



Daily Reflections

December 17, 2020

Scripture

Matthew 1:1-17

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,
the son of David, the son of Abraham.
Abraham became the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.
Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah,
whose mother was Tamar.
Perez became the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
Ram the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab became the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
Salmon the father of Boaz,
whose mother was Rahab.
Boaz became the father of Obed,
whose mother was Ruth.
Obed became the father of Jesse,
Jesse the father of David the king.
David became the father of Solomon,
whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.
Solomon became the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asaph.
Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Joram,

Joram the father of Uzziah,
Uzziah became the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.
Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amos,
Amos the father of Josiah.
Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers
at the time of the Babylonian exile.
After the Babylonian exile,
Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
Zerubbabel the father of Abiud.
Abiud became the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
Azor the father of Zadok.
Zadok became the father of Achim,
Achim the father of Eliud,
Eliud the father of Eleazar.
Eleazar became the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.
Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.
Thus the total number of generations
from Abraham to David
is fourteen generations;
from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations;
from the Babylonian exile to the Christ,
fourteen generations.

Our Scripture Reflection

The word genealogy actually means “genesis”. Matthew gives us, therefore, the genesis or beginning of the story of Jesus Christ.

Matthew divides his genealogy into three sets of fourteen generations. Setting aside hypothetical symbolic meanings of the number, the sections include fascinating details.

In the first section, four women are mentioned. The fact that women are mentioned at all in a genealogy of that day and in a patriarchal culture is exceptional. Jesus is not only the Savior of men; he is also the one who heals the primordial animosity between men and women, and works to restore the mutual dignity, equality, and complementarity of men and women. In addition, all four of these women are (arguably) non-Jews, gentiles. Tamar and Rahab are Canaanites; Ruth is a Moabite; Bathsheba (whom Matthew dares not even identify by name) may be a Hittite (at least by marriage). This could very well support the main point that Jesus fulfills God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the nations (Genesis 12 and 15). And all these women were associated with sin—though we should be careful to note that it was mostly not their own sin! Tamar was forced by Judah’s sin into humiliating herself. Rahab, though a prostitute, distinguishes herself by her faith and by risking her life to side with the Lord over her own countrymen. Ruth was a Moabite, which might entail guilt-by-association as descendants of

Lot. And Bathsheba was the victim of David's sin, and by no means an equal participant. The worst sinners in this list are Judah and King David himself.

Matthew's family history of Jesus correlates well with what the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 3:28-29: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Food for your Journey

The late management and life-planning guru Stephen Covey wrote a book some years back called *First Things First* (Simon & Schuster, 1994). It's a handbook for living a joyful and productive life. Perhaps the best line in the book is its subtitle. Covey declares that the purpose of a human life can be summed up in four essential points, all of them beginning with the letter "L": "to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy." This matter of leaving a legacy is something that concerns us all, in one season of life or another.

It concerns Abraham, too, and his wife, Sarah -- although, to be perfectly accurate, we ought to call them by their original names, Abram and Sarai. It was not until these two had figured out what their legacy was to be that these two were permitted the privilege of changing their names: which, whenever it happens in the Bible, is always the mark of something really big and transformative.

"Look toward heaven and count the stars," says the Lord, "if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be." The legacy is not Abraham's achievement. It is wholly God's doing. "And," say the Scriptures, "he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness."

A Prayer from the Heart

Gracious Father, I am now within the octave of Christmas and the time draws near for me celebration of the birth of Your only Son. Lord, Your plan and the reason for this holy season is to show the depth of Your love for me. Help me to become truly humble and grateful, Lord. Amen