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“A Messy Family Tree”

Matthew 1

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No one chooses their family of origin. We are born into a family without any choice. Sometimes that proves to be a good thing, and sometimes not. There are tragic stories of alcoholic parents, abusive family members, abandonment, divorce, poverty, etc. Children grow up to become adults who sometimes repeat those patterns, and the cycle continues. But what if that cycle could be broken? What if a person could actually live life without their family history defining them? It's possible in a relationship with Christ! Jesus Christ gives us a new heart, a new start, and a new identity. The heritage we receive is not as important as the legacy we leave. Jesus' own family tree was littered with human failure, and yet it did not define him. In addition, God used imperfect people in that family tree to accomplish his perfect purposes.

Historical Background

1. The time gap between Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, and the book of Matthew was approximately four hundred years.
 - a. Bible scholars call this “the silent years.”
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “These are the years [in which] God said nothing. He didn't speak through any prophets. ... Why was God silent? I want you to think of it in this way; if you have a major announcement to make... what's the first thing you say? [You ask everyone to quiet down], because you want everyone to hear what you are going to say. That's what God [was] doing. ... [The major announcement was] ‘The Messiah is here!’ ”

Matthew The Man

2. In Hebrew, Matthew's name is Mattityahu, which means gift of Yahweh.

3. Matthew was one of the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus.
 - a. **Matthew 10:1-4** - *“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.”*
4. Matthew wrote about his conversion and call to follow Jesus in **Matthew 9:9-10**.
5. Luke tells us that Matthew made a great feast for Jesus, and Matthew gave up everything to follow Jesus.
 - a. **Luke 5:27-29** - *“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi; sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.”*
 - i. Matthew was also called Levi, which may mean that he was from the tribe of Levi.
 - ii. Matthew was a tax collector, which was a despised occupation in the first century.
 1. Matthew was a Jew who worked for the Roman government.
 2. Tax collectors made an income out of the taxes they collected.

Matthew The Message

6. The Gospel of Matthew was written circa 50 A.D.
7. Matthew wrote the book for Jews in order to provide convincing evidence that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah.
8. There are more than one hundred quotes from the Old Testament in the book of Matthew, more than any other writer in the New Testament.
9. There are many Messianic references in the book of Matthew; for example, the kingdom is mentioned fifty-four times; the Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned thirty-two times out of only thirty-four times in the entire Bible; plus, sixteen references to Jesus being the Christ/Messiah.
10. Each of the four gospels have a specific theme regarding Jesus and his ministry.

- a. Early Church fathers gave a symbol to further identify the theme: Matthew – King of the Jews (Lion); Mark – The Lowly Servant (Ox); Luke – The Son of Man (Man); and John – The Son of God (Eagle).
- b. Pastor Gary said, “[These symbols] correspond to the faces of the cherubim in the book of Ezekiel, and they are similar to the description found in Revelation 4.
 - i. [Ezekiel 1:10](#) – *“As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle.”*
 - ii. [Revelation 4:7](#) – *“The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.”*

Jesus’ Family Tree

11. The book of Luke presents the genealogical record of Jesus through his mother Mary, and the book of Matthew presents the record through Joseph, who was Jesus’ legal/adoptive father.
 - a. Jesus had no biological, earthly father.
 - b. God supernaturally impregnated Mary, so Jesus was born of a virgin.
 - c. God took on flesh and became a man, Jesus.
 - d. Pastor Gary said, “[The line through Joseph] lets us know that Jesus was both born in a natural way, though by supernatural means, and he was legally adopted by Joseph because Joseph was not his biological father. ... Isaiah [used] two different words. [He wrote ‘a Child is born,’ and ‘a Son is given.’] [Born] speaks of a natural process of physical birth, but the other word is [about] adoption. The Messiah will be both born and adopted. How can that [be]? [Jesus fulfilled this prophecy.] ... Another important fact about Jesus being both born and given, when you look at Luke’s genealogical record and Matthew’s genealogical record, both Mary’s line and Joseph’s line trace their ancestry back to King David. ... Why is this important? This is absolutely vital to understanding the Messiah because the Bible, in different places, [including [2 Samuel 7:1-17](#), [Isaiah 11:1-10](#), [Jeremiah 23:5-6](#) and [Jeremiah 33:14-18](#), and many [other] verses, spoke about how the Messiah would be of the line of David, which is why, Jesus, in the Gospels, is sometimes called ‘Son of David.’ [Jesus was] called the ‘Son of David,’ not because he was a direct son of David, but that he was a descendant of David. This is important to his identity. The Messiah would be a descendant of King David.”
 - i. [Isaiah 9:6](#) – *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of*

Peace.”

12. [Matthew 1:17](#) - *“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.”*
- a. Abraham to David was fourteen generations.
 - b. David to the captivity in Babylon was fourteen generations.
 - c. From the captivity in Babylon to the Christ was fourteen generations.
 - d. Pastor Gary said, “Why would [Matthew] emphasize [the number of generations]? ... [Matthew was] communicating to a Jewish audience that Jesus [was] a descendant of David. So, he [used] something that is unfamiliar to us... In the ancient Hebrew language, as well as Greek and other ancient languages, there’s a thing called gematria. [Numerical values are attached to each letter of the alphabet.] ... What is the purpose [of adding up the numerical value to each letter in a word]? There are different reasons... when Matthew [used] this terminology, he [declared] with kind of a veiled reference to the fact that Jesus [was] a descendant of David.”
 - e. David
 - i. There are no vowels in the Hebrew language.
 - ii. David’s name in Hebrew has three letters: Dalet (4); Vav (6); and Dalet (4).
 - iii. The numerical value of the letters in David’s name is fourteen, thus the relationship between each of the fourteen generations found in [Matthew 1:17](#).
13. Pastor Gary said, “I marvel at the people that God chose to be a part of the Messianic line leading up to Christ. You’d think that God would have chosen some of the most virtuous men and women, some of the most honorable, and full of integrity, but [God didn’t do that]! What we find here is that God chose some of the most peculiar, morally irresponsible, and unfit people to be part of his divine plan. Why is that important for us to note? ... God always chooses to use imperfect people to accomplish his perfect purposes. That should speak to you and me. God chooses to use us to his glory.”
14. Abraham
- a. Abraham was a liar!
 - b. Abraham lied twice to save himself, ¹claiming that his wife Sarai was really his sister, which interestingly enough, is a half-truth because they had the same father, making her his half-sister.

¹ [Genesis 12:10-20](#) and [Genesis 20:1-18](#)

15. Jacob

- a. Jacob was a deceiver!
- b. His name in Hebrew means deceiver.
- c. Jacob deceived his brother Esau out of his birthright.²
- d. Jacob deceived his father-in-law out of the best of the sheep herd.
- e. Jacob's life was a mess until God got hold of him and literally changed his name to Israel, which means governed by God.

16. Judah

- a. Judah was a philanderer!
- b. Judah paid a prostitute for sex, and she conceived and bore twins, Perez and Zerah.
- c. The name of the prostitute was Tamar, who was actually his daughter-in-law, which means these children were technically his grandchildren!

17. Rahab

- a. Rahab was a Gentile prostitute!
- b. She operated a brothel in Jericho.
- c. When the spies came to spy out the land, Rahab had heard the testimonies about God, so she hid them from their enemies.
- d. When the Israelites conquered Jericho, they took Rahab with them.
- e. She was a proselyte to Judaism and married a Jew named Salmon.
- f. Rahab was the mother of Boaz.

18. Ruth

- a. Ruth was a Moabite, which means that her heritage was that of being born from a line conceived by incest!
- b. Lot's daughters must have thought that all men on earth were destroyed when God wiped out Sodom and Gomorrah, so they worked out a plan to get their father drunk so they could have sex with him.
- c. Each daughter bore a son, Moab and Ammon, so the Moabites and Ammonites were people groups born of incest.

19. David

- a. David broke three of the ten commandments.
 - i. David coveted Uriah's wife, Bathsheba.
 - ii. David slept with Bathsheba, which means he committed adultery.
 - iii. David was an accessory to murder when he ordered that Uriah be put into battle in a position that guaranteed that he would be killed.
- b. David repented of his sin, received God's forgiveness, and God used him.

² Genesis 27:1-45

20. Solomon
- a. Solomon was an idolater and a womanizer who had 700 wives and 300 concubines!
 - b. Idolatry reached its height during his reign as king.
 - c. According to the Bible, Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, but he did some of the dumbest things.
21. Rehoboam
- a. Rehoboam was divisive, and his actions split the kingdom after the death of his father, Solomon, and civil war ensued!
 - b. Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonite, so she too was from a line born out of incest.
22. Jehoram
- a. Jehoram was a murderer!
 - b. Jehoram was the fifth king of Judah, and he killed all six of his brothers to make sure that none of them would be a threat to his reign.
23. Manasseh
- a. Manasseh was a purely evil man!
 - b. Manasseh sacrificed his own son in the fire! ³
24. Pastor Gary said, "Here's the good news. In Christ you are not only given a new heart, you are given a new start... a new purpose, a new mission, and you are given a new legacy that you can leave to your [children]. That's what Christ does. ... You are not destined to repeat the sins of your [family]. You are not destined to be defined by the sins of your [family]. ... [Being a Christian means that you are a new person!] ... Tragically, I think far too many Christians have spent too much time looking at the past instead of looking ahead. Too many times Christians spend too much time trying to untangle their messy family tree rather than grabbing hold of the message that they are new creatures in Christ. Don't get me wrong. There is a place and a time to deal with some of the mess [that is] our family tree. Sometimes with the help of good, godly Christian counselors. ... [There is also] a time and place to move on, [recognizing that we don't have control over the family that we were born into], but in Christ [we] have a new family and a new identify in [the Lord]."
- a. **2 Corinthians 5:17** - *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* (Emphasis added)
 - b. **Luke 9:62** - *"But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'" (Emphasis added)*

³ **2 Kings 21:6**

- c. [Philippians 3:13-14](#) - *“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.**”* (Emphasis added)

25. Jesus lived his life for the glory of the Father without letting his family tree define or deter him; Jesus’ identity, purpose, and mission defined him.
26. God used some pretty messed up people to accomplish his glorious purposes.
27. Pastor Gary said, “The heritage you have received is not nearly as important as the legacy that you will leave. Why? Because the heritage you received you had no choice in, but the legacy you leave is all your choice. Leave a legacy that glorifies Jesus and live out your life in a way that exemplifies that you are a new creation in Christ.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Matthew 1:1-17](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of the life of Matthew and the book of Matthew (See #1 through #10 above)
3. How would you describe your family tree?
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about Jesus’ family tree. (See #11d above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about the importance of noting the fact that Jesus was from the line of David? (See #12d and #13 above)
6. Spend time talking about the basic details about the lives of the people Pastor Gary spoke about in his message. (See #14 through #23 above)
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about the new life and new identity every Believer has in Christ. (See #24 above)
8. How has your family tree defined you? (See #25 above)
9. How has the Lord helped you embrace a new identity, a new purpose, and a new mission? (See #25 above)
10. How is the Lord using you to accomplish his glorious purposes? (See #26 above)

11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)