

### 3. The Genealogy in Matthew: Its Function and Significance

#### 1. The Function of Genealogies in the Bible

- **Bookends of History:** Genealogies often act as "bookends," marking the end of one era and the beginning of something new. Matthew's genealogy signals that **what has come before has ended, and something new is about to begin**—the arrival of Jesus as the Messiah.
- **Establishing Identity:** Genealogies in the Bible serve to establish a person's lineage, legitimacy, and connection to important figures in Israel's history.
- **Demonstrating Fulfillment of Prophecy:** The genealogy in Matthew is meant to show that Jesus is the rightful heir to David's throne, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.
- **Revealing God's Providence:** Biblical genealogies often highlight God's guidance through history, showing how His plan unfolds through generations.
- **Structuring History:** Genealogies organize time and history into meaningful structures, often using symbolic numbers (e.g., Matthew's 3 sets of 14 generations).

#### 2. The Significance of Women in Matthew's Genealogy

Matthew's genealogy is unique because it includes **five women**, which was highly unusual for Jewish genealogical records. These women are:

- **Tamar (Genesis 38)** – A Canaanite woman who posed as a prostitute to secure her place in Judah's lineage.
- **Rahab (Joshua 2)** – A non-Israelite prostitute in Jericho who protected Israelite spies and became an ancestor of David.
- **Ruth (Ruth 1-4)** – A Moabite woman whose faithfulness led to her becoming the great-grandmother of King David.
- **Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12)** – Not mentioned by name but referred to as "the wife of Uriah," highlighting David's sin and God's mercy.
- **Mary** – The mother of Jesus, an ordinary young woman chosen to bear the Messiah.

#### Why Is This Groundbreaking?

- **Breaks Cultural Norms:** Women were rarely included in Jewish genealogies, yet Matthew highlights their critical role in salvation history.
- **Highlights God's Inclusive Plan:** These women were outsiders, sinners, or lived in unconventional circumstances, yet God worked through them.
- **Foreshadows Jesus' Ministry:** Jesus consistently reached out to the marginalized, including women, Gentiles, and sinners.

#### 3. Notable Men in Matthew's Genealogy

While the inclusion of women is groundbreaking, many of the men in Jesus' genealogy also had **unconventional** or **sinful** backgrounds, showing that God works through flawed individuals to accomplish His plan:

- **Abraham** – A man of great faith, but he twice lied about his wife Sarah to protect himself (Genesis 12:10-20, 20:1-18) and fathered a child, Ishmael, through Hagar outside of God's intended promise (Genesis 16).
- **Jacob** – A deceiver who tricked his brother Esau out of his birthright and blessing (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-40). He later wrestled with God and was renamed **Israel**.
- **Judah** – Fathered Perez and Zerah through his daughter-in-law Tamar, whom he wrongfully accused before realizing his own sin (Genesis 38).

- **David** – A great king but also a sinner—he **committed adultery** with Bathsheba and orchestrated the **murder** of her husband, Uriah, to cover it up (2 Samuel 11).
- **Solomon** – Known for his wisdom, but also for his **many foreign wives** (over 700!) who led him into idolatry later in life (1 Kings 11:1-13).
- **Manasseh** – One of the most **wicked kings of Judah**, who led the nation into idolatry and child sacrifice (2 Kings 21:1-18). However, he later repented (2 Chronicles 33:10-20).
- **Jeconiah (Jehoiachin)** – A king so wicked that God **cursed his line**, saying none of his descendants would sit on David’s throne (Jeremiah 22:24-30). This raises theological questions about Jesus’ kingship, which is resolved through His divine origin.

#### 4. Matthew’s Genealogy vs. Luke’s Genealogy

While Matthew’s genealogy presents Jesus as the **Son of David and Son of Abraham**, Luke’s genealogy (Luke 3:23-38) differs in several ways:

- **Placement:** Matthew places the genealogy at the beginning of his Gospel; Luke includes it after Jesus’ baptism.
- **Ancestry:** Matthew traces Jesus’ lineage back to **Abraham**, while Luke traces it all the way to **Adam**, emphasizing Jesus’ universal role as the Savior of all humanity.
- **Different Lineages:** From David onward, Matthew follows the line of **Solomon** (royal line), while Luke follows the line of **Nathan** (a lesser-known son of David).
- **Symbolic Message:** Luke presents Jesus as the **new Adam**, the one who restores what was lost through sin.

These differences show that genealogies in the ancient world were often **theological statements**, crafted to highlight different aspects of a person’s identity and mission. **THEY WERE NOT MEANT TO BE HISTORICAL!**

#### 5. Other Hidden Meanings in Matthew’s Genealogy

##### The Structure: 3 Sets of 14 Generations

- Matthew intentionally structures the genealogy into **three groups of 14 generations**:
  1. **Abraham to David** (Covenant and Kingship)
  2. **David to the Babylonian Exile** (Judgment and Exile)
  3. **Exile to Jesus** (Restoration and the Messiah)
- The number **14** is symbolically linked to **David’s name in Hebrew** (D=4, V=6, D=4 = 14), reinforcing Jesus’ Davidic identity.

##### Jesus as the “Son of Abraham” and “Son of David”

- **Son of Abraham** – Links Jesus to God’s promise to bless all nations through Abraham (Genesis 12:3).
- **Son of David** – Establishes Jesus as the rightful heir to Israel’s eternal kingship (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

##### The Omission of Certain Generations

- Matthew **omits some names** found in Old Testament genealogies, a common biblical practice for structuring genealogies symbolically.
- The focus is not on listing every generation but on emphasizing **thematic connections** leading to Jesus.

#### 5. How Would 1st-Century Readers Have Reacted?

- **A Familiar Yet Startling Introduction:** Genealogies were common in Jewish literature, so Matthew’s opening would have immediately caught the attention of his Jewish audience. However, certain aspects would have **shocked** them:

- The **inclusion of women** (especially Gentiles and those with questionable backgrounds) was **highly unusual**.
- The **mention of sinners and flawed kings** in Jesus' ancestry would emphasize that the Messiah came **for all people**—not just the righteous.
- The **symbolic structure** (3 sets of 14) pointed to **David's royal line**, reinforcing Jesus as the rightful King of Israel.
- **For Those Who Heard Rather Than Read:** Few people in the 1st century could read Matthew's Gospel directly, as literacy was limited and written materials were expensive. Instead, it was likely **read aloud** in early Christian gatherings. Hearing this genealogy would immediately position Jesus within Jewish history and prophecy.
- **Expectation of a Royal Messiah:** Many Jews expected the Messiah to be a **powerful political ruler** who would overthrow Rome. Matthew's genealogy both **confirms Jesus' royal heritage** and **challenges expectations** by showing that His kingdom would be **different from earthly power structures**.

## 6. Reflection Question

- What does this genealogy reveal about the nature of Jesus' kingdom compared to earthly power structures?

## Conclusion

Matthew's genealogy is more than just a list of names—it is a carefully crafted theological statement. It shows that Jesus:

- **Fulfills God's promises** to Abraham and David.
- **Includes the outcast and marginalized** in His redemptive plan.
- **Represents a new beginning** after exile and failure. Understanding this genealogy helps us see that Jesus' arrival is not an accident but the fulfillment of a divine plan centuries in the making.