

Mt. 1:1-17 Genealogy of the King

*Tim Anderson 11/12/2022*

This book is a family history of my great, great, great grandfather, William Gill.

He migrated to South Australia in 1836 and he and Mary were married at Holy Trinity Adelaide in 1849.

William Gill was my mother's father's mother's father's father.

He and his wife Mary had 10 kids,  
so there are quite a lot of descendents.

And all the ones born up until 2006 are listed in this book.

Alvoli is not listed because she was born in 2007,  
though you can see the evidence of Alvoli in Cherida's tummy  
in the photo.

If you were to read this book,

Unlike Jesus' genealogy,

it wouldn't be a list of difficult to pronounce names,

there would be lots of Gills and Davises and names like that.

Pretty boring names.

The interesting part would be reading the stories

of what my relations who I've never met have done with their lives.

Stories of people's lives are interesting.

I haven't yet met a person who didn't have a story to tell about their life.

The other interesting part

would be finding out some of the dark secrets of the past.

I guess most of us have an ancestor we can't help finding out about.

You know the sort I mean.

“Your great, great grandfather was grand Pooh-Bah of Smallsville.

If you study hard at school young Tim,

you might be impressive like he was!”

Or more likely,

“Oh to shame.

If your great, great, grandfather,

the grand Pooh-bah of Smallsville could see you now young Timothy

I believe he would turn in his grave.”  
 But there are others that you don't get told about.  
 I wonder which one of my ancestors ended up in Pentridge Prison  
 or was an undischarged bankrupt?  
 They would be interesting stories to find out too.

Jesus' genealogy is actually like mine.  
 It's not the names that are interesting,  
 it's the stories that lie behind the names.  
 And like my genealogy,  
 Jesus had highlights and lowlights in his family tree.  
 What can they tell us about the Christ Child?

The highlights are there in verse 1.  
 “This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David,  
 the son of Abraham:”  
 There are three big highlights there.  
 First, this baby born in the manger is the Messiah.  
 That means he is God's anointed one who will save his people.  
 Second, he's the Son of David.  
 That means, he comes from the Royal line.  
 Third, he's the Son of Abraham.  
 That's really not new information.  
 It's not possible to be a son of David  
 without also being a son of Abraham.  
 But it emphasises for us that Jesus is a true Israelite.  
 Jesus: the Messiah, the Son of David, the son of Abraham.  
 What is the story behind this part of Jesus' genealogy?

Jesus was born an Israelite.  
 The descendents of Abraham had been set apart by God.  
 God told Abraham that he would have a special relationship with him  
 and with his descendents.  
 God said that he would bless the whole world  
 through Abraham's descendents.

Abraham and his family were meant to be a model  
for the rest of the world,  
of what people who live in harmony with their creator look like.  
Abraham and his family were meant to be so attractive,  
that when people who weren't born part of his family looked at them,  
they would say,  
"I want my life to be like an Israelite's.  
I want to share the blessings that God is giving you.  
I want to live in a country  
that is ruled with justice and compassion like yours.  
Can I please come and pitch my tent with you guys?  
Can I please come and join the nation of Israel?  
Can I please come and be part of Abraham's family?"  
And it would have worked out that way,  
if Abraham's family had walked in God's ways.

There was a time  
when it looked like Abraham's family  
would fulfil their God given destiny.  
At least in part.  
God chose a young shepherd boy David  
who had six older brothers  
who were stronger and more handsome than he,  
and God put David on the throne of the Israelite nation.  
David was a great king.  
Not perfect.  
He made many mistakes.  
But he whole heartedly lived for God,  
and he whole heartedly led Abraham's family,  
his nation, Israel, in God's ways.  
And God blessed the nation.  
Those who opposed David, and opposed his God,  
he defeated in battle.  
The Philistines worshipped Dagon and hated Yahweh,  
the God of Israel.

David beat the Philistine champion Goliath as a young boy, and continued to beat back the Philistines for his whole reign and the borders of Israel were at their largest under king David and his son Solomon.

But those nations round about who were drawn into admiring the God of Israel, and peaceable towards its king, began to share in the blessings of God's people. Hiram king of Tyre traded profitably with Israel, and the queen of Sheba came to learn wisdom from David's son Solomon.

The baby Jesus was an heir to this heritage.

He was David's Son.

A Child with a kingly heritage.

And not just any king.

But a king after God's own heart.

A king who led the nation which was Abraham's family closest to fulfilling the promises that God made to Abraham.

This was a baby with a very special heritage.

A baby with a very special heritage,  
born into a nation with a very special problem.

You see, Abraham's family, the nation of Israel, didn't continue to walk in the ways of King David.

They rebelled against God.

David's son Solomon did some foolish things towards the end of his life -

marrying many foreign women who served other gods.

He had 700 wives of royal birth.

Kings from nations around were queuing up to marry their daughters off to Solomon.

Now this might have done wonders for Solomon's power and prestige.

But it turned his own heart and the heart of his nation away from God.

And things got worse.

Solomon's son Rehoboam,

the next in the genealogy of the baby Jesus,  
was a real dill.

And things got worse.

The low point was about 10 generations later,  
with a king of Israel called Manasseh.

He's there in verse 10.

One of Jesus' forefathers.

He reigned in Israel for 55 years.

And he was not just a dill, he was an incredibly evil man.

He sacrificed his own son as an act of worship to foreign god.

He practiced occult worship – sorcery and divination.

He turned the temple in Jerusalem

dedicated to the worship of the true God

into a place where people worshipped the stars.

He encouraged religions worshipping Baal and Asherah,

the acts of 'worship' of these two gods were basically orgies.

And Manasseh set up an Asherah pole in God's temple

so the orgies would happen in the temple too.

Manasseh basically worshipped every God he could think of  
except the true God –

and he lead Abraham's family, David's nation down the same path.

And this caused the nation a big problem.

God said to them,

"I'm not giving up on the promise I made to Abraham,

to make his family a blessing to all the earth.

But this people,

they are a blessing to no one.

I'm going to take them out of the land I gave them,

and send them into captivity –

into exile.

They can be slaves in a foreign land.

The promise can wait until I send a messiah to lead them."

And that's the third big marker in Jesus' genealogy.

Can you see that Jesus' genealogy is not just a list of names?

It's divided into three paragraphs.

The first is headed Abraham was the father of ...

The second is headed David was the father of ...

And the third is headed after the exile ...

Jesus is the son of Abraham,

he is the son of David,

but he is also a son of the exile.

And while physically the nation had returned from exile in Babylon, spiritually, the promises made to Abraham were still not being fulfilled.

Abraham's family, the Jewish people,

still felt that their relationship with God hadn't been restored.

God no longer spoke to them through prophets.

They lived in the land he had given them,

but they weren't rulers of that land.

They lived under Roman occupation.

And they certainly weren't being a blessing to the nations of the world.

Far from the days

when the queen of Sheba came to Solomon for advice,

the Jewish leaders were now scorned by their Roman overlords.

The Jewish people longed for their exile to be over.

They longed for God to smile upon them once more

and send them the promised messiah.

That's the story that Jesus' genealogy

calls out to every one of Jesus' countrymen who read it.

Jesus' genealogy is the story of the nation.

A nation founded on one family with a special relationship with God.

A nation that reached a high point under the great king David.

But a nation that had fallen,

and was longing for the day when she would be restored.

A nation longing for her Messiah.

That's Jesus' story.

Or at least that's Jesus' story seen through the eyes of the big people.

Through the eyes of kings and patriarchs,

through the eyes of national glory and national tragedy.

And Matthew tells that story.

But Matthew also tells another story with this genealogy.  
 This is the story your grandmother didn't tell about the family history.  
 The cheeky little incidents that teenagers whisper to one another.  
 The quirky parts of the family history.  
 The ones that definitely aren't recorded  
 in the very prim and proper Gill family history.

The standard way to write a Jewish genealogy  
 was to just list the Fathers.

Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

etc etc.

You didn't list the women.

But Matthew drops a few of the women into Jesus' genealogy.

He slips them in here and there when you aren't expecting it.

Now of course for every man recorded in a Jewish genealogy,  
 there must have been a woman.

Otherwise there would be no next generation.

So the fact that Matthew chooses to single out a few is interesting.

In verse 3,

“Judah the father of Perez and Zerah,  
whose mother was Tamar.”

In verse 5,

“Salmon the father of Boaz,  
whose mother was Rahab.

Boaz the father of Obed,  
whose mother was Ruth.”

And in verse 6,

“David was the father of Solomon,  
whose mother had been Uriah's wife.”

There are some cheeky little stories attached to these ladies.

Judah was actually Tamar's father in law, not her husband.

She married his son Er.

But Er died and by God's law,

Judah should have given another of his sons, Shelah,  
to Tamar as a husband  
to give her and her dead husband a son and heir.  
But Judah refused.

So Tamar dressed as a prostitute and Judah propositioned her,  
slept with her and made her pregnant.

And it was the son born to Tamar who was the ancestor of Jesus.  
That's a scandalous little story to have in the family genealogy.

So Jesus was the son of a woman  
who humiliated herself by pretending to be a prostitute  
in order to get her father in law  
to give her what he was required by God's law to give.

Tamar had faith that if she trusted God's law  
things would go well for her.

It's people like Tamar who Jesus calls.

People who have faith that if they trust God,  
God will sort things out for them.

Jesus says the same to you.

Trust God and his word.

Boaz' mother Rahab was really a prostitute.

Unlike Tamar who pretended to trap her Father in law.

Rahab was the prostitute in Jericho,  
who hid the Israelite spies so they could escape.

She was a Canaanite woman,  
not one of Abraham's family.

But she was joined into Jesus' family tree,  
and she chose to live with God's people and marry one,  
because she knew that their God was the true God.

So Jesus was the son of a woman who became a child of God  
because of her faith.

She was saved from the destruction of Jericho by faith  
not by a moral lifestyle.

God didn't pick out the best living person in Jericho  
to avoid destruction,



He chose the person  
who had heard about him  
and was willing to leave everything familiar to follow him.  
Jesus too called people to follow him,  
Not the moral ones but the ones who had faith.  
Jesus called prostitutes and tax collectors to follow him.  
It's people like Rahab who Jesus calls.

Obed's mother Ruth was also a foreigner.  
She was a Moabite.  
But she loved her mother in law Naomi who was an Israelite,  
and she chose to leave her people to come and live with God's people  
because of her love for Naomi.  
Ruth was an upright woman.  
There was no hint of the indiscretions of Tamar or Rahab about her.  
But rest assured,  
the fact that she was a foreigner – a gentile,  
would have made her just as unwelcome in the family tree  
to a first century Jew.  
Someone to gloss over in the genealogy –  
not someone to highlight.  
So Jesus was the son of a woman  
who chose the people of God over her own flesh and blood.  
And Jesus said,  
“If anyone comes to me  
And does not hate his Father and Mother,  
His wife and children, his brothers and sisters,  
Yes even his own life –  
He cannot be my disciple.”  
It's people like Ruth who Jesus calls.

And the last of the women mentioned was Solomon's mother,  
who had been Uriah's wife.  
Her name was Bathsheba.  
And of course she was only Uriah's wife

until King David had Uriah killed.  
And he had Uriah killed because he had seduced his wife,  
made her pregnant,  
and was trying to cover it up.  
A thoroughly sordid little tale that one.  
Again, not something to highlight in the family tree.  
But this is a family that needs a saviour.  
God sent a messiah because his people needed saving.  
Jesus' family tree is proof of that.

Why does Matthew draw our attention  
to the skeletons in the Christ child's closet?

Firstly,  
he's showing us how foreigners are significant in Jesus' family tree.  
And that's important because of the promise made to Abraham.  
He was promised not just the benefits of close relationship with God  
for himself and his family,  
But he was told his family would be a blessing to all the nations.  
And we can see here in Jesus' family tree  
that there has been blessing to the foreign women.  
They have been grafted into the family of God's people.  
Grafted into the family tree of his messiah no less.  
God is a god who is for the outsiders.  
And Matthew highlights it in Jesus' family tree,  
to let us know what kind of Messiah Jesus would be.  
Most of the Jews of Jesus' day were looking for a messiah  
who would restore their national pride.  
Build Israel back to the great nation it was in King David's day.  
But Jesus is a messiah  
who came to draw people from all the nations to God.  
Matthew's message is,  
don't be surprised that God is working that way.  
Even if you've forgotten it,  
God has always had a plan  
to draw people from outside of Abraham's family to himself.

The second thing Matthew is showing us  
with the women he includes in Jesus' genealogy  
is that God's kingdom is not just for the nice people,  
the people we would expect to find there,  
the ones who have our seal of approval.  
It's not that God doesn't care  
about the personal morality of Tamar and Rahab,  
or King David and Bathsheba for that matter.  
But personal morality is not the entry requirement for his kingdom.  
God is merciful to anyone who throws their lot in with him.  
It doesn't matter where they have come from.  
It doesn't matter what their chequered past.  
If they will stand among God's people and say like Ruth,  
"Your people are my people  
and your God is my God."  
Then God will be their God.  
No one is beyond the reach of his mercy.

And that too tells us what sort of Messiah Jesus would come to be.  
The Christ child had prostitutes in his family tree.  
And when he was a grown man,  
he was a friend of prostitutes and sinners.

This Christmas we worship that Jesus.  
The Christ who came into the world for all people.  
Not just those whom you might expect  
but a Saviour for all of us.  
Even those like you and me.