

Introduction: Genealogies

Matthew, the first book of the New Testament and first of the Gospels begins his first chapter with...

1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, 4 Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, 7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, 8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziyah, 9 Uzziyah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

12 After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eliud, 15 Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Luke, the third book of the New Testament and the third of the Gospels, also includes a genealogy in his third chapter.

23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, 27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Kenan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Differences

There are at least 2 dozen genealogies in the Bible. The two we have just read are called the “Jesus” genealogies. Matthew finishes his at Jesus’ birth while Luke starts with Jesus’ public ministry. Matthew traces his back to Abraham and moves forward in history while Luke starts with Jesus’ stepdad, Joseph, and moves backward all the way to Adam. Matthew breaks down his genealogy into three distinct periods as he explains in 1:17:

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 Christ.

Lastly, Matthew’s genealogy traces more so through Joseph’s lineage while Luke’s goes through Mary. This last point is ironic because Matthew mentions five women in his list, but Luke, none. Now that

we have a handle on the major differences between the Jesus genealogies, let's do a deep dive on the 120 names or so just mentioned (lol).

I got to be honest here, I never, nor have ever been, motivated to preach on genealogies before. In fact, whenever I encounter them in my devotional reading, I just kind of yawn and skip right over them. Or if I suffer from a bout of insomnia, I read them to help facilitate sleep (lol). So why talk about them now, on Christmas Sunday, when many of us are suffering from Advent/Christmas malaise?

Our Story

The one reason I will mention here, other than Matthew and Luke painstakingly researched, and wrote, these genealogies to demonstrate that Jesus was a true flesh and blood person, is that he, like us, had parents, grandfathers and grandmothers, relatives, and most-of-all, ancestors. He was born into a lineage, a family tree. Although he could have, Jesus didn't just materialize out of thin air, like a ghost.

Nevertheless, I felt led to preach on these genealogies today, because it occurred to me that each name on these lists represents a unique person with a story. I know, "Captain Obvious" right? Some stories may be more fascinating than others, but nonetheless, each has, in some way, shape, or form, intersected with God's story of redemption which culminated in the first Christmas. If I was a novelist, I might begin this Divine/Human story intersects with something like:

A man is walking along, trips, and falls into a deep pit. A passerby passes by. She hears the cries for help emerging from the hole. She looks down and sees the trapped man. He yells up, "I fell into this pit and can't get out." The woman replies, "It's a shame that such misfortune has befallen you" and then, like the old Dionne Warwick song, "Walks on by."

A second person passes by, hears the cries for help, and looks down into the pit. Again, the man yells up, "I fell into this pit and can't get out." The person responds, "No problem." "I'll google, 'How to climb out of a pit in three easy moves' and will text you the link." He then, like the old Dionne Warwick song, "Walks on by."

A third person passes by, hears the cries for help, and looks down into the pit. Again, the man yells up, "I fell into this pit and can't get out." Without hesitation, the man jumps down into hole. A few seconds later they make eye contact. Bewildered, the trapped man asks, "Are you crazy?" "Now we're both stuck down here." The man responds, "Of course, but now we're in it together."

God of the Pits

Imagine if God was the first passer-byer. He hears the cry for help but only sends down some sympathies and platitudes. Imagine if God was the second person? He stops only to offer instructions and then merrily goes on his way. But as we probably realize by now, God is the third visitor. He doesn't preach or pass by. No, he becomes the "Pit Jumping-Hole Dwelling-God" (a.k.a. Immanuel Isaiah 9:7) so that he can be with us, in all the pits and pitfalls, of our lives. He jumps down into the pit not only because he loves us, but also to pull us out and to teach us how to avoid them in the future. David, a man who is mentioned in both of our Jesus genealogies, was a "perpetual pit faller" but listen to how he praised the God in Psalm 40:2

*He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

Conclusion

]As we put a wrap on this message and the Christmas season (get it), let me just say that if you're in the pits right now, please don't despair, even if it's the pit of despair. If your life seems like a bowl of cherries, "full of pits," don't give up, there's hope. If you're at the bottom of a pit (relationally, emotionally, spiritually, etc.), stop digging, and start climbing, with your "Pit Jumping-Hole Dwelling-God." How? By allowing your entire story, with all the good, the bad, and the indifferent on it, to fully intersect with his story of redemption. The Son of God came on that very first Christmas so that we may no longer have to remain in the pits. Give him your story and I promise that he will get you out the pits, quicker than an overcaffeinated origami artist.