

PAUSE AND FOCUS

DECEMBER, 2021

By Caleb R. Howell

December 1, 2021

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

-Matthew 1:1

What an incredible way to begin the Book of Matthew! Matthew is writing his Gospel with the intended reader being primarily Jews. He gets their full attention in the first line of the Gospel by saying: Jesus has the pedigree to be the Christ because He is the Christ! Some of you may not be excited about this line because you need a review or a lesson on which David and Abraham were.

First, let us have a quick lesson or review on who Abraham was. Abraham was the Father of all Jewish men and women. Abraham was raised without knowing God. Yet as an adult Abraham would develop a relationship with God that would lead him to leaving his homeland, his family and his father's blessing to go to a land that God would give him, raising a family that God would bless him with and, because of his obedience, God would bless him. Abraham is the earthly father of the Nation of Israel. His life and influence is intertwined with the Jewish Nation. Jewish men and women recognize Abraham as a man that knew God and walked with Him daily.

Second, let us now have a quick lesson or review on who David was. In Charles Swindoll's autobiography of King David Swindoll writes that David was "The only one in all of Scripture to be called 'a man after God's own heart,' this single individual is mentioned more than any other Old Testament character in the pages of the New Testament. Poet, musician, courageous warrior, and national statesman, David distinguished himself as one of God's greatest men. In battle, he modeled invincible confidence. In decisions, he judged with wisdom and equity. In loneliness, he wrote with transparent vulnerability and quiet trust. In friendship, he was loyal to the end. Whether a humble shepherd boy or an obscure musician before King Saul, he remained faithful and trustworthy. Even in his promotion to the highest position in the land, David modeled integrity and humility. What a man of God!"

David's reign as the King of Israel is a time in Jewish history that the Jewish nation still dreams about returning to. In the days of Jesus and His disciple Matthew the Jewish people desired for the Son of David to return and reclaim the throne in Jerusalem. Because the Jewish people were so focused on a physical throne they missed God among them, Immanuel, who is Jesus Christ. This is why Matthew begins His Gospel by proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of

David – to gain the attention of the Jewish people. Even today, this one line should grab our undivided attention.

Jesus is God! In the story of Jesus all of the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Son of God are fulfilled by Jesus. None greater than the other because if even one prophecy was not fulfilled then it could be proven that Jesus was not the Son of God. However, all of the prophecies concerning Him being the Son of God are fulfilled. The first one of these prophecies that is fulfilled is the fact that He is from the lineage of David and Abraham.

PRAY: Today, praise God for Jesus being exactly Who He claims to be – the sinless Son of God! Praise Jesus for being fully God and fully man which means He understands our struggles. We do not serve a God who does not understand our own struggles of life. We serve a Risen Savior who understands our struggles and loves us despite our sin. Jesus is God!

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December 2, 2021

(1) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (2) To Abraham was born Isaac; and Isaac, Jacob; and to Jacob, Judah and his brothers; (3) and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar; and to Perez was born Hezron; and Hezron, Ram; (4) and to Ram was born Amminadab; and to Amminadab, Nahshon; and to Nahshon, Salmon; (5) and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab; and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth; and to Obed, Jesse; (6) and to Jesse was born David the king. And to David was born Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah; (7) and to Solomon was born Rehoboam; and to Rehoboam, Abijah; and to Abijah, Asa; (8) and to Asa was born Jehoshaphat; and to Jehoshaphat, Joram; and to Joram, Uzziah; (9) and to Uzziah was born Jotham; and to Jotham, Ahaz; and to Ahaz, Hezekiah; (10) and to Hezekiah was born Manasseh; and to Manasseh, Amon; and to Amon, Josiah; (11) and to Josiah were born Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. (12) And after the deportation to Babylon, to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel; and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel; (13) and to Zerubbabel was born Abihud; and to Abihud, Eliakim; and to Eliakim, Azor; (14) and to Azor was born Zadok; and Zadok, Achim; and to Achim, Eliud; (15) and to Eliud was born Eleazar, and to Eleazar, Matthan; and to Matthan, Jacob; (16) and to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (17) Therefore all the generation from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ fourteen generations.

-Matthew 1:1-17

Over the course of the next few days we will be referring back to Matthew 1:1-17. Believe it or not, there is a lot of exciting information and great truths of the Good News of Jesus Christ hidden in these verses! These truths, once discovered, adds a lot of depth to the Christians' life and viewpoint – especially during this Christmas season! So, to get us started on this journey of discovery let us read the words of Warren Wiersbe for today's lesson:

“The theme of the Old Testament is given in Genesis 5:1: ‘This is the book of the generations of Adam.’ The Old Testament gives the history of ‘the Adam family,’ and it is a sad history indeed. God created man in His own image, but man sinned – thus defiling and deforming that image. Then man brought forth children ‘in his own likeness, after his image’ (Genesis 5:3). These

children provided themselves to be sinners like their parents. No matter where you read in the Old Testament, you meet sin and sinners.

“But the New Testament is, ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ’ (Matthew 1:1), Jesus is the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), and He came to earth to save the ‘generations of Adam.’ (This includes you and me, by the way.) Through no choice of our own, we were born into the generations of Adam, and this made us sinners. But by a choice of faith, we can be born into the generation of Jesus Christ and become the children of God!

“When you read the genealogy in Genesis 5, the repeated phrase *and he died* sounds like the tolling of a funeral bell. The Old Testament illustrates the truth that ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Romans 6:23). But when you turn to the New Testament, that first genealogy emphasizes *birth* and not death! The message of the New Testament is that ‘the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord’ (Romans 6:23).

“The Old Testament is a book of promise, while the New Testament is a book of fulfillment. Beginning with Genesis 3:15, God promised a Redeemer; and Jesus Christ fulfilled that promise.”

PRAY: Thank God that we can be BORN AGAIN and no one has to face a spiritual death because of what Jesus has done for us! Thank God for your salvation in Him or pray to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. If you need help with that, call someone right now. My phone number is 601-530-2337. Praise God for His love for us!

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December 3, 2021

(1) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (2) To Abraham was born Isaac; and Isaac, Jacob; and to Jacob, Judah and his brothers; (3) and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar; and to Perez was born Hezron; and Hezron, Ram; (4) and to Ram was born Amminadab; and to Amminadab, Nahshon; and to Nahshon, Salmon; (5) and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab; and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth; and to Obed, Jesse; (6) and to Jesse was born David the king. And to David was born Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah; (7) and to Solomon was born Rehoboam; and to Rehoboam, Abijah; and to Abijah, Asa; (8) and to Asa was born Jehoshaphat; and to Jehoshaphat, Joram; and to Joram, Uzziah; (9) and to Uzziah was born Jotham; and to Jotham, Ahaz; and to Ahaz, Hezekiah; (10) and to Hezekiah was born Manasseh; and to Manasseh, Amon; and to Amon, Josiah; (11) and to Josiah were born Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. (12) And after the deportation to Babylon, to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel; and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel; (13) and to Zerubbabel was born Abihud; and to Abihud, Eliakim; and to Eliakim, Azor; (14) and to Azor was born Zadok; and Zadok, Achim; and to Achim, Eliud; (15) and to Eliud was born Eleazar, and to Eleazar, Matthan; and to Matthan, Jacob; (16) and to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (17) Therefore all the generation from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ fourteen generations.

-Matthew 1:1-17

If you desire to go incredibly deep and understand this blood line may I recommend that you start at the beginning of this genealogy in Matthew 1 and read about each of these men and women of the Old Testament. In short, today and tomorrow, I want us to read a couple of statements by John Phillips in order to learn a couple of very important lessons from this genealogy.

Phillips writes: "Note whom God deliberately introduced into the genealogy of His Son: sinners of deepest dye; women, when women in Jewish national life were generally regarded as nothing (In his morning prayers a Jewish male habitually thanked God that He had not made him a Gentile, a slave, or a woman); and pagans such as Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the

Moabites (both members of races cursed by God). Already – on the first page of the New Testament – the Holy Spirit was preparing for a new age. Jew and Gentile, male and female, saint and sinner – all would find new status in the Christ to whom this long list of names leads.”

In other words, Joseph’s family tree was full of people to be proud of and people to be ashamed of. Now, a family tree like this is fairly commonly found throughout all of history. But, is this the family tree of Jesus? Yes, because God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit make up a God of grace, love and forgiveness. Today, I want you to pause and focus on this fact: God took a family that was not perfect in the eyes of many and gave us Jesus.

Think about the sin in your life that God has forgiven or the sin in your life that God desires to forgive you of. Even in the genealogy of Jesus He is teaching us that He desires to forgive us of our sin and He desires to work through us despite our sins.

PRAY: First, meditate on how God desires to work in your life. Now, thank God for working in you, around you and through you despite your sinful nature. Give God praise in your prayers today because of His love, patience and forgiveness that He extends to us through the sacrifice of Jesus.

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(1) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (2) To Abraham was born Isaac; and Isaac, Jacob; and to Jacob, Judah and his brothers; (3) and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar; and to Perez was born Hezron; and Hezron, Ram; (4) and to Ram was born Amminadab; and to Amminadab, Nahshon; and to Nahshon, Salmon; (5) and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab; and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth; and to Obed, Jesse; (6) and to Jesse was born David the king. And to David was born Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah; (7) and to Solomon was born Rehoboam; and to Rehoboam, Abijah; and to Abijah, Asa; (8) and to Asa was born Jehoshaphat; and to Jehoshaphat, Joram; and to Joram, Uzziah; (9) and to Uzziah was born Jotham; and to Jotham, Ahaz; and to Ahaz, Hezekiah; (10) and to Hezekiah was born Manasseh; and to Manasseh, Amon; and to Amon, Josiah; (11) and to Josiah were born Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. (12) And after the deportation to Babylon, to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel; and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel; (13) and to Zerubbabel was born Abihud; and to Abihud, Eliakim; and to Eliakim, Azor; (14) and to Azor was born Zadok; and Zadok, Achim; and to Achim, Eliud; (15) and to Eliud was born Eleazar, and to Eleazar, Matthan; and to Matthan, Jacob; (16) and to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (17) Therefore all the generation from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ fourteen generations.

-Matthew 1:1-17

Today we read this statement by John Phillips: "But while Satan was concentrating his attack on this Davidic line, another line (the one recorded by Luke) was meandering down the back alleys and byways of history, away from the spotlight of the throne. This other line ran from David and Bath-sheba through Nathan to a village maiden named Mary. And of her, not Joseph, was brought forth the promised seed who was at once David's Son and David's Lord."

Yesterday we focused of the genealogy of Joseph. Today, we must see the half of the family. While Satan was trying to destroy Joseph's family (which he did not), God was able to work without Satan's interruption on Mary's side of the family.

That is just like God, He always has a plan and He cannot be stopped. Even in the story about the birth of Jesus we see that God always has a plan. When we think that Satan has won a victory we see him go down in defeat. Is there something in your life that you think Satan has won the day? Let me assure you that God has not forfeited anything to Satan.

As the songwriter says: "God has a way where there seems to be no way." Today, in the space below, write down some things where you need God to work in your life or in someone else's life. As you write these things down pray for God to win a victory in each of these areas:

PRAY: Thank God for what He desires to do in each situation.