

The Real Family Christmas Tree

Text: Matthew 1:1, 17 and 21

Introduction: This is one of the Christmas passages seldom read but very important. This record may seem dull, but it is vital. If I were to give a Bible to a pre-Christian or a newly saved person I would not suggest them to begin with Matthew because it would automatically be tedious. Listen to 1:9 in the KJV, *and Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz, and Achaz begat Ezekias.* I think it would be much better to start with Mark which reads more like USA Today, "*The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the son of God.*"

Why is this genealogy vital? Matthew was focusing on the mindset of the Jewish people. He wanted to show that Jesus had the credentials to be their Messiah, the long awaited One. It is the title deed to be king. If they were free of the Roman Empire then Jesus of Nazareth would be the King sitting on David's throne. See Romans 1:2-3 so this is not **A Family Tree - it is THE Family Tree. Matthew traced it back to Abraham and Luke tracks it back to Adam.**

THE FAMILY CHRISTMAS TREE HAS SOME TWISTED BRANCHES:

Judah in verse 3 counseled to sale his young half-brother Joseph into slavery. Rehoboam, verse 7 was responsible for splitting the nation that had enjoyed peace, prosperity and world renown under his father Solomon. Manasseh, v. 10 was credited with leading the southern kingdom into more sin than all the nations that the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites. I Ch. 33: 9. Then there were some **SHOCKING BRANCHES**. Women were not noted in Jewish genealogies and God forbid that Gentile women should make THE LIST. It is almost like today when women generally set aside their maiden name and take up the husband's name. Let's look at the UNEXPECTED WOMEN.:

- **Tamar** is a branch that celebrates God's determination. Please don't accuse the Bible of being boring. The story in Genesis is filled with drama. God's promised seed Jesus was to come from the tribe of Judah, the 4th son of Jacob. (Gen. 49:10) Tamar, Er, a gentile married the son of Judah but he did something wicked and the Lord killed him. The Levitical law required that his next brother Onan marry Tamar so that Er's name would be carried on. But Onan did not allow that to happen and he was killed. Judah had one son left and he began to feel that it wasn't safe to marry Tamar. Eventually Tamar seduced her father-in-law Judah and from that incident she gave birth to Perez. Regardless of the rebellious will of man and the deceit of God's will prevailed. The seed of David will be attached by Satan through Haman in the book of Esther when he desired to annihilate the Jewish people. Then in Herod as he tries to murder baby Jesus. But God overrules and Jesus fulfills the determined will of God to make it to the cross so that He might save us from our sins. V.21

- **Rahab** IS A BRANCH THAT CELEBRATES GOD'S PLEASURE, 1:5. The writer of Hebrews says that the thing that pleases God most is faith. This Gentile woman received the Hebrew spies and risked her life by hiding them from the Jericho police. She and the spies made a compact that when the army of Israel came to destroy Jericho that she and her family would be saved. Her faith is celebrated in the Hall of Fame of Faith in Hebrews: 11:31. Her faith was courageous and James writes that true faith works for God. Ja.2:25
- **Ruth** IS A BRANCH THAT CELEBRATES GOD'S GRACE. V.5 Hey, she has a whole novel named after her in the first volume of the Bible. Her ancestors were the Moabites. Because that nation began with an immoral daughter and her drunken dad, the Lord placed a curse on the Moabites excluding them from the congregation of Israel. But the 3rd and 4th generation passed and Ruth was born. She married a Jewish immigrant but he died. She learned of the God of Israel through the faith of her mother-in-law. Together they moved back to Bethlehem. There she married a rich farmer and she gave birth to Obed. She was the great grandmother of King David. That's called Grace.
- **Bathsheba** IS A BRANCH THAT CELEBRATES GOD'S RESTORATION. The story is in II Samuel 7 Even Hollywood found this story intriguing. As a result of her adulterous affair with King David, her husband was killed, and the child she conceived died. She would later bare a son named Solomon who built the temple. David will write a favorite Psalm about his recovery from that sin, Psalm 23: "he restoreth my soul."

THE CHRISTMAS FAMILY TREE HAS A DELIGHTFUL BRANCH. Mary, the mother of Jesus. The angel said that she was highly favored. She was chosen to be the vessel to deliver Jesus Christ to the world. Her attitude is so beautiful. When she heard of God's s plan, she responded, "***I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said.***" In modern parlance, she seconded the motion. O how we need Christians that say, I second the motion. To Christ's command to preach the gospel to the entire world. To be committed to the growth of the Kingdom here on earth. To confess publicly. To say "yes," when the Spirit of God when you believe He has motioned for you to do a certain thing.

The Christmas family tree is still growing branch-by- branch. I thank God for allowing Joyce and me to serve for over twenty years in San Francisco. The churches were located on two of the famous streets in California, Mission Street and Market Street. I have seen the Tamars, Rahabs, Ruths, and Bathsheba. Garby from Armenia was rescued from the Communist when she was so young. She made her way to China and then San Francisco. Her faith was strong and her prayer life was powerful. If you visit FBC of SF you will find a prayer chapel beautifully appointed named to honor her. Penny H. lived most of her adult life as a tough, harsh and wild woman. The Christ arrested her by His grace. She was baptized, sang in the choir, brought family and friends to church where some of them received Jesus. But there were a number of times when she was at the door of death. God brought her back and she believes it was to give witness to Jesus who

was active all the events of her life. If you didn't want to know about Jesus you didn't go near Penny. I can still see Rachel in the audience sitting on my right with a twinkle in her eye and her young daughter next to her and usually some friend. From time to time she would testify with words like, "You know before I came to Christ, I was a prostitute. I want to tell you how he changed my life."

When the visitation team visited in the Alemany projects they came to an apartment where the door was opened and the man was beating his wife. Her name was Barbara. Our team told them to stop it. Barbara and her daughter lived a few days in the nursery of our church. She became a Christian and later taught people how to minister to the homeless. She became a missionary for Jesus in the Portland area. There have been some Mary types who as young high school students turned their lives over to Jesus. Ana went to Africa and Marianne to Vietnam to share the message of Jesus.

The question is Have you become a branch in God's tree of life?

My son has made a serious study of our family tree. He has found that my wife Joyce can trace her ancestors to Charlemagne, King of the Franks (768-814) and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 800-814.

WOW! I KNEW I HAD MARRIED UP

But I'm sure that Joyce and I put no stock in that family tree. Our hope for this world and the life to come is that we have been adopted into **THE ONE AND ONLY TREE THAT REACHES INTO HEAVEN**. Several years ago the Hammer Schlemmer advertised in their Catalog The 7th Upside Down Tree. The promotion had these enticing phrases "more room at the bottom for gifts" all the lights are attached and it is all for \$599.00. Well the True Family Christmas tree offers plenty of room for the family. And it has been completely paid for by Christ's death on the cross.