

## Our Sinless Savior Comes From Sinners For Sinners

### Matthew 1:1-17 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: <sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, <sup>3</sup> Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, <sup>4</sup> Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, <sup>5</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, <sup>7</sup> Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, <sup>8</sup> Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup> Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup> Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. <sup>12</sup> After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, <sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, <sup>14</sup> Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, <sup>15</sup> Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, <sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. <sup>17</sup> 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 Messiah.

A genealogy reading on Christmas Day? Pastor, don't you want to use something more epic, more narrative, than a series of names? Or maybe you're thinking, "Genealogies make perfect sense on Christmas. I mean, look at the family photos and all the Christmas cards from relatives. We can make a family tree from these things." This morning, I want to walk with you through Jesus' family tree, almost as if we were pulling out the family photo album and sharing with you all sorts of history to help define who you are.

Since this is the Messiah's, the Holy One's, genealogy, there are quite a few renown heroes of faith listed, such as Abraham. He's called the father of all believers. He uprooted his family to go wherever God would send him. He believed that God would do the impossible and give him children as numerous as the stars of the sky, even though he and his wife Sarah were beyond childbearing years, and had that promise later attached to circumcision. He even had enough faith to be willing to give up his son, the one God promised to him. Then again, this hero of faith wasn't perfect. Abraham asked his wife to lie about being his wife not once, but twice, because he didn't trust the Lord to protect him. He slept with his wife's maidservant when he and Sarah didn't think God would actually give them a child of their own together.

So, let's move on to Isaac. He followed his father's example and believed the same promises. He was faithful to his wife. Then again, he followed his father's example of sin and asked his wife Rebekah to lie about being his wife. Isaac tried to bless his older son, Esau, instead of going with what God said when he foretold that the older son would serve the younger.

But Jacob's here, the guy who wrestled with God, who showed great faith as he held God to his promise to bless him and be with him, and so was given the namesake of Jesus' people, the name Israel, the one who struggles but overcomes. Then again, Jacob was a liar. He deceived his brother and his father. He had multiple wives. It wasn't pretty.

How about David, a man after the Lord's heart? He gave all credit to God when he slayed the giant Goliath. He refused to lift a hand against the Lord's anointed... And he married multiple women, had an affair with the wife of one of his top soldiers, Uriah, got her pregnant, then conspired to have Uriah killed and make it look like he was a casualty of war, acted as if he had done nothing wrong for the better part of a year. Plus, he was kind of a terrible father who didn't discipline his kids. Later in life arrogantly trusted in the number of his soldiers rather than trusting in the Lord to win his battles.

Solomon's in here, the man that God made wiser than anyone else ever in history...but who also married 1,000 women who led him away from the Lord and into idol worship. There were other good kings like Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Yet none of them measured up to David or Solomon. Regardless, how do you balance them out with all the bad kings? I mean, one of them, Manasseh, he erected idols and worshiped them in the Lord's temple, practiced witchcraft, worshiped the stars, and even sacrificed his own son in the fire to an idol.

This Jewish genealogy from a patriarchal society also interestingly lists five women. The first is Tamar. Brace yourself because this might make your stomach churn for a bit. Tamar, a non-Israelite, married Judah's oldest son, Er. But Er and his brother Onan were so wicked that the Lord put them to death, and Judah wouldn't give his youngest son to Tamar, leaving her a widow. When she

realized that her father-in-law wouldn't give his remaining son to her in marriage, she dressed up like a prostitute with a veil hiding her face as Judah, her father-in-law, was approaching. Judah approached Tamar, slept with her, impregnated her. Ew, right? This is Mom and Dad God chose to have on display as part of his family history in a genealogy that the whole world will read?

I suppose, then, this at least lines up a bit as to why Rahab of Jericho is also a part of this list. She was a prostitute, maybe ran a brothel. Yet, she hid the Israelites who were spying on the city, saving their lives. She had heard of the great things that their God had done, and she asked to be spared when they returned to destroy the city. God did more than spare her life; he made her a part of his family tree.

Then there's Ruth. She's a foreigner, a Moabitess, one of the enemies of God's people, Israel. Shortly after marrying into an Israelite family, her husband died, making her a young widow. Instead of turning away from the God of the Israelites who had allowed her husband to die so young, she believed in her in-law's God and held to him and her new family. She met a wonderful and kind man named Boaz, and then she was brought into Jesus' genealogy as she became the great-grandmother of King David.

Although her name is not listed here, we already talked about the next woman listed a bit – Bathsheba. She was Uriah's wife, the one who had an affair with King David and, after her husband was killed, she married David. She was an adulteress, but God brought her into his family.

Finally, there's Mary, a young virgin from Nazareth, a great model of faith. But had she not been Jesus' mother, would anyone today know who she was, much like how we don't know half the people in this genealogy? She was, in a way, forgettable, unnoticeable, maybe shunned once she was found to be pregnant before she and Joseph had consummated their marriage. Yet, God took this unassuming, seemingly unimportant woman, and called her to be his mother.

Jesus' family history is messy, to say the least. Would any of us have assembled this group of ancestors as the perfect lineup for the holy one of God to come from? Wouldn't we just pick the cream of the crop, the best of the best, the holiest of holies, the most pious of all believers throughout history? Jesus, don't you want to edit out your family tree with people who are a bit better?

This shows us an amazing truth about Jesus, the Son of God. He did not come from the holiest of holies. In some ways, he came from the messiest, most repulsive sinners. He has a real family history, one that maybe we would be ashamed of, but he wasn't. He boldly declares the kind of people he came from. The Word made flesh, the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, he came from sinners for sinners. This means you too.

Is your family history messy? Is your family dysfunctional? Are there members of your family who have hurt you so badly, sinned against you so deeply, that you cannot spend time with them, let alone look them in the eyes because of the pain they've caused you? Are there things in your past that you have tried so hard to bury so that no one would ever know what you have done? Should Jesus belong to any of our family trees?

Our families are messy. We are messy. All of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. But so did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Tamar, Rahab, Boaz, Ruth, Jesse, David, Bathsheba, Solomon, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah, Zerubbabel, Joseph, and Mary. All of these people were forgiven, washed clean by the blood of the one who came from them but also for them. They were grafted into God's family because of what he did for them. God made us family, as we heard in our other Bible reading today: "In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." (Hebrews 2:10-11)

God knows everything about our past, just as he knew everything about the past of all these people that he included in his genealogy. But he was not ashamed of them. He didn't try to hide them. Instead, he put them on display to show how great the grace of God is. He didn't just let them pass into his family history unnoticed. Their blood flows in his veins. So, he points them out to us and all generations so that we could see that our sinless Savior came from sinners for sinners to make us his family.

You know what this means for you and me? No matter what we've done, no matter what is in our personal or family history, no matter how dysfunctional our families are or how dysfunctional we personally are, God has made us a part of his family. He is not ashamed of us. No, he sings over us. He shows us off proudly as those he has saved, those he has cleansed and made holy. This is God's gift to us on Christmas. This is what it means that a Savior has been born to us. Our sinless Savior came from sinners for sinners to make us all family by his perfect life and his sacrificial death. He proudly calls us his brothers and sisters. Amen.