

WHOSE CHILD IS THIS?



The Ancestors of Jesus -- What does it mean to us?

Scripture:

Matthew 1

1. A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:
2. 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 Uzziah,
9. Uzziah 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.
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 Christ.



Thanks go Anita Pinney for reading the list of names in the scripture. These are the very first words in the New Testament, but most people don't read them. They are a very important part of the Christmas story, and they are the one document among the thirteen stories about the nativity that everyone believes is authentic.

Have you ever read every name on this list before? Did you know there is another list very similar to this in the book of Luke?

The list may be authentic, but Matthew and Luke don't agree on what belongs on this list. Matthew's list traces the ancestry of Jesus back to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These are patriarchs of the Jews.

In Luke, the list extends not just to Abraham, but to Seth, and finally to Adam, whom the author says was the Son of God. And where this list of

Jesus' family appears is different in Luke. It is placed, not before his birth, but it is important to the story of Jesus only after Luke has told the story of Jesus' baptism at age 30.

Questions that these lessons raise are part of the reason that some clergy follow the scholarship all the way to seminary. These lessons raise the question of when did Jesus become the Christ? Was it at birth or at baptism? Spiritual ancestry is important because of the spiritual future that lies ahead.

So we have some choices here:

Was Jesus the Christ from the very beginning even before he was born?

- John's gospel says in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

AN ABRIDGED GENEALOGY

Matthew abridged the genealogy by omitting some names that appear in earlier records. Some speculate that the abridged arrangement was intended to aid in memorization. Some say that these are sacred numbers. Seven is the holy number. Therefore fourteen is twice as holy. And forty-two is not only twice as holy, but it is multiplied by the trinity to achieve the perfection of time in which the messiah was born. Numerology was taken more seriously than Sodoku by spiritual numerologists.

And who might that be? Astrologers included numerology in their set of sciences. Were there astrologers at the birth of Jesus? I can think of three: Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar.

But Matthew did not say there was a total of 42 generations (i.e. 14 multiplied by 3). He respectively indicated that there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the Babylonian Captivity, and 14 from the release to Christ. David's name was repeated because he was alive when the first division ended, and when the second division began.

WOMEN IN CHRIST'S GENEALOGY

Matthew included five women in his genealogy of Christ. This is notable since it was not customary for Jews to include women in their records. Even more remarkable is the fact that Matthew included some women who had disreputable histories. The five women included were: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary.

So here's another question raised by the genealogy scripture. Does Jesus royal lineage come from his mother or his father? Matthew says it came through his father's Jewish lineage. However, Luke and others say that Jesus' royal roots come through his mother.

Is that important?

I don't think anyone is special because of their birth or family. But where and when we were born can certainly make a difference. But Oprah Winfrey is not the most influential woman in television because of the family into which she was born. And Jesus' life is important because of the way he lived it, not for unrealized potential.

NOT THE SAME NAMES

Comparison shows that Matthew and Luke did not record the same names in their genealogies. Since they are not in harmony with each other, one

- Matthew places the ancestry prior to the story of Jesus' life in this gospel that was a primer containing all the important events of the life of Christ to be read by Jews whom the Christians hoped to convert, and he says that Jesus became the Christ on the day he was born, if not on the day he was conceived.
- And Luke says this is important at the point when Jesus was adopted as the son of God, on the day that he was baptized.

It's important because it asks the question of whether divinity was inherited or conferred by baptism. I can't give you a quick take home answer, but I ask you to join me in the search, because we ask this question about ourselves as well. Is our spiritual nature in our genetics or is it chosen?

If we are born with a spiritual nature, then it would seem that nothing we can do in life can take that spiritual nature from us.

If we elect to be God's children, then we must say what the essential tenets are that we must believe in order to be faithful to that choice. That is the same type of question we ask of Elders and Deacons when they are ordained for service in our church. Wise people disagree of this.

Let's take a closer look at the names in Matthew's account.

NAMES IN MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT

The names in each division appear below.

Abraham to David	David to Captivity	Release to Christ
Abraham	David	Jeconiah
Isaac	Solomon	Shealtiel
Jacob	Rehoboam	Zerubbabel
Judah	Abijah	Abiud
Perez	Asa	Eliakim
Hezron	Jehoshaphat	Azor
Ram	Joram	Zadok
Amminadab	Uzziah	Achim
Nashon	Jotham	Eliud
Salmon	Ahaz	Eleazar
Boaz	Hezekiah	Matthan
Obed	Manasseh	Jacob
Jesse	Amon	Joseph
David	Josiah	Jesus Christ

or both of them must be erroneous. Matthew and Luke traced two family histories. Matthew recorded the ancestors of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. Luke recorded the ancestors of Mary, the biological mother of Jesus. The divergence of names is natural, given the fact that both authors presented two different family trees.

STRANGE DOCTRINES AND ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

"Instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation, rather than furthering the administration of God..."

~ Paul's advice to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3-4)

PAUL'S ADVICE

Paul gave Timothy sound advice. The differences in the genealogies raise many questions. And sometimes the truth is not one idea, but two.

WHOSE CHILD IS THIS?

So during advent we sing a familiar song entitled, *What Child Is This?* Scripture today answers the question, whose child is this?

I wanted to be sure you got some scholarship this morning. I hope I haven't lost you in the process. The point of the genealogies is to put Jesus' life in context

One context is genealogy. Whose child is he? And another is a quasi-science of numerology and astrology that were the learned sciences of their day.

Are you saying that astrology has something to do with the birth of Jesus?

I'm not saying it, but the scriptures do. The wise men were astrologers, not astronomers. And they watched the skies for signs that the messiah would be born, and they got a doozy. Aries is the sign of the ram, the sheep. In the year 6 BC, Jupiter was found right in the middle, Saturn emerged over it, and these stars (planets) emerged from behind an eclipse caused by the alignment of the sun and moon. This was another context of the cosmos.

WHO ARE YOU?

I realized recently that by birth I am not really very special. I was fortunate that my parents put great emphasis on education, but privilege of entitlement was never part of my childhood. I started my professional career as a newspaper boy who believed that education would help me to have more choices.

I have always been called into churches where there has been a lively history, a measure of conflict, and a need to refocus our energy on fundamentals, rather than incidentals.

So when we ask whose child is this, we realize that there comes a point in our lives when we are no longer the children of our parents, and when we are no longer just a product of where we were raised and what we think we remember of our early education.

Jesus went far beyond his genealogy. Here is another list of words about Jesus. This time not ancestors, but accomplishments, and titles conferred on him by the people who knew him by his teachings. Each of these words comes from Holy Scripture.

1. Advocate
2. The Bread of Life
3. Bright and Morning Star
4. Captain of Our Salvation
5. The Wonderful Counselor
6. Emmanuel
7. Jesus Christ the Judge
8. The Lamb of God
9. Light of the World
10. Lily of The Valley
11. Lion of the Tribe of Judah
12. Master
13. The Great Physician
14. Potentate
15. Prince of Peace
16. The Resurrection & the Life
17. Christ the Good Shepherd
18. Rose of Sharon
19. Sun of Righteousness
20. The Vine
21. The Vine (Part 2)
22. The Living Water
23. Christ, Revealed In Sacrifices

But that is just the short list. In my notes will be 117 names, all from scripture, answering the question, "Whose child is this?" Not in terms of ancestry, but by accomplishments. This list is important too, because sometimes people let their idea of God grow small rather than large. Sometimes people think they know God better than God knows them. It is a temptation, but we do not need to yield to it.

(From *Torrey's Topical Textbook*)

A few moments ago, I asked, “Whose child are you?”

- Your parents brought you into this world, and helped you get started. But your parents’ child really isn’t the answer to “Whose child are you?”
- Does your marriage really define you? It is certainly important, but we don’t abandon who we are when we marry. We can honor marriage in many ways, but there are many different kinds of families that range from families of one to families of many.
- How about the country or the state in which you live? That doesn’t define you.
- Your political affiliation is interesting too, but the political party in power is not my answer to the question of “Whose child are you?”
- Are you your job or occupation? Let’s hope your occupation expressed what was important to you, but it’s not the answer to the question of “Whose child are you?”

But whose child is this is not a question about Jesus; it is a question about you. So let me ask it again.

- Who knows your story from beginning to end?
- Who hears the prayers you say when you are disappointed in yourself or frustrated by someone else?
- Who hears the songs you sing?
- Who hears the tears you cry?
- Who hears the fearful prayers of soldiers in foxholes or metal bunkers?
- Who hears the prayers of condemned prisoners?
- Who hears the noises of whales in the oceans?
- Who do the birds sing to?

Maybe no one hears them. But at Christmas we say that someone does. And that is the story of Immanuel. And that is the God who is revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the vastness of the universe, in the faceless cities, in the armies, in the schools, and in the places where people gather to pray, we are not faceless, and every life is important. God is great.

Everyone should be entitled to that prayer, no matter where they live, nor under what conditions.

I don’t want YOUR life. But I want my life.

And YOU don’t want my life either. If you had my life, you would have to listen to my music in the car, and worry about my children, and balance the many spiritual and political factors that help bring balance to a church.

**The answer is that we are all God’s children.
We are all entitled to be God’s children.
And that nothing that we can do
separates us from the Lord our God.**

We belonged to the Lord before the Lord belonged to us.

We belonged to the generations before we knew the names of our parents.

And we belonged to history before we had discovered our own history.

Let me tell the Christmas story another way. God so loved the world that God sent God’s only child that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have abundant life. God did not send God’s son to be our judge but to be our savior.

This scripture you memorized as a child is the heart of Christmas, and it should be your heart every day as well.

Your name is ‘whosoever.’ And because of that your name is important to God, even if it is important to no one else.

“Whose child is this?” It was never a question about Jesus. It has always been a question about you.

Who claims your heart? God wants to, more than you can ever know.



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