

Prayer

Lord God Almighty; when trouble is near and we are hard pressed, come to our rescue. When we fail before others and before You, forgive us and help us. When we sense evil around us and cry out for help, deliver us from the enemy. When we yield to temptation, remove the root of sin from our hearts. Lord God Almighty, purify our souls, and by Your grace and the blood of Jesus, bring us to Your eternal Kingdom: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Justice

Pray for the family and home life of your own country, within which children learn the moral values they live out in later years. Pray for the teaching and upholding of 'right and wrong'.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for daily blessings
- Pray for the people who live near you or in your street
- Pray for local shops & businesses

Meditation

(a meditation using John 1:14-17; Acts 14:3; Rom 5:1; 1 Cor 15:10; 2 Cor 4:15, 12:9; 2 Peter 1:2, 3:18)

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
And we have received grace upon grace:

Grace and truth has come to us
through Jesus Christ our Lord;

Grace is the measure of His love for us,
shown by signs and wonders;

Grace gives access to His glorious throne,
Through faith and hope and peace;

Grace towards us is never in vain,
for He has made us His children;

Grace continually extends to us,
overflowing around the world;

Grace is always sufficient for us,
His power is made perfect in weakness;

Grow in the grace and knowledge of God,
And may peace be yours, forever.

Bible Study - Matthew 1:7-17

⁷ Solomon was the father of
Rehoboam,

Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,

⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,

Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,

Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah
and his brothers at the time of the
exile to Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abiud,
Abiud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,

Akim the father of Eliud,
¹⁵ Eliud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph,
the husband of Mary, who gave
birth to Jesus, who is called the
Messiah.

¹⁷ So there was a total of fourteen
generations from Abraham to David,
fourteen from David to the Babylonian
Exile, and fourteen from the Exile to
the Messiah.

Review

Today's passage of scripture contains the 2nd 14 names and the 3rd 14 names in the genealogy of Jesus, following the 1st 14 which we studied yesterday. The names in the second group from David to the Exile, are familiar to us as the Kings of Judah who reigned in Jerusalem from around 950 BC to 597 BC. The last '14' names from the Exile to Joseph, Mary and Jesus, are largely unknown to us, except for Zerubbabel, a leader of God's people after the Exile (see below). This final 14 is awkward because it is only makes 14 if you included Joseph, Mary and Jesus as separate 'generations', but Mary and Joseph were clearly the same! One answer to this problem is that because Joseph was not Jesus' father, we should include the Holy Spirit as the 'missing' name or 'generation', because He is the true Father of Jesus. Theories abound, but no one is really sure what to make of this, and we have to accept scripture as it is, with no explanation!

The '2nd' 14 names make an interesting list. All kings are in 'David's line', and reigned over Judah in Jerusalem; only David and Solomon reigned over a united kingdom of both Judah (south) and Israel (north). God rejected Israel because of her sins (see 2 Kings 17) and yet maintained faith with the line of David in Jerusalem, and each of these kings has an interesting story, as found in 1 and 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles. However, I must divulge a little intrigue! Not every king is listed, and some have been left out! These are the four between Jehoram and Uzziah! They are Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash and Amaziah, who represent the worst period of Judean history. Through a variety of circumstances, Ahaziah married Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, queen to the infamous Israelite King Ahab (see 1 Kings 17-22). Athaliah then corrupted the line of David in Jerusalem, and when her husband Ahaziah died, she reigned in his place! You heard me right, Jerusalem had a queen on the throne, and you can read about it in 2 Kings 11!

We could become too concerned about the literal accuracy of the genealogy, but this reminds us that it is the meaning of the genealogy that counts, not its literal accuracy. Matthew obviously did not want Jesus connected to the apostasy (abandonment of faith) of these kings, and left them out. Neither would it have bothered Matthew to call Uzziah 'the son of' Jehoram, even though he was his great – great – grandson! 'Son of' means 'in his family', and in the same way scripture calls Christians 'sons of God', meaning that they are His family. Matthew is single minded in his presentation of the purity of Jesus' heritage as the anointed leader of God's people and the coming Saviour of the World.

The break between 2nd 14 and the 3rd 14 occurs at the time of the Exile. This happened between 596 and 586 BC when a series of invading Babylonian forces reduced Jerusalem to a pile of rubble, carting people away and talking them into Exile. Once the line of David

had been broken in this way, people looked for a spiritual leader who would fulfil the many prophecies about God's Messiah. One figure keeps appearing in the Old Testament as a possible Messiah, named Zerubbabel. He appears with the High Priest Jeshua in the prophet Haggai (1:1, 2:2) as a servant of God, receiving the 'signet ring' of royal status with authority to rebuild the Temple after its destruction during the Exile. He also appears in Ezra (3:2,8, 4:2,3), and Zechariah (4:6-10), where it is prophesied about him 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord ...' (Zech 4:6); a prophecy about the rebuilding of the Temple. We should not look on Zerubbabel as a false hope, but as a man who pointed to the real Messiah yet to come, and he gave the people of Israel great hope when he was alive by building a new Temple.

All together, Matthew put together a genealogy probably from the Greek texts of the Old Testament and other surviving ancestral records, connecting Joseph with Zerubbabel and the ancient royal line via Jeconiah in Babylon to the line of David, and thence back to Abraham. It was a remarkable genealogical feat, and it tells us a great deal. It is a guide which explains the background to Jesus 'in a nutshell', and it indicates God's faithfulness in guiding His people over generations. It highlights both men and women who show faith in God, setting a standard for the stories of the Gospel to come; it demonstrates that the Messiah is the fulfilment of God's plan for the salvation of all humanity and it declares the royal authority and role of the Christ.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Did you know that Judah was ruled for a time by a Queen? What other features of the life of the Kings are new to you?
2. How do you interpret the lack of fourteen generations from the Exile to Jesus?
3. Can you make your own summary of what the genealogy of Christ means in Matthew's Gospel? Does it raise more questions than give answers?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Personally, I find the genealogy fascinating, because the more you look into it and investigate the characters involved by looking up whoever you can in the Old Testament, you find some fascinating stories, especially if you are not used to reading the Old Testament! God sometimes gives us unexpected pleasures!

Ideas for discipleship programme

- Read through some of the Old Testament references in this study to help you become familiar with them. You will not regret doing this!
- Ask yourself whether you are really worried by the fact that Matthew has clearly been selective in his genealogy and it is not 'literally' correct. Pray about what this all means to you.

Final Prayer

Glorious Lord Jesus. We do not know what will happen to us next, and we never know when trouble or stress will hit us or for how long. We place our trust and our faith in You, Lord Jesus, for everything. You will lead us through our trials to heavenly joy! AMEN