

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

www.ffbic.org

**SERMON:** *The Genealogy*  
**SERIES:** *The Christmas Story*  
**SCRIPTURES:** *Matthew 1*  
**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*  
**DATE:** *2022 - 12 - 3*

---

*\*Credit to Bible Gateway; The Bible Project; Ken Bailey; Tim Keller; John Ortberg*

Well good morning and welcome to Five Forks Church. If you have your Bible with you today turn to Matthew chapter 1. And just take a quick glance at **verses 1-17 (PIC)**. How does that look to you? The Genealogy of Jesus, that's where we are headed today!

Last week we started our Advent series.

This year as we prepare for Christmas, our series is called **"The Christmas Story" (Graphic)**. We're working our way through all of the major scriptural passages of the Christmas Story. Last week was the ancient prophecy from **Isaiah 9 - The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,**

And we talked about the importance of "waiting" and "light in the darkness" as major themes of the Christmas story.

This morning we're going to a part of the Christmas story that perhaps you've never talked about or considered before. We're going to the part of the Christmas story that is often overlooked and neglected, skipped over and set aside because we don't really know what to do with it.

## I. The Genealogy of Jesus.

Sounds exciting, right? But I think as you'll see this morning there is something significant about this list of names.

So first, we just need to say a few words about reading and understanding

### A. Ancient Genealogies.

It's important because sometimes as Christians, we want the Bible to say things it is not intending to say and we can get ourselves in trouble. And so we need to learn how to be thoughtful and responsible in handling Scripture. We did a sermon series earlier this year where we talked about learning to **take the Bible seriously but that does not always mean taking the Bible literally**. The genealogies in Scripture are an example of this concept.

If you're familiar with your Bible, you'll know that genealogies show up on numerous occasions and if you're anything like me, often when I come across lists of ancient Hebrew names like this. I skip right over them.

But it's important to note that ancient genealogies are intended as more than just lists of names that are hard to pronounce.

Tim Keller writes that **“Matthew 1 might look like a genealogy, and it is, but it is also a resume. In those times it was your family, pedigree and clan – the people you were connect to – that constituted your resume. So a genealogy was a way of saying to the world, “This is who I am.”** (Keller 29)

In fact, there is historical record of King Herod removing certain names from his own genealogy, people he didn't like so that he wouldn't be associated with them.

One of the things we need to know when it comes to ancient genealogies is that they are not compiled based on our modern expectations for genealogical records and historical accuracy. Now listen carefully, I'm not saying they're not historical in any

sense. I'm saying they are not intended historically according to our modern standards and expectations, because that's not usually the main purpose of ancient genealogies.

Often times, the lists of names more than trying to be exact in every detail, are intended for theological purposes. The meaning of these lists isn't mostly about making sure every name is listed. So historically based, but not according our expectations.

And if you've ever taken time to do detailed studies on the Biblical genealogies, you'll know this is the case.

For example, Matthew 1 opens with a list of 41 names. The list ends with verse 17 stating, **<sup>17</sup> 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 Messiah.**

But two problems arise if we place our modern expectations on this text. The first one, for all of you mathematicians out there, is pretty obvious. You've been waiting, squirming in your seat uncomfortable, ready to jump up and shout... "That's not possible!" Because 41 names cannot be divided evenly into 3 groups of 14 generations. If you start counting, you'll see that there are 14 generations from Abraham to David. And there are 14 generations from David to the Babylonian exile, BUT...there are only 13 generations listed from the exile to Jesus. This gives us a hint that there is more going on than simply a concern about exact lists of names. It's not a mistake, it's just there's a different purpose to the list. (Davidson pg. 29-36)

There is also a second problem. This genealogical record from Matthew 1, is also found in the Hebrew Scriptures (OT), mostly in the book of 1 Chronicles. And when you compare the two lists **(PIC)**, one of the things you'll notice is that in the second group of "14 generations"...there are three or possibly four generations missing

(depending no how you count them!) from Matthew's list that appear in the Chronicles list. It is highly unlikely that these names were omitted from Matthew's list by simple oversight. It appears to be intentional.

And again, hints to us that Matthew is not writing with our modern genealogical expectations in mind. Rather, it appears that Matthew has other theological purposes in mind. His listed is intended as a resume. Matthew's gospel, is very much written to convince a Jewish audience that Jesus is the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

One of the best ways for Matthew to convince Jews that Jesus is the Messiah is to show that **Jesus** is connected to **Abraham** and **David**. Meaning that Matthew's primary purpose in the genealogy was to convey Jesus as a direct descendent of David and Abraham, the fathers of Judaism. That's his number one goal, not to actually give us all of the names in that recorded lineage.

Author Gregg Davidson says (pg. 33), *"To put this into a modern perspective, suppose you write an article about travel in the United States. You state that Chicago is 800 miles from New York (PIC). A thousand years later, your article is uncovered at an archeological dig. The archeologist finds maps with your work and determines that you had the resources to know that the actual distance was 810 miles. Did you make an error? No. But 800 is not the actual distance! You were as accurate as the context of your assignment demanded. The intent of your article was to provide distances that allow travel time to be estimated. The difference between 800 and 810 is inconsequential. If the intention of your article was to locate a target for missile strike, then the required accuracy changes and the 10 mile discrepancy is of serious consequence.*

*In Matthew 1, **the intent is to emphasize the legitimate lineage of Jesus through David and Abraham...**The exact number of generations is not the intended message."* (Davidson 33).

So, one it's important as we talk about being thoughtful with Scripture, don't try to make the Bible something it is not.

Now, that said, while there are elements within the genealogies that may not be intended as exact details, it's also true that part of the intention in the lists is that the story of Jesus is based in history. This is not simply a made-up list of names. Matthew is very much trying to connect Jesus historically to Abraham and David.

While the lists may not meet our modern expectations, one of the intentions of the list is that the Christmas story, the birth of Jesus is historical. It's different than say, Jesus parable about a good Samaritan. Matthew is grounding who Jesus is and what he does in history. Jesus is not a metaphor. The genealogy points us to something real, something historical, something that actually happened. And that's important also. I think I've shared before around Christmas time that, when I think of Christmas my mind immediately goes to one of my grandmothers **(PIC)**. I'm sure you probably have your people that you think about this time of year. My mom's mom, who we called Namaw. She was famous for serving her grandkids huge mugs of hot chocolate piled high with whipped cream on Christmas morning. But I remember when my Namaw had her emotional breakdown, a few years before she passed. And those magical Christmas mornings with Namaw ended. And it was hard for our family. Because we don't live in an imaginary world, we live in a real world, real jobs, school, relationships, and with real hurt and real pain. We need a real Messiah who enters into history with us.

Then second, it's important to pay attention to

### **B. The names that are listed.**

If the list is intended as a resume, a way to communicate theological truth and meaning. The names that are present, help us to begin unpacking some of that theological truth and meaning that Matthew was trying to emphasize.

One of the unique things about the genealogy of Jesus is Matthew seems to have included the names of folks, you'd rather leave off the genealogical record, particularly **the inclusion of so many women**. There are five women listed in Jesus genealogy. **Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary**. In an ancient patriarchal society, a woman was virtually never named in such lists, let alone five women! An ancient historian Sirach once began his own genealogical list by saying, **“Let us now praise famous men...”**

It's stunning to find five women listed. We might say they were **“gender-outsiders.”** But included on Jesus list.

But there's more. At least three of the women and likely four, listed in Jesus' genealogy were gentiles. **Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba**...possibly all gentiles. We might call them **racial outsiders**. To the ancient Jews these nations were unclean. Gentiles weren't allowed into the tabernacle or temple to worship. But Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, is listing gentiles in the genealogy of the Messiah.

And then finally, by naming these particular women, Matthew was deliberately recalling some of the most sordid, nasty, immoral incidents in the entire Bible.

This is not a mistake. This was intentional, on purpose! You can be sure that Jewish listeners were more than familiar with the names of these particular women. Every one of their names triggers stories and emotions. If Matthew wanted to include women, it seems he should have chosen, Rachel or Rebekah. Not these women.

I'll just describe one of these women to you, so you can get a feel for what I'm talking about, because it's really important. Are you familiar with **Tamar**? We find her story in **Genesis 38**. Tamar was married to the eldest of three brothers, but her husband died childless. The custom at the time was that when a woman's husband died

without leaving a family heir, and the deceased had a brother, the family was expected to marry the widow to that next brother.

This practice, as strange as it sounds was called Levirate Marriage and is described in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. This is why we take the Bible seriously, but not always literally, otherwise some of you in here would have eventually ended up married to your brother-in-law or perhaps in the future...that should make for some interesting family discussions this holiday season.

So Tamar married her first husband's brother. He also died. The third brother in line was too young for Tamar to marry at the time, so the father-in-law, **Judah**, promised Tamar that she could marry this youngest brother, as soon as he became a man. Tamar waited and waited. The third brother grew up, but the promise was not kept.

This is where the story gets a little interesting. So Tamar devised a daring plan. Having heard that her father-in-law would be traveling along a certain road at a certain time of the day, she dressed like a prostitute, but covered her face, and sat beside the road which Judah, was expected to pass. He appeared, approached her and said, "Come, let me come in to you..." I won't explain that in any more detail, you get the idea. Again, if you don't care for this story, don't blame me, it's in your Bible. She then asked what he was willing to pay for her "services." As any good man would do, he offered her a goat.

So Tamar asks for his staff and signet ring as a guarantee that he would keep his promise and send her a goat. He agreed, slept with her, left his staff and ring and went on his way, never knowing who she was. I told you this is pretty sordid stuff.

When Judah got home, he sent his servants back with the goat, but they could find no prostitute. Tamar had changed out of her disguise.

Tamar became pregnant, because of her one-night-stand with her father-in-law. In time, Judah found out that Tamar, his daughter-in-law was pregnant outside of wedlock he was furious, and demanded that she be burned.

As she was being dragged to her death, she sent a message to Judah, along with the staff and signet ring, saying **“By the man to whom these belong, I am with child.”**

Of course, Judah immediately recognizes his staff and ring and remembers the promise he had made many years earlier about giving Tamar to his third son when he came of age. In the end, Tamar’s life is spared, and she gives birth to two boys...Perez and Zerah.

So, now I want you to look back and Matthew 1 and look at verse 3. These names that perhaps meant nothing to you before...And as I read this verse I want you to remember this story and that this is the resume of Jesus our Messiah and Lord. The Son of God.

### **3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar...**

If there is a name, a story, you might want to remove from your family history, your character resume...it would be a story like this. Astonishingly, Tamar is listed as an ancestor to Jesus. The great Jewish Messiah comes from this line!

Here then you have moral outsiders – adulterers, adulteresses, incestuous relationships, prostitutes. The Law of Moses excluded these people from the presence of God and yet, they are all publicly acknowledged as the ancestors of Jesus.

What is Matthew trying to communicate in his genealogical account?

#### **1. People who are excluded by society, are welcomed into Jesus’ family.**



The genealogy is a crucial reminder that God often includes and uses messy people in his Kingdom.

*Author John Ortberg tells the humorous story of a woman he knows who locked her keys in her car in a rough neighborhood. With her cellphone locked inside also, she was at a loss. "God," she prayed, "send somebody, anybody to help me."*

*A minute later, a rusty old car pulled up, and a tattooed, bearded man wearing a biker's skull rag stepped out. She thought, "Really, God? This is who you send?" But she was desperate, so when the man asked if he could help, she asked, "Can you break into my car?" He said, "Not a problem."*

*He got a coat hanger from his car, and in just a few seconds, he had her vehicle open. The lady was overjoyed. "You're a very nice man," she blurted out and gave him a hug.*

*"No, ma'am," came the reply. "I'm not a nice man. I just got out of prison today. I served two years for auto theft, and I've only been out a couple of hours."*

*She hugged him again, looked to heaven, and exclaimed, "Thank you, Lord! You sent me a professional!"*

God just has this habit of including messy people in his family. Matthew was trying to say, don't judge other people and don't judge yourself because God uses Tamar's and Rahab's and Ruth's and Bathsheba's, and tattooed, bearded, auto theft professionals in the work of his kingdom.

Can we pause for just a moment here? This is so important for us to grasp.

When you think about our society today, **who are the people that are considered outsiders by religious standards? How do you often think about these folks? What kind of emotional response do they conjure up in your heart? How do you tend to talk about them? What kind of actions do you take towards them?**

Here's something to think about...those seem to be exactly the kind of people that Jesus includes in his family tree!

In the famous **Peanuts movie, Charlie Brown PIC**...Lucy sometimes feels like being the psychiatrist. One day she puts up her little sign: "Psychiatric help 5 cents." As usual, her first customer is Charlie Brown. But this time she's so frustrated with him that she says, *"Charlie Brown, sometimes I feel we are not communicating. You, Charlie Brown, are a foul ball in the line drive of life. You're often in the shadow of your goalpost. You're a miscue. You're three putts on the 18<sup>th</sup> green. You're a seven-ten split in the tenth frame. You are a dropped rod and reel in the lake of life. You're a missed free throw. You're a shanked nine-iron. You're a called third strike. You're a bug on the windshield of life. Do you understand? Do I make myself clear?"*

Time and time again, one of the central messages of Scripture, is that God uses those you would least expect, those we would probably consider least worthy to carry out his purposes. Often this is called **the "great reversal."** God turns/reverses all of our expectations.

God chose Jacob the second born over Esau.

God chose David, the youngest to be King.

God chose Esther, a woman to save God's people.

Even Perez, Tamar's son, was the second born behind his brother Zerah.

God chose a corrupt tax collector, several fisherman, a doubter, a denier and a betrayer to be his disciples and the foundation of the church community.

And each and every day, God uses messy people like you and me to continue to carrying out his purposes!

I don't know what your past is like. I don't know how you think about your past. I suspect there are bits and pieces, maybe huge chunks you'd like to eliminate and forget and just ignore. Perhaps at times, your past failures and mistakes have held you captive. Perhaps you've tried to keep your past hidden, afraid that if others

found out, they might reject you. Perhaps you have struggled to forgive yourself. You have struggled to accept that other people could love you. Maybe you have struggled to believe that God could receive you into his family.

Jesus genealogy, are a reminder of God's incredible love and grace for messy people. In God's Kingdom, you are not defined and rejected by your past mistakes. You are forgiven and you are loved...you are adopted into his family...and you are then used for God to continue bringing about his purposes.

**Hebrews 2 says, “<sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.<sup>[g]</sup>**

God is not ashamed of us. We are all in his family.

Always reminded of that that great hymn we sing that says, “The love God is greater far, than tongue or pen could ever tell. It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to lowest hell. O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!

God's great love adopts messy people into his family.

I told you there's something incredibly valuable tucked away, for us to learn, in this list of names in the Christmas story.

Ok, there's a second important lesson we learn from the genealogy and that is that...

## **2. Jesus offers ultimate rest.**

Follow me on this for just a minute...I made mention of the numbers of generations that Matthew highlights.

**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 Messiah.**

Scholars suggest that these sets of generations point to a symbolic significance regarding Jesus. **Three sets of fourteen generations is the same as six sets of seven generations.** Meaning Jesus is the beginning of the seventh set of 7 generations.

In the Bible, the number seven is significant...because on the **7<sup>th</sup> day God rested** and designated that 7<sup>th</sup> day as the day of rest. And in Judaism, **every 7<sup>th</sup> year was a year of rest.** Where they didn't farm for crops. They let the land rest. And the 7<sup>th</sup>, 7 year segment...the 49<sup>th</sup> year was called **the year of Jubilee.** It was the ultimate year of rest. No farming and all slaves were set free.

Matthew's genealogy is pointing us to Jesus as the seventh seven and the ultimate fulfillment of the year of Jubilee. Jesus is the sign of rest, contentment, peace on earth. He is the freer of slaves. He is the sign of everything being set right. Look what Jesus says in Luke 4...

**18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”<sup>[1]</sup>**

Jesus, his life and his teachings, are the year of Jubilee arriving on earth.

And that brings us full circle to our advent theme for today...**Peace.** In Hebrew, the word for peace is shalom and the idea is when “everything in life is set right.” Peace is when all people, and the earth experience Jubilee. When people experience, rest and contentment.

Matthew is telling us through his genealogy that this rest and peace and this contentment that you are looking for, that our world so desperately needs is found only through Jesus.

This is why the angels announced the birth of Jesus by saying, **“Glory to God in the highest and on earth Peace to those on whom his favor rests.”**

You can participate in the Jubilee life of Jesus...you too can experience rest and contentment and peace as you accept Jesus as Lord, he adopts you into his messy family and you then make it your goal to know and love and follow this Jesus.