

Jesus' family tree - the women

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[0 : 00] For the king comes to town. As we come to Matthew's gospel, we come to a gospel that announces the king has come.

We have a red line of the scarlet stain of sin rolled out to lead us to the king.

What we have, as we saw this morning, in this list of names that at first sight might look a bit boring to us, what we have actually is a wonderful list.

For the original readers, and it's always important for us to remember who would first be reading these scriptures, for those original readers, when they came to read this, they could see that these list of names would be an encouragement as it led them to the hopes that Israel were resting on, the hopes of a child to come.

We read those verses from Isaiah. Other verses we could turn to. Micah chapter 5. I'll just read a couple of verses from there.

[1 : 44] Micah chapter 5. And perhaps when someone gets there, just in case we're struggling to find Micah, do you shout out a page number in the church Bibles.

933. Micah chapter 5, verse 2 and 3 says, But you, Bethlehem of Frathfa, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times.

Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son. And the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

We're just getting clues in the Old Testament that a child is coming. That the hopes of Israel rest upon a promised offspring, a promised son. And this list of names leads us to that promised son. Now this morning we particularly pause to think about Abraham and David, two names who wouldn't surprise you or the original readers to see in this list.

[3 : 10] But this evening we're going to think a little bit briefly about four names which would be a surprise. Which if you were one of those first readers, you may think, hang on a minute, how are they here?

What are they doing here? And this list has a few things in common as we'll see. These four surprising names.

The first one is in verse 3. Judah, the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. So the first person, Tamar.

She's recorded for us in Genesis 38. You could go away and read it later. And her story is quite the story.

Her husband, Ur, very much Ur is on the side of sin. We're told he was wicked in the Lord's sight. So God put him to death.

[4 : 18] So her husband is dead. But there was a responsibility from his brothers to provide her with descendants.

And so Onan, her brother-in-law, was given that responsibility. And you can read it for yourself, but he very much makes sure that that doesn't happen. So the Lord puts him to death.

So Tamar was determined to have a descendant, as she felt she should rightly have, from Judah's line. And so she ends up disguising herself as a prostitute. And ends up, as we're told, being given these two twin boys, Perez and Zerah, whose father was Judah, whose mother was Tamar.

A surprise in this list. Another surprise, Rahab. Verse 5. Salmon, the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.

There are questions over exactly whether this is the Rahab I'm going to mention to you this morning, but I think it seems most likely. Rahab, who's recorded in Joshua, who was the spies, went into Canaan to suss out the land.

[5 : 42] She sees that they are the lords, and she makes sure to hide them and keep them safe. But she herself was a prostitute.

Didn't just pretend to be one like Tamar. And she was very much an outsider by birth. And you have Ruth. Verse 5 again. Boaz, the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. She was a Moabitess. Moabites were not permitted to be part of God's people at all. They weren't hospitable to the Israelites when they left Egypt.

The king of Moab hired Balaam to prophesy against God's people. But remarkably, despite the history with the Moabites, Ruth was being brought in.

[6 : 50] You can read the book of Ruth and see how beautiful it is, how Ruth, this complete outsider, is being brought into the family of God as we see Boaz, who becomes her kinsman redeemer.

And then there's another one. Not mentioned by name. Verse 6. We see Jesse, the father of David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.

Uriah's wife, Mrs. Uriah, Bathsheba, known for the adultery with King David. Her name's not given, perhaps to highlight the fact that this son Solomon was brought about with one who David had sinned with, who he abused his power to take her, to sleep with her, to make sure that Uriah, her husband, was put to death.

Perhaps this is highlighting to us that David's a sinner. So in common with all these people is firstly, not only that they are all women, but they are outsiders.

Just to be a woman mentioned in a Jewish family tree is astonishing. They don't have any legal status as heirs in families.

[8 : 31] But not only that, if Matthew was going to mention women, why didn't he mention, like, Abraham's wife Sarah, or Isaac's wife Rebecca, or Jacob's wives Leah and Rachel.

Why these? All of them, arguably, are outsiders, foreigners, not directly related to Abraham. Rahab and Ruth were obvious outsiders.

Tamar likely. Bathsheba was married to Uriah, who we're told is a Hittite. But all of them very likely foreigners, all outsiders by birth, all outsiders by gender.

But this is precisely because this is what Jesus has come to do, isn't it? To bring outsiders in. He's come to fulfill those promises that we saw this morning to Abraham, that there would be blessings through him for the world.

This is where Matthew's gospel begins, showing us outsiders, part of the family tree of Jesus. Where does Matthew's gospel end?

[9 : 50] Well, let's turn to it and remind ourselves. Matthew 28. We know these words well. Matthew 28. Words of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. From verse 18. Matthew 28. Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. Matthew ends with a call to go to all nations, to all peoples and bring them in.

Bring them in to my kingdom. And this evening we sit here as people once outsiders to God's kingdom.

[10 : 52] But in Jesus, because of what he has done on the cross, which we're remembering this evening, we outsiders have a place in his family. He died to bring to the Lord new sons and daughters in him.

That's a wonderful thing. And so as we take this meal this evening, we're taking the family meal. We take it with brothers and sisters in Christ, included in the kingdom, included in his new family.

Secondly, this list is of sinners. These are people who are known for their sin or sin done against them.

If they were alive today, perhaps all of them might have a claim to be part of the hashtag me too movement. Tamar, with all that involvement with Judah and his family's faithlessness.

In all that, God was fulfilling his purposes for the world. In all that sin and messiness of Tamar's story, God was making the way forward, move forward for his promises of the Lord Jesus to come about.

[12 : 21] In Ruth, God was bringing together a Moabite to marry an Israelite, which was an astonishing thing. And she would bring about a descendant who would lead us very soon to King David.

And then we get to King David and as I've said, with the mention of Uriah's wife, his sin is highlighted. Perhaps King David would be cancelled if he had done this today.

But through Bathsheba and David, God was making sure the royal line would lead to his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as we thought of in those promises made to David, would rule on his throne forever.

And yet, doesn't the greatest king of all deserve better? doesn't he deserve the red carpet being rolled out, not the scarlet stained carpet of sin.

And yet, this evening, we can marvel at this list. It should encourage us this evening because we come to this table like them as sinners.

[13 : 42] we come before a holy God and yet God's still been good and merciful to us in achieving his salvation purposes for the world for you here this evening.

And we know that. We know that well because verse 20. We read it this morning. Let me read it again.

But after Joseph had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son who will give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. We read in Jesus of a saviour for sinners.

This family tree as we thought of this morning opens with those words genealogy, genesis, beginning, a new beginning for the world, a new beginning for sinners who can be set free by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15 : 09] And this evening as we take the bread and wine it's a chance for us to remember that with great thankfulness. There's one more woman on this list to mention and it's at the end in verse 16.

Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary and Mary was the mother of Jesus who was called the Messiah. Joseph was the father of Jesus and was unlike the other fathers here.

He was not the natural father of his eldest son. Matthew rightly then includes Mary. This birth did not come about by a sinful relationship.

rather it came about in the most miraculous way. In impossible circumstances. That through the virgin Mary, through her, God was achieving his glorious plan of salvation for the world.

So that through him we can be found as spotless and pure sinners in his sight. For as Jesus came into that line full of scarlet sin, he willingly went to the cross and shed his blood so that our sins, though as scarlet, can be whiter than snow.

[16 : 51] Often Christmas cards end up with snow scenes on them, don't they? Though I'm not sure there would have been snow when Jesus was born, actually there is some help in that image as we think of this wonderful verse in Isaiah 1 verse 8.

Though our sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow, though they are crimson red, they will be white like wool because of our spotless, sinless, pure saviour who's come because of the son born to Joseph and Mary.

And all this family tree, all this wonderful work of God that he's been doing in the world reminds me of these words from Lord of the Rings as Frodo is struggling on in their attempt to save Middle Earth, Sam says to him, I know it's all wrong, by rights we shouldn't even be here, but we are.

It's like in the greatest stories, Mr. Frodo, the ones that really mattered, full of darkness and danger they were, and sometimes you didn't want to know the end, because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad happened? But in the end it's only a passing thing, this shadow, even darkness must pass, a new day will come, and when the sun shines it will shine out the clearer.

[18 : 42] Those were the stories that stayed with you that meant something, even if you were too small to understand why. But I think Mr. Frodo, I do understand, I now know, folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't, because they were holding on to something, that there's some good in this world, Mr.

Frodo, and it's worth fighting for. In the stories of Tamar and Rahab and Ruth and Bathsheba, when we see a darkness, when we see sin and mess, we might say, why is this here?

Surely it's all darkness and no hope, and yet their stories lead us to a new day that's dawning, a new sun that's rising, the sun of God, and it confirms the stories of every name on this list that help bring forth the one with the greatest names of wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting father, and prince of peace.

Four surprising people that lead us to the saviour. Why don't we respond by singing?

Um.