

The Prophetic Significance of the Earthly Genealogy of Jesus

During this Christmas season I thought it appropriate that we understand the earthly lineage of Jesus because it portrays both the depths of God's love for humanity as well as the profound need humanity has for a deliverer! The genealogy in this article (published in two parts) is derived from the Gospel of Matthew, which many believe is based upon the lineage of Jesus' earthly stepfather Joseph.

Like many other people, I used to think that studying the genealogies found in Luke and Matthew were a waste of time and I would never read them but skip over them when I read these Gospel accounts; however, I have since found that they contain a rich and vast snapshot of the whole story of redemption that culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus. They also powerfully illustrate the vast array of sins and sinners that represent the messy story of humanity that desperately needed a Savior.

Consequently, to accomplish my objective in this article, we will explore how the biblical narrative related to Jesus' lineage reveals not only those who participated in the genealogical collective of Jesus—but how some of their stories reveal the various types of people along with their dark past biologically, spiritually and theologically correspond to the glorious advent of Jesus. Also, when reviewing these passages, we can ask ourselves if we resemble any of the characters shown in this genealogy. We can also immerse ourselves in their story to believe that God can save me and use me in spite of my personal challenges, history and family history. Finally, my hope is also that we will realize how the incarnation (advent) of Christ bridges the gap between

humanity and God.

The following are the compelling stories of some of the primary people connected to the genealogy and birth of Jesus.

What I respect so much about the Bible is the honesty with which sacred writ has not whitewashed the sordid history of some of the most important figures who contributed to redemption history.

Abraham (Matt. 1:2)

He was promised to be the progenitor of the seed that is Christ. Galatians 3:16 (ESV) says: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring." It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

Abraham was also a prophetic type of God the Father, since he was willing to sacrifice his only son of promise, Isaac, out of obedience to God; which points to God sacrificing His only begotten Son (see John 3:16).

Judah (Matt. 1:3)

He was the father of Perez, the son of Judah's daughter-in-law (Tamar) who was born as a result of Judah committing adultery with his mother (Tamar).

The backdrop to this is that Judah, the father-in-law of Tamar, refused to give her Shelah, his youngest son, as her husband (because the Lord put to death his two other sons who were previously the husbands of Tamar—Er and Onan—so Tamar made believe she was a prostitute and tricked Judah into sleeping with her and getting her pregnant, which resulted in the birth of their son Perez—see Genesis 38:6-29).

Rahab (Matt. 1:5)

She was actually a well-known prostitute (perhaps even a so-

called madam who ran a brothel) who feared the Lord and hid the spies Joshua sent to check out the city of Jericho before Israel invaded it—and whose life was spared because of her faith in the God who was about to conquer her land (see Josh. 2).

Her act of faith was so great that she is mentioned as one of the heroes of the Old Testament (Heb. 11:30, 31).

After Joshua conquered Jericho, Rahab repented and married a Jew named Salmon, the father of Boaz, who married Ruth—out of whom descended King David.

Matthew 1:5-6 says, "... Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king." Hence, Rahab went from being a participant of sex trafficking in Jericho, to a well-honored woman of God who became the mother-in-law of Ruth—married into the royal line of David, which produced Jesus!

Boaz as Kinsman-Redeemer

Boaz, the son of Salmon, became the kinsman-redeemer of a gentile woman by the name of Ruth who married into his family through Naomi her mother-in-law.

Ruth 1:1-5 talks about how Naomi, her husband Elimelech and her two sons left Bethlehem of Judea to live in the country of Moab because of a famine. After some time elapsed, Elimelech died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about 10 years, and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. However, even though Ruth's husband died she refused to part with her mother-in-law Naomi, who then arranged for her to connect with Boaz who was her kinsman-redeemer because he was her relative. (The kinsman-redeemer was a male relative who, according to various laws in the

books of Moses, had the responsibility to act on behalf of a relative who was in trouble, danger or need.)

The Hebrew term (*goel*) for kinsman-redeemer designates one who delivers or rescues (Gen. 48:16; Ex. 6:6) or redeems property or person (Lev. 27:9-25, 25:47-55). Also, Yahweh as Israel's Redeemer, is the one who promises to defend and vindicate them. He is both Father and deliverer (Ex. 20:2). There are numerous Old Testament appeals to God as rescuer of the weak and needy (Ps. 82:4; Dan. 6:27; Jer. 20:13) and preserver of the sheep of Israel (Ezek. 34:10-12, 22).

Finally, in the New Testament, Christ is depicted as an example of a kinsman-redeemer because, as our brother, He redeemed and restored us back to God, as Hebrews 2:11 says. Consequently, the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us back to the Father—from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13)—and blessed us for all generations. Truly, He is the kinsman-redeemer of all who believe!

David (Matt. 1:6)

David was the great Jewish King who, as a teenager, slew the Philistine giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17) and who was a type of Christ who, as our champion, appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He was called the root and offspring of David in Revelation 22:16, which is taken from Isaiah 11:1, which says, "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit."

It is also interesting that God did not whitewash David's sin in this genealogy since Matthew also makes note of the fact that David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba (Matthew could have only mentioned David's slaying of Goliath) who had been the wife of Uriah, whom David murdered after he committed adultery with her and she became pregnant (2 Sam. 11). Matthew 1:6 says, "David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah." This shows the messiness of the people who are part of

the grand story of redemption and partook of the genealogy of Jesus.

The scriptures depict our real-life messes, challenges and sins and show how God overcomes all obstacles in our life if we only turn back to Him and seek Him with our whole heart like David did. {eoa}