

Jesus' Family Tree

Joe Slater

Someone said, "Don't shake the family tree too hard because some fruits and nuts may fall out!" I've found that to be true in my own family history research, and it holds true in the genealogy of Jesus too.

I wonder how many people, as they begin reading the New Testament, just skip over the first seventeen verses of Matthew. Whew! All those begats! All those difficult names! Why do we care about them anyway?

Among many other reasons, we ought to learn about those people because they show that our God uses less-than-perfect people to accomplish His perfect will.

Human wisdom would have Messiah's family tree filled with pure, spotless ancestors. Some people think we shouldn't even mention the character flaws exhibited by some in Jesus' pedigree. However, doing so isn't disrespectful; it's honest! Scripture portrays even its heroes "warts and all."

"Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar" (Matthew 1:3). Tamar had been the wife of Judah's two sons, both of whom died. Judah didn't keep his promise to give her to his younger son when he came of age, so Tamar dressed like a harlot and duped Judah into getting her pregnant. Despite their obvious moral failures God used these people to bring Messiah into the world.

"Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab" (Matthew 1:5). Rahab's background as a Gentile and a harlot in no way prevented God from accomplishing His will despite her flaws.

"David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah" (Matthew 1:6). We all know the sad and sordid account of David and Bathsheba. But despite their glaring defects they are listed in Jesus' genealogy.

This doesn't excuse anyone's sin or make it ok! Quite to the contrary, it demonstrates the universal need for a Savior. Jesus came to save sinners. That includes His own blood kin. And it includes you.

If It Smells Like A Skunk . . .

Last week when entering the church building we were met with an all-too-familiar odor. Unfortunately, some of us know firsthand just how bad a skunk can really smell. Whether you've encountered a skunk one-on-one or not, when you smell the distinctive odor produced by these little varmints, you can immediately identify it. If it smells like a skunk, then it probably is a skunk.

Sin is like that. If some action or emotion feels like it could possibly be sinful, then there's a good chance that it is:

⇐ If it feels like pride, then it probably is.

⇐ If it sounds like gossip, then it probably is.

⇐ If it seems to be petty, then it probably is.

⇐ If it feels lukewarm, then it probably is.

⇐ If it looks like it might be a sin . . .

You get the idea. The Christian life is a constant growing experience, and God want us to continue to learn about Him and His will through study and meditation of His Word. Outlined in the Scriptures are corrections and guidance to help us avoid the stench of sin.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:9-10).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

Some Christians are experts in knowing athlete's stats, celebrity gossip, or the latest political outrage, but remain novices in knowing the Bible. People will naturally want to learn about what they're excited about.

Passion reveals priority.

--J.J. Hendrix (via Facebook)

Thank You For My Time

"Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes" (James 4:14, ESV).

Thirty-three years ago an elderly Chinese doctor told me, "You have a forty percent chance of living." Forty percent? That's not too bad. But wait! Our sons were five and seven. I was taking care of a sick family member and helping my husband put a new roof on our house. It was bad.

God saved me. Now that I'm "getting up there," I know more than ever what a precious gift my life has been. My Father has given me time to watch my children grow and to see my grandchildren. I have had years to grow and mature spiritually. Precious friends have helped me along the way, and God has given me the strength and knowledge to help them.

Paul reminds us to make the best use of our time because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16). I do not know when the hour will come that I must meet my Lord and give an account of how I spent my time in His service. I pray that He will grant me the time and strength to bring others to Him.

So, thank You, my God and Savior, for the time You have given me. Thank you for the time You lived among Your creation to save me. I worship You for the time of agony You suffered while You died for me. Thank You for Your resurrection which gives me joy and hope. Thank You for being my Friend, listening to my prayers, and guiding me and helping me. Most of all, I thank You for Your promise of eternal life with You.

--Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)

Throughout the ages no nation ever had a better friend than the mother who taught her children to pray.