

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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The Lineage of David

Ruth 4:13-17 & Matthew 1:1-6

Key verse: “The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi.’ They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David” (Ruth 4:17).

What parts of the Bible do you skip over? Most people rarely read the *genealogies*—“so-and-so begat so-and-so who begat so-and-so.” Granted, these passages might not offer the most exciting reading. But with just a little study, the genealogies of the Bible offer great spiritual treasures!

This week’s lesson dips into the genealogy of Christ as presented in Matthew’s Gospel. The lesson also looks back to two ancient women of faith whose lives play an integral part in God’s great plan for humanity—Naomi and Ruth.

Their story as told in the Book of Ruth is one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible. The story focuses on Naomi first, a Hebrew woman whose family has lost everything because of a famine. Trying to find a way to survive, Naomi, her husband and their two sons move to the nearby country of Moab. There the two sons find wives. But before long, bad times are back. Naomi’s husband and both of her sons die, leaving her with few prospects for support. Hearing that the famine in Judah has ended, Naomi decides to go home.

The second part of the story focuses on Naomi’s daughter-in-law, Ruth. Ruth refuses to part from Naomi and so they return together to Bethlehem. The two women face a bleak future without money or property or husbands. But God has not forgotten them. To make a not-so-long story a bit shorter: Ruth meets a godly man named Boaz. They marry, restore Naomi’s fortunes, and have a son together.

This part of the story is where the Book of Ruth and the genealogy of Christ in Matthew’s gospel intersect. As Matthew 1 tells us, Ruth’s child with Boaz was named Obed. Obed became the father of Jesse. Jesse became the father of David. And Jesus came from the line of David!

So, as you can see, “the begats” of the Bible hold hidden treasures for anyone willing to dig a little. The genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1, connecting us as it does to God’s work in history, demonstrates several important truths....

First, Matthew’s genealogy demonstrates that **Jesus is the Messiah for all people.**

There are names in Matthew's list that one would not expect to see in a Jewish genealogy of the first century. Specifically, Matthew's genealogy includes the names of *Gentiles and women*. Ruth, for example, was a godly person, but she was both a Gentile from Moab and a woman. In the patriarchal culture of first-century Jewish society, Gentiles and women were second-class citizens. Jewish men used to pray: "Lord, I thank you that I was not born a woman or a Gentile."

Yet, Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, includes in his report of the genealogy of Jesus the names of women, Gentiles, and other "unsavory characters." (Judah committed incest. David was an adulterer and a murderer. Rahab was a prostitute.) Why does Matthew include such names in the genealogy of Jesus? He does it to underline this great truth: Jesus is the Messiah for *all* people! Aren't you glad?

Secondly, Matthew's genealogy demonstrates that **our God is moving human history toward a glorious future**. Some religions and worldviews hold a *cyclical* view of history. For them, history always repeats itself. There is not now, nor ever will there be, anything "new under the sun." Other people have a *nihilistic* view of history. For them, history is a meaningless series of events going nowhere, meaning nothing.

Christians do not hold a cyclical or a nihilistic view of human history. Instead, we believe that history is *linear*, moving ultimately toward God's great future. History, we believe, is a stage on which God is working out His plan. As Matthew's genealogy demonstrates, that plan involves imperfect people and events. But God in His providence will have the last word in human history. So, for us, history is headed not into an eternal sunset but into an everlasting Sunrise!

Finally, Matthew's genealogy demonstrates that **God's plan for the ages centers on Jesus Christ**. Through the lineage of David, God fulfills His promise to Abraham that, through his seed, all the earth would be blessed. Matthew's genealogy, most importantly, shines the spotlight of history on the great "earth blesser," God's Son and the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

In the movie *A Knight's Tale*, which is set in medieval England, a young man named Ulrich wants to become a knight. Problem is, a knight had to come from nobility. Ulrich and his family are neither royal nor noble.

In a scene in which Ulrich is about to compete in a jousting tournament, his squire introduces him with a grand-sounding pack of untruths:

"I cannot look upon my Lord Ulrich, for I weep to see his shining face. My Lord is a gift to your eyes, for we shall never, ever see his like upon this earth again....Now, Sir Ulrich has great ancestors, make no mistake about that. Sir Chirard von Richbach, Duke Guelph of Saxony, Van Misch IV out of Brunswick—but these great, great men pale into insignificance next to him. I do not list them to honor him: I list him to honor them!"

In the movie, the squire's claims are completely false. But his last line describes accurately the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ "has great ancestors—make no mistake about that....but these great men [and women] pale into insignificance next to Him." As Matthew might have said, "I do not list them to honor Him. I list Him to honor them!"

Matthew's genealogy demonstrates, *God's plan for the ages centers on Jesus Christ.*

Thanks be to God.

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