

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

July 29, 2018

Lessons from a Genealogy (1)

by Frank Himmel

The New Testament opens with a list of names, a genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17). When we come across such lists in our Bible reading we may be tempted to give them the "passover" treatment: after all, there is little action, many of the characters are obscure, and besides that, most of us struggle to even pronounce their names!

Why does the Bible include such lists? The answer varies, but in each case there is a purpose. What can we learn from this one that introduces Jesus to us? First of all, *God knows us all*.

This list identifies just over forty men. We know a good bit about some of these from the accounts of their lives in the Old Testament. On the other hand, we know nothing about others of them; a few are not even mentioned anywhere else in Scripture (Luke's genealogy is not identical). Nevertheless, God knew them all!

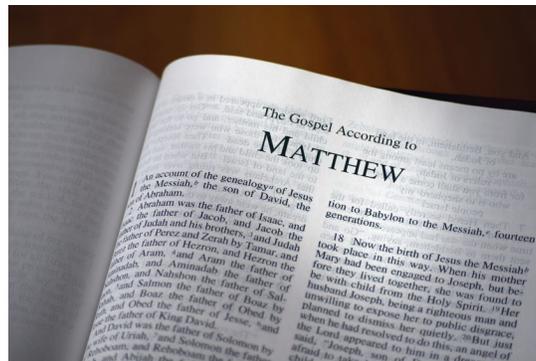
Matthew's list has several omissions. For example, Matthew lists twelve generations from Zerubbabel to

Jesus, whereas Luke has twenty-one. And Matthew omits several kings in v. 8: Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah reigned between Joram and Uzziah. These omissions were evidently to condense the genealogy to three equal lists of fourteen (note v. 17). But why three lists of fourteen? Several theories exist, among them: 1) It was simply to aid in memorization: it divides the list into three distinct historical periods. 2) It was a play on the perfect number seven: three lists of two times seven. 3) The answer may be in the significance of 42. In prophecy it is a time of suffering (1260 days, 42 months, 3½ years—"time, times, and half a time").

This would emphasize that the era of suffering during the pre-Messianic period was now ending.

Regardless of the reason for Matthew's arrangement, these omissions in no way negate the point. God knows all people, prominent or obscure.

Few of us will make much of a mark in history. No one will build monuments to us or record our names in history books. In fact, in fewer generations than we imagine, our own families will not even know our names. Just remember, however, God always knows us. He knows all about every one of us. He knows our strengths and weakness, our opportunities, our challenges, and our efforts or lack of them. He even knows our hearts. Is this first lesson from Matthew's genealogy a consoling one or a frightening one to you? ■



Our Spiritual Family

by Frank Himmel

Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.” Answering them, He said, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:31-35).

When we are reconciled to God in Christ we are also joined in association with others who are in His fellowship. It is “the household of God, which is the church of the living God” (1 Timothy 3:15). It is a spiritual family.

The reality is that we are often closer to our spiritual family than to our physical one, at least in some ways.

One reason is geographic. Many families are spread out all over the country. In my adult life I have never lived in the same state as my sister and only briefly close to my brother. That means I spend a lot more time with spiritual brothers and sisters, and that naturally builds bonds.



Another factor is that physical families are frequently divided over religion. Jesus warned that it would be this way: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). Because our service to the Lord is the most important thing in life, it is natural for us to grow closer to those who share that outlook and be somewhat distanced from those who do not, regardless of biological connections.

Jesus promised,

Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).

What a blessing our spiritual family is! It gives us brethren who will come to our aid: materially (e.g., Acts 2, 6), physically, emotionally, etc., any time of the day or night. It gives us brethren who can instruct us (Ephesians 4:11-13), brethren who can advise us (cf. Psalm 1:1), brethren who are watching for our souls (Hebrews 12:15).

Thank God for such a rich blessing. Do all you can to make the local church family the best it can be. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Chris Brooks	Howard Moore
SONG LEADER	William Lefort	William Lefort
OPENING PRAYER	David Gray	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Mike Zachry	
CUP	Kerry Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Adam Gibson	
SERMON/INVITATION	Greg Winget	Chris Brooks
CLOSING PRAYER	John Baucom	Josh Baucom