate the royal claim?

In this first chapter Matthew gives the human ancestry of Christ (vv.1-17) and then describes the birth of Christ (vv.18-25). Jesus is “the root and the offspring of David” (Rev.22:16). Jesus is the root in the sense that Jesus Christ is the eternal God who brought David into being; and He is the offspring in that His humanity is linked to David in His birth.

## **The King's Jewish Roots**

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

#### **The King's Legal Genealogy (vv.2-16)**

*Matthew 1:2–17 (NKJV)*

*2Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers.*

*3Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram.*

*4Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon.*

*5Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse,*

*6and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.*

*7Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa.*

*8Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah.*

*9Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah.*

*10Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah.*

*11Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.*

*12And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.*

Here we have mention of Jeconiah. In Jeremiah 22:30—God pronounces a curse on this man:

Thus says the LORD:

“Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days;  
For none of his descendants shall prosper,  
Sitting on the throne of David,  
And ruling anymore in Judah.”

If Jesus were the biological son of Joseph he would bear that curse. Yet he had to be the legal son of Joseph in order to inherit the rights to the throne of David.

Was Satan aware of God's promise to David? I think the answer is yes. Was Satan aware of this curse? I suspect Satan counted on this curse—that's God's promise to David was for all intents and purposes dead in the water. Satan must have rejoiced. The link was broken. The curse cannot mean Jeconiah would go childless; because in 1 Chronicles 3:17-18 children are listed. What the curse required is that as far as the royal throne was concerned; the royal line through David and Solomon ground to a stop with Jeconiah (also called Coniah and Jehoiachin).

## **The King's Jewish Roots**

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

But what a rude awakening—when the devil learned that God was not limited to one line; another son Nathan would preserve David's seed and Mary would give birth to David's Son!

The problem is solved and resolved in the miraculous virgin birth. Jesus is the legal heir through Joseph. Jesus is the real son of David through Mary. The curse on Jeconiah did not fall on Mary or her children since she was not a direct descendant of Jeconiah.

*13Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor.*

*14Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud.*

*15Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob.*

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

Why include the genealogy of Joseph? Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus. No—but Jesus is Joseph's legal heir. The curse on Jeconiah would seem to have precluded His occupancy if he had been the actual son of Joseph (Jeremiah 22:30). Joseph is called 'the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.'

We note five women are listed in the genealogy; which seems to run contrary to most Jewish genealogical lists; and in ancient cultures women were often treated as a thing—owned by father or husband.

1. Tamar—her shameful story is told in Genesis 38; where after two husbands die—she deceives Judah into sleeping with her. Judah is by no means guilt-less in the drama.

2. Rahab the harlot—a Gentile who becomes the wife of an Israeli prince; she is from Jericho (Joshua 2:1-7).

3. Ruth the Moabitess—a Gentile—a stranger to the Covenant of Israel, who enters the royal line only through her levirate marriage to Boaz; her husband's near kinsman; a member of a despised, alien, hated race.

4. Bathsheba—not mentioned by name but rather—"by her who had been the wife of Uriah". David seduced her and had her husband killed; in what some might call an unforgivable cruelty (2 Samuel 11-12).

5. Mary—guilty of no unchaste behavior yet her pregnancy was filled with questions that still preoccupy scholars

What do all these women have in common? A checkered past. What some might call unchaste-(perhaps we can be more generous with Ruth and Mary). But all of this speaks of the mercy of God which goes out to the most sinful and depraved. The name of Ruth—loyal and devoted—yet a stranger speaks of God's incredible grace. In Deuteronomy 23:3-6 a ban or

## **The King's Jewish Roots**

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

prohibition was given to the Jews forbidding Ammonite or Moabites entrance into the congregation of the Lord (v.3).

Tamar and Rahab ex-harlots; Ruth; former pagan; Bathsheba; ex-adulteress. Tamar—distant grandmother of David; Rahab great, great, grandmother to David; Ruth great grandmother; Bathsheba—beloved wife and mother of Solomon.

Does it shock you that the Messiah's family tree was filled with people; some who loved and trusted God; and some that rebelled? Why would Matthew include them in the list; and more important—why would a Sovereign God write into His Son's roots such an assortment of undesirables?

Could it be—that God's providence and preservation of these people; God's grace and mercy towards these people tell us something about God and ourselves? Whatever else it means the barriers were coming down! The barrier between Jew and Gentile—is down! Rahab—from Jericho—Ruth—from Moab—find themselves in Jesus' family tree! Already we see a glimpse of the truth that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Here is the beginning that God's love, and God's grace and God's mercy would be for all people. The barriers between male and female start to drop; the old prejudice and contempt starts to evaporate; men and women are equally dear; equally loved; equally important; equal candidates for salvation! The barrier between saint and sinner blurs! In what way? Somehow—somehow—God can and does use people for His plans and purposes! What? Does an unbelieving ancestor or a cruel ancestor or a wicked ancestor or those who have in the past sinned greatly or in the present sinned greatly preclude people from experiencing God's grace and mercy and love and salvation?

Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13).

Here at the very beginning we are given a hint that all human history is designed with Jesus in mind. Here at the beginning we are given the hint and intimation that the miraculous preservation of the Jew—in history and prophecy was to accomplish God's ultimate plan to save sinners! Here at the beginning we are given a hint of God's all embracing goodness and love and mercy—that he can take less than respectable characters and transform them and include them in a divine narrative that leave people overwhelmed by God's Wisdom and Love!

What about your family tree?

Our standing with God is not based on our ancestors success or failure. We do not stand by the disgrace of a distant relative or near relative. We stand by God's grace in Christ.

### **The King's Spiritual History (v.17)**

## **The King's Jewish Roots**

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

*17So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.*

Are we to believe that the genealogy is complete? Are there names left out? Scholars point out that 14 generations are given to make it easy and memorable. But is the reason for the breakdown different? Some have suggested that David's name in Hebrew has the numerical value of 14. Since the heading of the list is "Son of David"—the writer is drawing attention through the history of David throne; from Abraham to David—the establishment of that throne; and then the disestablishment—with the Babylonian captivity and the reestablishment of that throne—in the return of the Jews and coming of the King. Another argument is these periods of time involve three great covenants—to Abraham and David And Jesus (the New and the Everlasting Covenant).

In the list of Kings in verse 8; Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah are omitted (see 2 Kings chapters 8-14; 2 Chronicles 21-25).

Some scholars have pointed out the genealogies of Matthew and Luke seem to overlap in mentioning two names; Shealtiel and Zerubbabel (see Matthew 1:12-13; Luke 3:27).

William McDonald writes; "It is strange that the ancestry of Joseph and Mary should merge in these two men, and separate again. The difficulty is increased when we notice that both Gospels follow Ezra 3:2 in listing Zerubbabel as the son of Shealtiel, whereas in 1 Chronicles 3:19 he is listed as the son of Pedaiah" (p.1205). McDonald further points out that Matthew founds 27 generations from David to Jesus while Luke gives 42. He rightly points out that both are outlining different family trees and further notes that he still finds it odd that the numbers listed are still rather dramatic.

We know the Bible is true. We can resolve the problem in part when we remember both genealogies are accurate in the information that the writer desires for the reader.

In Matthew's gospel Jesus is the rightful king of the Jews. In Luke's gospel—Luke's goal is not to prove to Greek or gentile readers that Jesus is the king of the Jews; but that Jesus is the true Son of Man—a real human being who has the right to be the Savior of all mankind.

What do Bible difficulties do? For some it causes them to throw up their hands in despair and accuse the Bible writers of duplicity or inaccuracy or contradiction! For others like Norm Geisler and Gleason Archer it causes them to look for reasonable explanations; that perhaps the problem is not in the text but rather our lack of knowledge. And so we study and search for answers.

## **The King's Jewish Roots**

### **Matthew 1:1-17**

We know that “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2).

I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. The original autographs do not contain errors and our Bible is true, without errors and reliable. Careful research by historians and excavations by archaeologists have not been able to demonstrate that statements in the Bible are false.

What seems like difficulties and contradictions almost always have reasonable and persuasive explanations if we take the time to explore the difficulty with humility and submission to God's Word.

No Jewish person today has what might be called a legal genealogy. The genealogical records were destroyed when the Temple was destroyed in AD 70.

Wiersbe: “Jesus Christ is the only Jew alive today who can prove His rights to the throne of David” (see Wiersbe's Expository Outlines of the New Testament; p. 16).

The genealogy of Matthew traces Christ's legal descent. The genealogy of Luke traces Jesus' lineal descent as the Son of David. Luke's genealogy follows the *blood line from David through another son—Nathan*. The genealogy of Matthew concludes with Joseph—of whom Jesus is the adopted Son—and Luke 3—probably traces the ancestry of Mary—of whom Jesus is the real or biological Son.

A thousand years before the birth of Jesus God had made a promise to David; a covenant—promising a king and a kingdom; that would last forever (see Psalm 89:4, 36-37).

The covenant finds permanent and eternal fruition in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the legal heir to the throne through Joseph and covenantal and actual seed of David through Mary. Because Jesus lives forever; He is King forever. He is David's Son and He is David's greater Son. Jesus lays claim to that throne legally and lineally—and opposes all other claims to that throne!

### **Conclusion**

The genealogy of Jesus contains some surprise characters.