

December 30, 2018
The 1st Sunday of Christmas

Matthew 1:1-17

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ An account of the genealogy of **JESUS** the Messiah, the *son of David*, the **son of Abraham**.

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah **by Tamar**,

and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram,

⁴ and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz **by Rahab**, and Boaz the father of Obed **by Ruth**, and Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

And *David* was the father of Solomon **by the wife of Uriah**,

⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of *Asaph*,

⁸ and Asaph the father of *Jehoshaphat*, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of *Uzziah*,*

⁹ and Uzziah the father of *Jotham*, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of *Hezekiah*,

¹⁰ and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of *Josiah*,

¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers*, at the time of the deportation to *Babylon*.

The Gospel of Matthew is the retelling of the story of Jesus attributed to the disciple named Matthew. This account of Jesus' life insists in particular on hebraic culture and literature, leading scholars to believe that it was addressed specifically to a Jewish audience (quite possibly in ancient Syria). The story of the birth of Jesus is only told in two of the gospels (Matthew and Luke). Here the story starts with this genealogy rooted in the Hebraic people and their history, before expanding to include the Gentiles (or foreign peoples) represented by the Magi who come bearing gifts for the child who will be a light to the nations. Matthew's telling of the story of Jesus starts in the center of the Jewish homeland and finishes with Jesus sending all disciples to the four corners of the earth in the teaching we call "The Great Commission" (Matthew 28). This movement from one nation to all nations, from one history to all of history characterizes the whole of Matthew's gospel project.

Messiah : in Greek it's the word Christos from which we get "Christ" It means the anointed one, with strong connotations of the royal leader anointed King by God.

son of David : David was the greatest of the Israelite kings, so being called his son associates one with his greatness, similar to our current adjectives such as "Washingtonian" and "Lincolnesque." God also promises in 2 Samuel 7:11-17 to preserve the line of David forever.

son of Abraham : this recalls two stories – Abraham as as the pioneer of faith in God and the one to whom God promised "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:1-3.

by Tamar: was a foreign woman who married a son of Judah. That son [Er] was deemed evil by God and died prematurely. Judah then gave Tamar to his son Onan as a wife (to continue the line), but Onan too was deemed evil for God for performing *coitus interruptus*. He too dies prematurely. Judah then seems to perceive Tamar as cursed (because of the deaths of two of his sons) so he does not wed her to another of his sons (as was the custom). Following the death of Judah's wife Tamar dresses as a prostitute and conceives with the now widowed Judah, having twins (Perez and Zerah). Her story is told in Genesis 38.

by Rahab: Was also a foreign woman, a Canaanite who helped the Israelites invade and capture Jericho. Ironically she was more faithful than the Israelite spies were to the cause of the Hebrew people. She is described as a prostitute in her story told in Joshua 2:1-24.

by Ruth: another Gentile (Moabite) woman who married Mahlon, the son of the Israelites Elimelech and his wife Naomi when there was a famine in Israel during the time of the Judges and they immigrated to Moab to survive. All the men of the family die during

the famine, and Ruth returns to Israel with her mother-in-law where she later meets and eventually weds the Israelite Boaz. She is the great-grandmother of the greatest king of Israel: David. Her story, told in the book of Ruth, is one of great faithfulness, telling the testimony of a person who chooses to be Jewish: faith by choice not family or tribe. Her story is told in the book of Ruth.

by the wife of Uriah: Here the woman is not named. It's Bathsheba, who becomes the lover and eventual wife of King David. Her first husband, whom David has murdered, is repeatedly identified as Uriah the Hittite – In naming her as his wife, Matthew strongly evokes her other-ness as a foreign woman in this genealogy of the Jewish Messiah. Her story is told principally in 2 Samuel 11 & 12.

of Mary Matthew is one of the two gospels (along with Luke) to include an infancy narrative. Unlike Luke, though, Matthew gives a greater emphasis on Joseph than on Mary. Matthew tells the story of how Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant and intended to divorce her quietly, until he received a visit from the angel of the Lord. Matthew has Mary fulfill Isaiah's prophecy that a virgin will conceive and bear a son called Emmanuel (Matt 1:23, Isa 7:14). Beyond this, however, her figure is largely passive, especially in comparison with her betrothed Joseph. In Matthew's account, it is Joseph who agonizes over Mary's unexpected pregnancy, and it is Joseph whom the angel visits—to order him to take Mary as his wife and move to Egypt (Matt 1:20, Matt 2:13). Joseph, not Mary, makes the decisions.

Matthew is also the only Gospel to include the visit of the Magi, and to share the story of the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod's murderous designs. Mary is obviously involved in these events, but Matthew's narrative places a greater emphasis on Joseph's role than on hers (for example, the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in his dreams to warn him, not to Mary). Scholars suggest that this emphasis on Joseph could be related to the fact that he is of the line of David, but Jesus is not, as he's biologically only of Mary's line. Immediately following the genealogy is the phrase (and title) "Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way." Matthew 1:18, telling the story from the point of view of Joseph described as a righteous man (one who lives in the way of God) in 1:19

fourteen generations: Numbers play an important role in Judaic ritual practices and are believed to be a means for understanding the divine. 1) Fourteen is 2 x 7 (which is the number representative of God and divinity). Jesus is thus born as the first of the 7th generation of 7 when you look at the list. 2) In Hebrew, letters also double as numbers. Each consonant has a numerical value. The numerical values of the consonants in the name David add up to 14. [d=4] [v=6] so d+v+d=4+6+4=14. The number fourteen also reinforces a notion of destiny or providence in the ways in which the generations are evenly divided in the birth line of Jesus who is the culmination of Jewish history and

¹² And after the deportation to *Babylon*:

Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband **of Mary**, of whom **JESUS** was born, who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ So all the generations 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 Messiah, *fourteen generations*.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What shimmers in your attention in this reading?**
- **This is the very beginning of the Jesus story (gospel) as retold by Matthew. He intentionally starts his gospel account with the genealogy of Jesus. He's the only one of the four gospel authors to do so. Why would he do that? Who is Jesus? How is he introduced? How does that shape our experience of Jesus through the story of the gospel? The larger story of the people of God (what we call the Bible)? The even larger story of the people of God – including us today?**
- **How do you hear the Spirit of God inviting you to act, speak, be, or live relationally today through the word of this scripture?**