

Matthew 1:18-25
Family Secrets
WRCoB 12.18.22

Now, I wouldn't be so bold or presumptuous
As to tell Matthew he should never start a book

With a genealogy of 42 generations
And a bunch of difficult-to-pronounce names!

BORING!

It's a sure way to get a reader to close the book.

In fact, if I were to guess
Most readers simply skip over the genealogy
And start in on verse 18 and the birth of Jesus.

So, why would Matthew place a genealogy first??

Simply put, do lend credibility to his account.

To someone, who is knowledgeable of Scripture
And the promises set forth by God

A genealogy at the beginning
Would give credence to what was to follow.

Credence that Jesus is God's fulfilled promise.
That he is the Messiah whose roots go deep into Judaism.

Actually, Matthew gives us a one sentence
Summation of the Bible.

Matthew 1:1 NLT This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham

You see, Matthew was concerned his readers
Would understand in every way
That Jesus is the One that fulfills Scriptures.

His lineage is orderly, mathematical and direct

Matthew lists fourteen generations per triad

1. 14 generations from Abraham to King David
2. 14 generations from King David to Jechoniah
3. 14 generations from Jechoniah to Jesus

Of course, Matthew hopes that no one will call him out
For skipping a few generations here and there.

His attempt, from the git-go, is to show that
Jesus is the real deal.

That Jesus was the chip off the old block of Abraham
A direct descendent of King David.

And yet, and yet at the same time
Matthew wants to show his readers
Just how twisted the path became
To get from Abraham to Jesus.

It is actually brilliant.

Matthew spells out in a way that makes it very clear
There is a direct line from Jesus to King David
And from King David to Abraham.

Yet, Matthew also wants to show his readers
How unlikely and somewhat unorthodox it all was.

For unlike your typical biblical genealogy
That strictly follows a patriarchal lineage

Matthew includes four women
Not to mention Mary, the mother of Jesus.

And these women weren't your typical family matriarchs.

They were not the notable women of the faith like
Sarah, or Rebekah, or Rachel, or Leah.

And mind you, they were not even Jewish!

Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites
Ruth was a Moabite
And Bathsheba most likely a Hittite.

Why would Matthew list these women
In a patriarchal list of descent
If he didn't feel they were important.

Matthew writes to a mostly Jewish audience
And so most people had would be somewhat familiar
With who these four women were.

Let's briefly take a look at these four women.

Tamar is the first woman mentioned in verse 3.

She is a Canaanite.

She is the widow, in Genesis 38
Who took matter into her own hands

You see, her father-in-law, Judah
Refused to let her marry his third son, Shelah
After being widowed by his first two sons
And not having an heir.

She disguises herself as a prostitute
And seduces Judah, her father-in-law
And becomes pregnant by him.

When Judah announces a death sentence on her
Because she was with child illegitimately
She exposes him as the father.

She got herself pregnant so that an heir would follow her
And that she could have peace in her old age.

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Next woman on the list is Rahab.in verse 5.

She too is a Canaanite.

She is a prostitute living in Jericho.

Rahab protected Jewish spies
By letting them down her window outside the city wall

They were to promise to protect her and her family
After winning the battle of Jericho.

Afterwards, Rahab joined the Jewish community

Her story is found in Joshua 2:1-24.

Ruth is next.

She is also listed in verse 5.

Ruth is a Moabite.

Ruth stubbornly refused to leave her mother-in-law, Naomi
Who wanted to return to her homeland, Israel
After losing her husband and her two sons.

Back in Israel, in order to provide food for her and Naomi
She gleaned fields owned by Boaz

After showing interest in her
Naomi instructs Ruth to go at night
And lay under the covers
At the feet of Boaz to keep him warm.

As a result, he marries her.

And she gives birth to Obed
The grandfather to King David.

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And lastly, we look at Bathsheba in verse 6.

She is not mentioned by name.

Matthew lists her as the “wife of Uriah”.

Uriah was a Hittite

Presumably, Bathsheba was too.

Bathsheba was eyed by King David while bathing.

He sent for her and forced her into an adulterous affair

It led to her pregnancy.

It also led to King David
To have her husband, Uriah
Killed on the battlefield.

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Each of the four women were foreigners.

They became a part of Judaism later.

Could it be that Matthew wanted show that though
Jesus is the real deal, son of David, son of Abraham

How Jesus got there
Included ethnicities other then Jewish?

Matthew didn't try to hide the fact
That Jesus' genealogy included
Three other ethnic groups.

He could have easily followed the paternal line
And avoided potential controversy.

It seems intentional on Matthew's part.

Each of the women were involved in affairs
That could be taken as sexually scandalous.

Could it also be that since Mary's pregnancy
Was perceived as scandalous

Matthew wanted to temper attitudes and perceptions
By including these four women's stories
In the overarching story of God's redemption.

With purpose, Matthew records Jesus' own lineage
Peppered with various ethnicities and family-kept secrets.

Matthew willingly exposed skeletons in the family closet.

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Maybe some of you would suggest
I place too much emphasis on Jesus' genealogy.

Because, Jesus was born of the virgin Mary
Joseph's genealogy has no impact
On who Jesus was.

However, in Judaism, an adopted son had as much right
To ancestral inheritance as a blood son.

In that way, Joseph's genealogy belongs to Jesus.

Matthew in his genealogy handles the whole affair
As judiciously as he can.

Matthew 1:16 CEB Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary—of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ.

Matthew records Joseph as the husband to Mary
Not the father to Jesus

Alluding to the idea that things are not as they appear.

Matthew lays out the genealogy of Jesus
Without explaining why he chose
To recorded it in the peculiar way he did.

We are left in our own musings.

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My mother's mother, my Grandma Esther
Grew up in a very strict home.

They were conservative Brethren.

They wore the strict garb of the old order.

Church was the center of their life.

Her name growing up was Esther Mae Behr.

She grew up with the last name of a father
She never knew.

That was the way it was done back then.

My great grandmother, Esther's mom
Was single at the time of her pregnancy.

We don't know the whole story
But she was probably raped or forced upon
By a young man they never heard from again.

After Esther was born
Her mother went to live alone in York, PA.

Her punishment was estrangement from family.

My Grandmother Esther was raised by her grandparents
Samuel and Amanda Sellers.
In the Black Rock CoB community.

She bore her last name
Like she had the scarlet letter A
Embroidered on her blouse.

It shamed her.

It was their little family secret.

My grandmother always had low self-esteem.

Even though my Grandfather Bittinger
Was a loving and caring and accepting man.

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Each of us, if we dig deep enough
Can uncover family secrets in our own ancestry.

But we shouldn't be ashamed of them.

For they make us who we are today.

Matthew simply lays out the fact
That there were skeletons
In Jesus' ancestry closet.

He lays it out for all to see.

Certainly not to denigrate the character of Jesus.

Just the opposite.

To help us understand that like our own lives
Jesus came from a family tree
That had its share of family secrets.

And yet, God used Jesus in a mighty way
To bring healing to a hurting world.

An Immanuel, God-with-us
Who was like us in so many ways
And yet so very unlike us too.

Perhaps, that's why his birth is so appealing to us.

He was a Son of Man, and yet the Son of God.

He was born in a stable
And yet came down from heaven.

Kings came to worship him
And yet some day every knee shall bow
And every tongue confess Jesus is Lord.

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Actually, when you look at it
Matthew was brilliant to begin his gospel
With the genealogy of Jesus

For otherwise, you and I
Might never have had this conversation.

To God be the Glory.