



New Covenant
BIBLE CHURCH

The Mothers of Jesus: Bathsheba

Advent Series #4

2 Samuel 11, Matthew 1

Pastor David Sunday

December 18, 2011

We've been looking at the genealogy in the first chapter of the New Testament—Matthew 1—because we believe you can learn a lot about what Jesus came into the world *for* by considering who He came *from*. We've seen that Jesus came from a crooked family tree and this Advent season, we've been looking at the broken ornaments on that tree—five women, five “Mothers of Jesus.”

When we think about our family trees, we often try to wash over those unsavory elements. I heard a story about a family who had hired a professional biographer to tell the story of their family. But they were a little bit nervous about the black sheep of the family—Uncle George—who had been executed in the electric chair for a capital crime. They told the biographer, “We don't know what to do about him but can you take care of this?” He said, “No problem. I'll just say that Uncle George occupied a chair of applied electronics at an important government institution. He was attached to his position by the strongest ties and his death came as a real shock.”

Surprisingly, Jesus makes no efforts to hide the skeletons in His family's closet. He's not ashamed of the black sheep in His family. We've been seeing this the past three weeks but before we look at another of the mothers of Jesus, I want us to take a step back and learn just a few lessons from this genealogy that will help us think rightly and worship more deeply this Christmas season.

I'm going to draw out three lessons and I want to acknowledge that I've received some help from a sermon I heard by my friend Mike Bullmore. He did such an excellent job that I want to draw from some of his insights.

1. God Has a Plan for History

As we look at the genealogy as a whole, we see that God has a plan for where this world is heading. If you've been reading the Bible or studying theology, you know this is

true—it seems too obvious. You might be thinking, “David, tell us something we didn’t know!”

Well, you know God has a plan but experientially—living life today—you don’t always feel like God has a plan. You need to be reminded that God is working out history in a certain direction. As Matthew writes his genealogy, he’s being very selective and purposeful. He doesn’t include every possible generation that could have been included but he’s showing us that this Jesus is the One who has the legal right to sit on David’s throne and to be the King who rules forever.

Matthew unfolds the plan of God in three phases. We see three groups of fourteen generations in the genealogy of Jesus. **Stage one starts with Abraham**—you see him in Matthew 1:2, “*Abraham was the father of Isaac...*” Now as you think about the Scripture story back in Genesis 12, the word that should come to mind first is the word blessing. Abraham was just a normal, ordinary man. He was a pagan who worshiped idols. God called Abraham to Himself—.listen to what God said to Abraham:

“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse [and here’s the phrase I want you to remember as we think about this story], and in you [Abraham] all the families of the earth shall be blessed’” (Genesis 12:1-3).

God was putting a signpost on the road of redemption here at this point in history and He was saying, “Someone is coming.” Abraham didn’t have any offspring at this time but God was saying, “Someone is coming through your line, Abraham, who is going to bring blessing to all the families of the earth.” And as the succeeding generations grew, they would hear this covenant promise. Isaac would hear the promise and believe it. Jacob. Judah. Perez and Zerah. Perez and Hezron. Ram and Amminadab. Nahshon and Salmon. Boaz and Obed (Genesis 12:3-5). All these people would hear the promise that God intended to bring blessing to the world.

Then stage two of the great plan that God has for history is focused on another man named **David**. He shows up in verse six of the genealogy—Jesse was the father of David the

king. David was another ordinary man; the youngest of Jesse's sons; just a shepherd boy. But God chose David and made an astounding promise to him. In David, God's promise to Abraham is amplified. We see that this blessing that God intended to bring to the nations would take the shape of a kingdom. God makes this promise to David about this kingdom and it's breathtaking in its scope. Look at 2 Samuel 7:12-16:

*"When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his **kingdom**. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his **kingdom** forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your **kingdom** shall be made sure forever before me. Your **throne** shall be established forever."*

Think about it. God promised a world we would love to live in—a world of righteousness and peace. A world in which all wars have ended; where there is no more mourning or crying or pain. A world where all things would become new. A world of safety and security. A kingdom that would never end. This is the promise that God made to David—"From one of your descendants will rise arise this king who will rule forever."

So back in the genealogy, you see that David is a focal point because the whole next section of names in the genealogy springs from David. You can imagine the hopes of God's people as they were fixed on David, this great king. As the people of Israel would look back on the reign of David, it was in many ways a golden age. Yet it was also a disappointment and Matthew gives us a hint of why. That disappointment took place in verse six, "*And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah...*" There it is. A sin that took place that prevented David from being the one who would reign forever. But neither would his son, Solomon who was no better than his father; nor any of the other names: Abijah, Asaph, Jehoshaphat, Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amos, Josiah, Jechoniah (Matthew 1:7-11).

What do these names represent to the people of Israel? These names represent a long line of dashed expectations. Who will come and be this king who will reign forever in righteousness and peace? He is not going to come from David, nor his immediate sons. In fact, where did these kings lead Israel? Not into righteousness and peace. Look at verse 11. They led them into exile in Babylon. They led them to tyranny under oppressive rulers. They led them to be taken away from their homes and land, into captivity in a foreign land.

That's where history seemed to be heading if you lived at the time of Jechoniah—a big disappointment. But God has a plan for history and He's moving that plan forward.

2. God's Plan is Advancing in History

The second lesson we see from this genealogy is that God is advancing that plan in history even when all evidence seems to suggest otherwise. If you were living during the exile, you would have wondered what happened to the blessing. What happened to the kingdom? Has all hope been lost? Even after the exile, they return to the land and try to make a go of it there but it was still a time of great frustration and disappointment. The shadow of the exile continued to loom large over God's people.

The third stage of fourteen descendents begins in verse 12. We read of names like Jechoniah, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel. Then in verse 13 we see a list of names that don't appear anywhere else in the Old Testament. We don't know anything about Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan. These names are lost in history but the point is even in this dark time, even when it appeared that God had forgotten His promises, even when it appeared that all hope was gone, even during the 400 years of silence that led up to the time of the Messiah, God was weaving history together. He was meticulously orchestrating events to bring about the fulfillment of His purpose. God was not done.

This should encourage us who live in this day and age. The hope of the world is not who wins the election next November. The hope of the world is not what happens on Wall Street. The hope of the world does not depend on your own health or your own personal situation. The hope of the world hinges on the fact that God has a purpose; God has a plan and is faithfully carrying out that plan, even today in 2011. He is working through people who otherwise would not be known. He is working through people like you and me who are faithful to God, who believe in the promises of God. He still is carrying forth that plan and I find it really encouraging that Jesus came into a world where many people have lost hope, where it seems like darkness was prevailing—a world so much like our world today.

As Christ came the first time, He's going to come again. In the last couple of years, that whole truth of Christ's return has become much more precious to me. I used to pray, "Lord, help me live more consciously with the knowledge of Your return in mind. Help me really hope in the fact that You are coming again." Now I find myself praying just about every day, "Lord, come. Come Lord Jesus. I long for Your return."

Wouldn't it be wonderful, instead of celebrating Christmas next weekend to be celebrating the return of Christ? Our King is coming again. God's plan is advancing in history, even when all the evidence suggests otherwise.

3. God's Plan Culminates in Jesus Christ

Look at verse 16: "*Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*" Jesus was the name by which He was known. It means "the Lord saves." Christ was His title—"the anointed One, the Messiah, the Promised King." You know what Matthew is saying? He's saying that all of history has been moving toward this Person. God's radar through all the generations he's just traced—1,800 years of Biblical history—has been focused on what would happen in an obscure village named Bethlehem in Judea in the first century. That Baby who would be born there, He is the One we've been waiting for. He is the One through whom God's promise to David would be fulfilled that the coming Kingdom will never end. He is the One in whom the promises God made to Abraham to bring blessing to all the nations of the earth will be carried out. Jesus the Christ coming into the world at Christmas is the hinge of history. Everything hinges on what happened at Christmas.

There are three ways we see in verses 16 and 17 how unique Jesus is. How He stands out amongst all the other names in this genealogy.

First, look at how His ancestry is described in verse 16. It's very different from the others who were all born from a father. But notice what it says about Jesus—He came from Mary, His mother. His maternity is very clearly expressed but Joseph is just Mary's husband, not Jesus' father. There's something unique there. Mary is the mother; Joseph is only legally the father. He's the husband of Mary because this child was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit whose Father is God Himself.

Another interesting observation is in verse 17. "*So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.*" Now how many of you think Matthew is trying to tell us something about fourteen here? And how many of you think you know what he's trying to tell us? For us in the 21st century, we look at that and we think, "Okay, I think there's something here but I really don't know what it is."

As I studied this, I found two interpretations, both of which were instructive and compelling. If you've listened to me preach for awhile you know Biblical Numerology is not a hobby of mine. But the ESV Study Bible points out that the Jews had a practice of giving numerical value to the consonants in a person's name. How many consonants in the English word David? There are three: D-V-D. In Hebrew it is still three consonants. The value for D is four; the value for V is six; and the value for D again is four. Now I know the youth have finished final exams and are on Christmas break but can you add four plus six plus four? What does that equal? Fourteen.

Notice also that David's name is the fourteenth in the list of this genealogy. So who comes after 14 + 14 + 14 generations? Christ. What is Matthew saying? Christ is the true Son of David. He's the One we've been waiting for. He's the One on whom all these hopes are focused.

My family visited Epcot Center in Florida a few weeks ago and we went to a Christmas concert there. I was a little nervous, wondering if the name of Jesus would be obscured in a place like that but we were thrilled to hear His name mentioned over and over and over again, right in the middle of Epcot Center. Christ was praised and extolled. The Scriptures were read by some famous person. And at the end of that concert, the orchestra started playing the introduction to the Hallelujah Chorus and everyone in that outdoor pavilion instantaneously rose to their feet as we listened to these words:

"The kingdom of this world
Is become the kingdom of our Lord,
And of His Christ, and of His Christ;
And He shall reign for ever and ever,
For ever and ever, forever and ever,

"King of kings, and Lord of lords...
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"

(Hallelujah Chorus from The Messiah by Georg Friedrich Händel)

Praise God! That's what Matthew is saying in this genealogy. Jesus is that King.

One more observation about these numbers. Notice at the end of every group, we have a name and then that name begins the next group. In the first group, David ends; in the second group, David begins. And so on and so forth. If there was another group of names, whose name would begin that next group? Jesus.

Now, divide 14 in half and what do you have? Seven. If you have three groups of 14, how many sevens do you have? Six-sevens. So, there have been six groups of seven and

now the seventh-seven is Jesus. If you think about the number seven in Scripture, what did God do on the seventh day? He rested. What was supposed to happen every seven years? There was supposed to be a Sabbath for the whole year. And what was supposed to happen in Israel on the seventh-seventh year? Year 49 and 50? It was the Year of Jubilee—the year when all the debts would be canceled. When all the slaves would be set free. When all the land that had been lost would be restored to the families. When all things would be made new.

There is no record in the history of Israel of this Year of Jubilee ever being practiced but it was in the law. I think what Matthew may be suggesting to us—with this 14-14-14 outline—is that Jesus is the seventh-seven. He's the One who brings in the Year of Jubilee.

It's no surprise that when Jesus began His preaching ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth, the very first words He read from the prophet Isaiah's scroll were these words (Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16-21):

*“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...”*

Jesus is our Jubilee. In Him all debts are canceled. In Him our bondage is turned into freedom. When we repent and turn from our sins and turn to Jesus, we are set free from the dominion of sin and the power of Satan. We are brought into an inheritance in God that cannot be taken away from us. So Matthew is teaching us these lessons. God has a plan for where this world is heading. This plan is moving forward even when all evidence seems contrary and this plan culminates in Jesus Christ, in His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection. He's ruling the world right now. He's going to return. He's going to judge the living and the dead. He's going to make all things new in a New Heaven and a New Earth. Praise Him! Rejoice in Him.

*“He rules the world with truth and grace...
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found...”*

(Joy to the World by Isaac Watts & Lowell Mason)

These are some of the lessons you can learn from this genealogy. But it raises a question, doesn't it? Wouldn't you like your name to be among those who are included in Jesus' family? Wouldn't you like to be one of those who receives that promised blessing from God? You don't want to live outside God's blessing. You don't want to live under God's curse. But our sins have earned us judgment and cursing; not blessing. Wouldn't you want to be one of those who lives in that Kingdom of righteousness and peace where there is no mourning or pain? All things become new.

Who can be included in this plan of God? Who can enter into these blessings? That brings us to the last lesson.

4. God's Plan Embraces the Most Defiled

You know that old song, "Wonderful Grace of Jesus, reaching the most defiled...." That's what I think of when I read this catalog of names in Matthew 1. There's a purity problem in Jesus' lineage and Matthew does not hide it. In fact he highlights it. If you're a king, you would want a lineage that documents a spotless pedigree.

It was highly uncommon in those days for women to be included at all in genealogies. Matthew does not shy away from including women but why does he pick the women he does? Matthew had some other options, didn't he? What about Sarah? Rebecca? Rachel? Leah? They could make some really nice stories and they were in Jesus' lineage, too.

Why did Matthew chose someone like Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, who pretended to be a prostitute because Judah had treated her so shamefully? She manipulated him into providing offspring for her. He treated her even more shamefully by impregnating her and it was out of that union that the men of verse three came forth. Pastor DeHaan preached a sermon on that the end of November. I had asked him to preach that sermon, then about a week later I looked at a commentary by H.C. Leupold on Genesis. After each chapter in Genesis he gives homiletical suggestions on how to preach that passage. You know what he said about Genesis 38 and the story of Tamar? He said, "This chapter is totally unsuitable for homiletical use." In other words, don't you dare preach on this. We should all give Dave a hand of applause for taking on that challenge. He is a loyal bond-servant in the gospel.

What a story! I can imagine a pure Jew saying, “Oh, Matthew, you’re embarrassing us. We don’t even like to read that story and now you’re telling us that she’s part of the lineage of our Messiah.”

Then there’s Rahab who not only pretended to be a prostitute but she made her living that way. And she was a Canaanite to top it off.

Then the story of Ruth, an honorable woman who unfortunately came from Moab, another nation that was formed out of an incestuous union between Lot and his daughter. The race of people who came from Moab was not even allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord because of their immoral and cruel behavior.

So each one of these women is disreputable, shady, suspect, spiritually impure. Each one, according to the law of God, would have been barred from entering the presence of the Lord and worshipping with His people. A true Jew would have been repulsed by the inclusion of names like this.

What a sigh of relief when you get to verse six: “...*Jesse the father of David the king...*” A good Jew would be thinking, “Oh, now David. There’s someone we can be proud of. Wouldn’t you want to have David in your ancestry? The shepherd boy who slew Goliath? The great singer of Israel—the psalmist? The warrior who defeated the enemies of God? The king who brought about times of prosperity for God’s people? David—he’s the kind of guy we want in our lineage.”

But then Matthew thrusts a dagger into our self-righteousness by reminding us how David got there and how David’s sons got there. Look at the middle of verse six: “*And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah...*” Ouch! “Why did you have to bring that up, Matthew?” Notice Matthew doesn’t even mention this woman’s name. She was a mother of Jesus but here she’s just the wife of Uriah. We know her name—it’s Bathsheba. She’s the woman who committed adultery with King David. The child of that union died and then they had another son named Solomon who became a great king.

The focus here is not on Bathsheba’s sin even though she was a sinful woman who needed a Savior. The focus here and throughout the Scriptures is on the sin of King David. David abused his power by taking Uriah’s wife into his chambers and committing adultery with her. And do you know what that makes David? That makes David a worse sinner than Tamar and Rahab. Let me tell you why.

Who was Uriah? There is a startling discovery in 1 Chronicles 11:41. There we read that Uriah the Hittite was one of David's fighting men. One of David's mighty men of valor. These were the men who stood by David when he was running as a fugitive from Saul. These were the men who continually put their necks on the line to protect God's anointed king. They loved David. They gave their all for David. Uriah was no stranger to David. David had known this man for a long time as one of his most faithful, loyal soldiers.

Furthermore, Uriah lived close enough to David for David to see what was happening on his rooftop. I don't think they had very advanced binoculars back then so he had to be a close neighbor. I'm pretty sure that David knew of Uriah's wife before he knew her intimately. What did David do? What did he do with that relationship? When Uriah was off at battle, again putting his life on the line for the king, David stayed home, relaxing and lusting. Lusting after Uriah's wife—his friend's wife. Instead of recognizing the evil of the very desire that was welling up within his heart, David abused his power. Betrayed his friend. Summoned his wife to his chambers. Committed adultery with her. Then sent her back home, perhaps thinking he would never see that woman again. But...

Bathsheba became pregnant. So David called her husband home hoping to cover up the pregnancy by enticing Uriah to spend the night with his wife. Uriah was too loyal to his king and to his fellow soldiers to take it easy, to go into his home, to enjoy the pleasures of his wife while the other men were out fighting the battle. So he didn't go home.

How did David then repay this most loyal soldier? This man who had repeatedly risked his life for his king? David had him killed on the front lines of battle. Treachery. Abusive authority. Adultery. Murder. And even worse, blasphemy because he was God's anointed king—he represented God and when by the grace of God, David finally was brought to repentance for his sins, he said, "*Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...*" (Psalm 51:4).

I read an insightful quote by a man named Page Brown who said, "David committed spiritual adultery way before physical adultery. He lost sight of the beauty of God, then he found the beauty of Bathsheba. He didn't sin and then lose the joy of his salvation. He lost the joy of his salvation, then he sinned." Very insightful. May we continue to keep before our eyes the beauty of God, the joy of our salvation and the goodness of God. Because it's when we lose sight of these things that we are in danger of grave, grave rebellion and sin.

None of the women in that list had done anything like David did. None of those women had as much privilege and responsibility and power as David had. In the records of Scripture, we do not find that any of those women committed sin as grievously as David did. What is Matthew's point? The man who seems most noble in this list—the man you would probably most like to have in your family line—he is just as undeserving of being in God's family as Tamar and Rahab the prostitute. No one, in fact, deserves to be here. The only basis of being in the family of God is the grace of God. As Tim Keller says, "The gospel is not that we give God our good record and then He blesses us."

These people had an impure record. They were blessed because One came into the world, lived the life they should have lived and died the death they should have died as a substitute for their sins. And by Him—by His grace—they are brought in to God's family.

So by the grace of God, we find a prostitute, an outsider, an alien from the people of God and a king, all sitting together at the table of grace as equals. Amazing. Shocking. And sometimes if God's grace does not shock us, it's a sign that it hasn't sunk in very deep. God's grace is shocking. Amazingly shocking!

Paul the apostle got this. He had a pure pedigree. Pharisee of Pharisees. He was the best Jew you could find. But here's what he said at the end of his life: "*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...*" What is Christmas all about? Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And Paul thinks about that and says, "...of whom I am the foremost" (1 Timothy 1:15). "I am guilty, vile, helpless. I am not better than anyone else. In fact, I'm the chief of sinners."

What does the fact that the wife of Uriah enters into the genealogy of our Savior say to us? First, it says something about your past. Maybe there's something in your life that makes you blush a thousand blushes were it ever to be revealed to others. You believe you're forgiven but every time you look back on that thing, it fills you with shame. The fact that Matthew includes the wife of Uriah in this story—this genealogy—is an example to all of us who repent and turn from their sins to the Lord Jesus. He is no longer ashamed to call you brother or sister. He welcomes you into His family.

Douglas Wilson put it like this, "God loves disreputable women. He arranged for His son to marry one." That's who we are—His bride.

"From heaven He came and sought [us]
To be His holy bride;

With His own blood He bought [us]
And for [our lives] He died.”

(The Church's One Foundation by Samuel J. Stone & Samuel S. Wesley)

There's nothing in your past that would disqualify you from entering into God's family if you will repent of your sin and believe in Jesus. Jesus is not ashamed to welcome you, to lift you up and to say to His Father in heaven, “Behold, here am I God and the children You have given me. They are Yours. They are Mine. I'm proud to call them My people.”

That's grace!

One more application—a word about our purity as God's people. Purity is so essential. Remember that purity is not who we are by nature, it's who we're becoming by God's grace. It's what we have in Christ through our union with Him. So as we train our children and speak to them about the importance of purity, as we seek to raise sons and daughters who will be virgins until they get married and who will reflect the Kingdom values that Jesus gives us, let's remember to train them to be pure, not so we can preserve our pedigree but so we can reflect the Savior's grace.

Purity is not who we are by nature. We are not a pure people but we have a holy Savior who takes us in our impurity and through His grace not only cleanses us of our sin but makes us new and gives us the power to live a holy life, to pursue that holiness without which no one will see the Lord. This purity is in Christ—not in us by nature.

This grace should make us a people who are very welcoming to all kinds of different people, with all kinds of different backgrounds, with all kinds of blemishes. It should make us a people who are very patient and forgiving of others' faults. It should make us a people who are humble and hopeful because none of us is beyond the need of God's grace and none of us is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Finally a word about our failures. David's failure took place after he had written many of our psalms. He was a believer. His sin with Uriah's wife was the sin of a believer—a grave sin with terrible consequences. (We'll read about those consequences when we read the story about David in a few weeks.) Don't underestimate the grave consequences of sin but on the other hand, don't minimize the grace that is even greater than all our sin.

When you think about your failures, remember the Messiah came into the world and in the process of His coming, there was an adulterous union—a great wickedness. But out

of that wickedness came good. So don't go away saying, "Okay, I'm going to be wicked so good may come." because there was a whole lot of suffering including exile in Babylon. What is stronger, our sin or God's grace? God's grace triumphs over human evil. It was a sin over which David grieved and repented. It was precisely at that point of his sin that God said, "I'm going to bring in the Savior, the Messiah."

So own your sins. Mourn over your failures. But do so in hope—don't wallow in your guilt and sin. Let it become an occasion to look up to God and to believe, "God, You can take this—even this—and make it a trophy of Your redeeming grace because even though my sin abounds, Your grace abounds much more."

Praise the Lord! Let's offer Him our thanks!

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