



GPS GUIDE Grow, Pray, Serve Guide for Weekly Reflection

(adapted from United Methodist Church of the Resurrection resources: sharechurch.com)

December 1, 2024

The Surprising Genealogy of Jesus

A record of ancestors—why?

MONDAY 12.2.24 Matthew 1:1

“Not another list of names I can’t even pronounce!” If that’s your first thought, Scholar N. T. Wright may help: “It is important not to think this is a waste of time.... in the Jewish world of Matthew’s day, this genealogy was the equivalent of a roll of drums, a fanfare of trumpets, and a town crier calling for attention.... Like a great procession, we watch the figures at the front, and the ones in the middle, but all eyes are waiting for the one who comes in the position of greatest honor, right at the end.” * •

Matthew’s gospel, starting with this genealogy, was not the mere story of one person. It was the story of a new start for a hurting world distorted by the presence of evil, hatred and death. “As the original writing may be translated, the book of the *genesis* of Jesus Christ. Matthew was about to set forth the story of the new Genesis, the new creation of the world, and it centered in Jesus.” ** How different would our world be if Jesus had never come? ***

- “In Genesis 5, the phrase is followed by a list of the person’s descendants, who depend on their ancestor for their meaning. Matthew, by contrast, lists not Jesus’ descendants but his ancestors. Jesus is so pivotal for Israel’s history that even his ancestors depend on him for their purpose and meaning.” **** The apostle Paul wrote, “If you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham’s descendants” (Galatians 3:29). This is **your** spiritual genealogy. Does that increase your interest?

Prayer: Lord God, every name in Matthew’s list of Jesus’ ancestors was important to you—and so is my name. Thank you for inviting me to be a participant in your story of restoring our broken world to the beauty you intended for it. Amen.

* Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 2). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

** John Killinger, *A Sense of His Presence* (The Devotional Commentary: Matthew). Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977, p. 4.

*** To explore that question in greater depth, John Ortberg’s book *Who Is This Man?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012 is a readable resource worth your time.

**** NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (pp. 8371-8372). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

“Son of Abraham”

TUESDAY 12.3.24 Matthew 1:1, Genesis 12:1-7, Hebrews 11:8-10

Abraham was a foundational Biblical figure, the original Israelite with whom God made a covenant. “In Genesis, Abraham is presented as the important forefather to whom God gives promises and with whom God makes a covenant.... The extravagance of God’s covenant promises is linked to images of the stars of the sky, the sand of the seashore and the dust of the earth.... The keynotes of Paul’s references to Abraham are the motifs of faith and promise” (cf. Romans 4:2-9). * • By faith Abraham

“went out without knowing where he was going.” One of the most characteristic

signs of the human desire to maintain control is an unwillingness to move forward until we can be sure of the outcome we desire, until we “know where we are going.” Does Abraham’s journey of faith strike you as foolishness or faith? When (if ever) have you had to take a step of faith in response to a divine calling without knowing for sure where you are going?

- Scholar Theodore Hiebert said of God’s Genesis 12:3 promise to Abraham, “Much later... when Israel and Judah had been conquered... these old promises gave a vision about who God’s people might be again in the future.” ** In what ways was the record of God’s promise to Abraham not just ancient history, but a mission statement for Jesus? How is it a pointer to God’s ideal for you as one of God’s people, one of Abraham’s spiritual descendants?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, sons of Abraham, you wanted Abraham to care about blessing “all the families of earth.” Plant that kind of heart in me, too, as I live into Abraham’s heritage. Amen.

* *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, general editors: Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III. InterVarsity Press, 1998, pp. 4-5.

** Theodore Hiebert, sidebar note “The Promises to the Ancestors” in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 23 OT.

“Son of David”

WEDNESDAY 12.4.24 Matthew 1:1, 6, 1 Samuel 16:10-13, 2 Samuel 7:8-9, 16 “Mentioned a thousand times in the Bible, David is the biblical man for all seasons, the most complex and many-sided human character in Scripture.” * We often only know a few of those sides of David. His name in Jesus’ genealogy evoked many sides of his life, with a clear air of royalty. “David is the only person called king in this genealogy. This is because he is the representative king of Israel. Israel’s royal dynasty was called the house of David. See [2 Samuel 7:12-13](#).” ** • In David’s day (and much of the Middle East today), shepherds had very low social status.

David’s father at first didn’t even include him with his brothers as a potential king for Samuel’s attention. Have you ever (years ago or 10 minutes ago) felt that you’re not valued, that the world needs nothing you can offer? How does the story of God choosing David, the left-out kid brother keeping the sheep, speak to your heart?

- One thread that ran through David's story was God's promise that his royal dynasty would last "forever" (cf. [2 Samuel 7:16](#), [1 Kings 9:3-5](#)). To human eyes, that promise failed—the Davidic line of kings could not and did not continue through and after the exile in Babylon. But Matthew traced Joseph's ancestry back to David (as Luke did Mary's—cf. [Luke 3:23-38](#), especially verse 31). How was Jesus the only one who could and did fully make God's promise to David come true at last?

Prayer: Jesus, Son of David, so much, globally and locally, tugs me toward hopelessness. Reinforce my ability to live in hope, in confidence that your good reign will indeed last forever. Amen.

* *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, general editors: Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III. InterVarsity Press, 1998, p. 194.

** Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 1:6 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 5 NT.

Descendant of Tamar and Rahab?

THURSDAY 12.5.24 Matthew 1:3, 5, Genesis 38:24-26, Joshua 2:8, 12-13, 6:22-23 Against all patriarchal tradition, Matthew included women in Jesus' genealogy. And what women! "He is about to tell how Mary, Jesus' mother, had become pregnant not through her fiancé, Joseph, but through the holy spirit. So Matthew adds to his list reminders of the strange ways God worked in the royal family itself: Judah treating his daughter-in-law Tamar as a prostitute, Boaz being the son of the Jericho prostitute Rahab." * Matthew's genealogy, if read aloud, must have triggered gasps. • Tamar's story was told in a single chapter (cf. [Genesis 38](#)). It may strike us as an embarrassing, offensive story based on the ancient custom that required a dead man's brother to help his widow conceive an heir. But Tamar's resolve to see that duty carried out helped to establish the Israelite tribe of Judah, in which Jesus was born generations later. How could Matthew see God's hand at work even through customs and actions that might not have reflected God's highest ideals?

- Rahab was a Canaanite woman who lived in Jericho. She defied Jericho's rulers and hid two Israelite scouts who came to the city before its walls famously fell down (cf. [Joshua 6:1-20](#)). Israel recalled her as the only person whose family survived the city's fall. Her son Boaz, we will see tomorrow, was King David's great-grandfather. By including her, Matthew made the point that Jesus was for all people, not just Israelites. How does that matter to you?

Prayer: Lord God, Matthew saw the amazing way you weave our brief human lives into the wonderful pattern of your eternity. Guide me to value the part you offer me to play in that eternity. Amen.

* Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 4). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Descendant of Ruth and Bathsheba?

FRIDAY 12.6.24 Matthew 1:5-6, Ruth 1:14-16, 4:13, 16-17, 2 Samuel 11:2-5, 26-27 Matthew added two more surprising women into his genealogy of Jesus. (Of course, he also included Mary at the end of the list—we'll read that tomorrow.) He mentioned Ruth almost in passing. But Ruth was a Moabite, welcomed in Israel despite [Deuteronomy 23:3](#) saying that “those people” couldn't belong to “the LORD's assembly.” Matthew didn't even name Solomon's mother, who “had been the wife of Uriah,” perhaps because the [tragic story in 2 Samuel](#) had made Bathsheba's name familiar. • The book of Ruth “contains no clue to its authorship. The setting is that of the period of the Judges ([Ruth 1:1](#)), but its writing belongs to a later date.” * Ruth's story showed that Israel's God welcomed non-Israelites too. “The people of Moab were ancient enemies of the people of Israel, so Ruth's willingness to live in Bethlehem, and the Bethlehemites' acceptance of her, are unexpected and remarkable.” ** How does that likely show why Matthew included her in Jesus' ancestry?

- Hebrew historians didn't directly describe “motivation.” But Bathsheba's story was about King David's guilt, not hers: “There is no suggestion that Bathsheba intended to attract David's attention. The text gives no support to the idea that she was a seductress.... David's sex with Bathsheba is adultery under the menace of power.” *** Later giving birth to King Solomon, she continued David's royal line, which led to Jesus. How did Matthew's genealogy honor her innocence?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you that Matthew's genealogy subtly showed that even when we miss the mark, we cannot permanently derail your purposes. Thank you for working through people of every nation and gender to lead to Jesus. Amen.

* Mrs. M. Beeching, article “Ruth, Book of” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, Third Edition. Intervarsity Press, USA, 1996, p. 1031.

** Linda Day, introduction to Ruth in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 410 OT. *** Bruce C. Birch, study notes on 2 Samuel 11:2 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 486 OT.

Jesus, the culmination of the whole story

SATURDAY 12.7.24 Matthew 1:1, 16-17

Hebrew genealogies were not for mere record-keeping. Like Matthew's, they often held symbolic messages. “The three-part division of the record of Jesus' family tree indicates that the establishment of the Davidic dynasty and the Babylonian exile were key events in Israel's history. Names (e.g., Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah) have been dropped from the genealogy in order to fit into this three part division of 14 names each.” * Scholar N. T. Wright summed up the message: “As though to emphasize that Jesus isn't just one member in an ongoing family, but actually the goal of the whole list, he arranges the genealogy into three groups of 14 names—or, perhaps we should say, into six groups of seven names. The number seven was and is one of the most powerful symbolic numbers, and to be born at the beginning of the seventh seven in the sequence is clearly to be the climax of the whole list. This birth, Matthew is saying, is what Israel has been waiting for for two thousand years.” **

- In our hurry-up world, our vision often narrows to the next hour, the next day, the next week. But God works on a much larger time scale. Matthew's genealogy pointed to God's time scale, not ours. As Pastor John Killinger wrote, "We can be sure there was nothing trite or dull about this list of names to the Jewish Christians. They knew stories about each person named. History to them was a web, a ladder, a series of interconnecting events, and now it led directly from Abraham to Jesus.... Imagine God at work through all the centuries from Abraham to Jesus. Then imagine him at work from Jesus' day until ours. This is the story of a new creation, isn't it?" ***

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul wrote "when the fulfillment of the time came, God sent his Son" (Galatians 4:4). You are the center point of our world's history. This Advent, I welcome you in my life, and rejoice as you define my course as a member of your eternal family. Amen.

* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 1:17 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 6 NT.

** Wright, N. T., *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 3). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

*** John Killinger, *A Sense of His Presence* (The Devotional Commentary: Matthew). Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977, p.