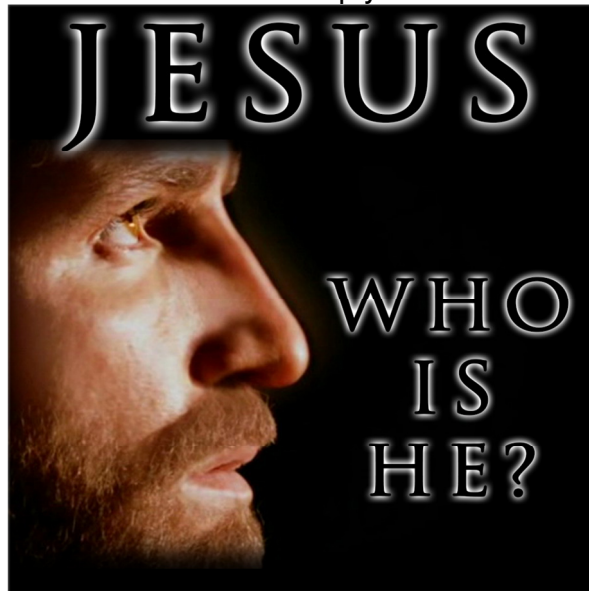


Matthew 1:1-17, Jesus: Who is He? “The Gracious King”

4.19.15

Today we begin a series in the book of Matthew simply titled: Jesus: Who is He?



The reason we titled the series “Who is He?” is because there a TON of misconceptions about who Jesus really is.

The media has one way of describing Jesus. They describe Jesus as a man who accepted all lifestyles and was just an all-around nice guy who never offended anybody with anything He said. He was “happy-go-lucky” frolicking kind of guy.

Then there is the “Prosperity Gospel Preachers” who tell us that Jesus came to make us happy and if we’ll just give their ministry \$300 in one lump sum or three easy payments over the next 3 months, then He’ll bless you with health, wealth and prosperity and all your problems will go away.

Then there are the legalists who say that you must obey their 618 rules and regulations and dress like they dress, don’t wear make-up, sing out of the red-back hymnal and then you might please Jesus enough to allow Him to grant you entrance into the kingdom of God, but only if you contort your face to make it look like you’ve been eating dill pickles and sucking on lemons for 6 months. And don’t you dare smile, because Jesus never smiled.

You see all of these views are absolutely and totally unbiblical. What I just described to you are false depictions of Jesus. They are simply not true, yet the public (and even many Christians) have bought into these erroneous views of who Jesus really is.

You might know that just before Easter on Sunday, March 29, the National Geographic Channel premiered its adaptation of Bill O’Reilly’s book *Killing Jesus* to a huge audience of over 3.7 million viewers. Here’s a picture of one of the scenes in the movie:

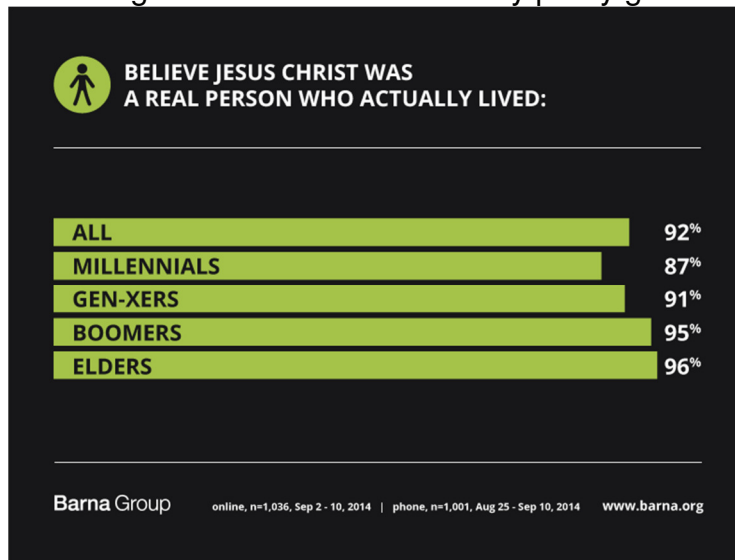


It was the channel's biggest audience in history. Also, CNN's *Finding Jesus* miniseries had impressive viewership that same week. Google reported that searches of Jesus Christ climbed by 53% in the week leading up to Easter. And all of that is great...but, if what is being disseminated as fact about Jesus is wrong, then that's a big problem.

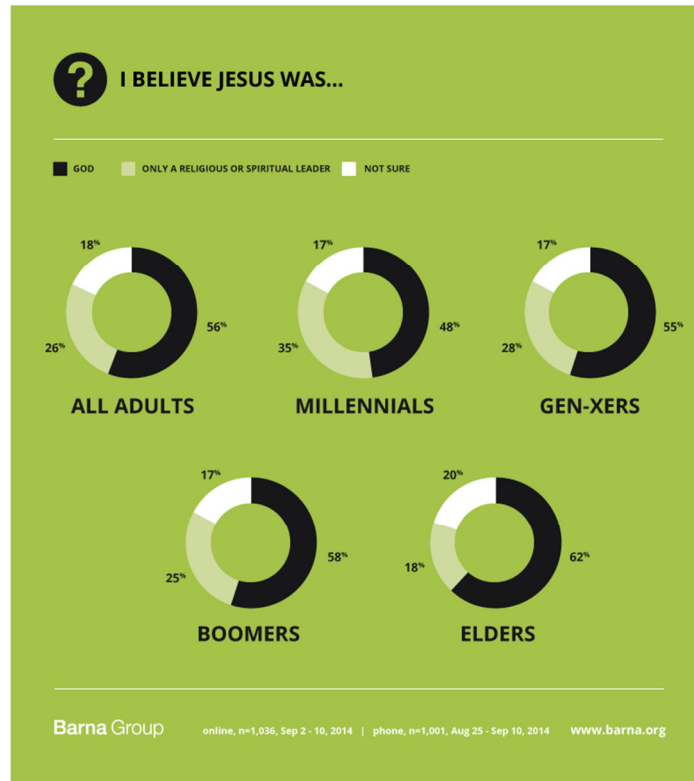
You understand, Satan works best when he can mix false teaching and false doctrine with a little bit of the truth and the populace in America (which is mostly biblically illiterate) will fall for it and when they do, Satan wins. He wins because he has distorted the real Jesus and a proper Biblical understanding of who He really is.

And I believe in many ways, He is winning. Americans have some really strange views of who Jesus is. I did some research via the stats guru, George Barna Research and this is what I found.

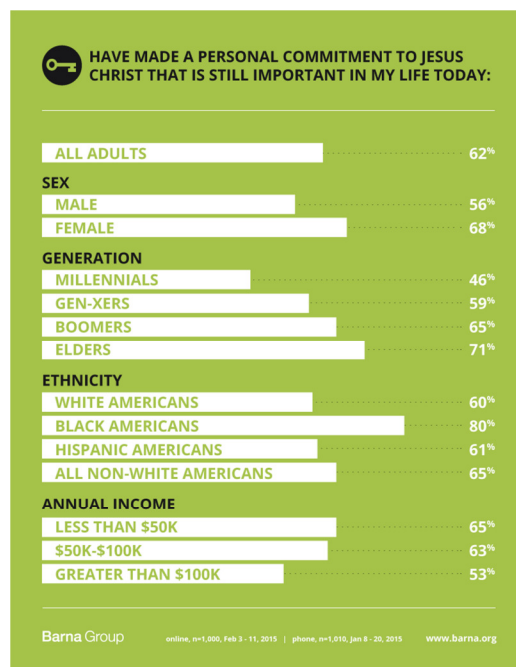
I'm going to show you three things. The first chart is actually pretty good...



Barna reports that 92% of all Americans believe Jesus was a real person who actually lived. That's great! But the next chart shows the % of people who believe Jesus was either "God," "Only a Religious or Spiritual Leader" or "Not Sure."



You'll see that "All Adults," the top left circle indicates that 56% of Americans (see the black part of the circle) believe Jesus was God. Only a little over half of Americans believe Jesus is God, even though the Bible teaches that. Keep that in mind. 26% believe He was only a religious or spiritual leader (I guess that would be like Confucius or Buddha) and 18% aren't sure who He was. But, get this...



62% of All Adults in America, (see the top line), have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their lives, but remember the last chart... Only 56% of Americans believe Jesus was actually God. That means there are people who are choosing to follow Jesus even though they aren't 100% sure He is who He said He is in the Bible.

Interestingly, if you will look back at this chart near the top...Under SEX...women believe in Jesus more than men, by far (12% more) and if you look at the annual income near the bottom, you will see that the more money you make, the less likely you are to have surrendered your life to Jesus. If you make less than \$50k/yr. (65%) you are much more likely to make a personal commitment to Jesus than if you make over \$100k/yr. at only 53%.

So what does all of this tell us? It tells us there is a lot of confusion out there about who Jesus really is? There is uncertainty galore and that's because most people do not look to the Bible for their information... Instead, they look to the news media, Facebook, Twitter, Huffington Post, CNN, Bill O'Reilly or the Discovery Channel.

Well, over the next few Sundays, we are going to look to the Word of God to see who Jesus really is and today we begin by looking at where Jesus came from. **I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 1.**

Today we are going to look at the genealogy of Jesus, which will tell us where He came from and why He came to this earth. Today we are going to see Jesus as our "Gracious King" and we're going to see the grace and mercy of God in what might otherwise be considered a very boring passage of Scripture.

Follow along with me as we read together the first 17 verses of Matthew, chapter 1. Matthew is writing this most likely between 50-60 A.D.

Matthew 1:1-17

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. **2** Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, **3** and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, **4** and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, **5** and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, **6** and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, **7** and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, **8** and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, **9** and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, **10** and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, **11** and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, **13** and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, **14** and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, **15** and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, **16** and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

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.

So why would I take 3 ½ minutes to read all of these names? You say, “That pretty much means nothing to me.” Well, that’s precisely the point. I want us to understand something very critical about this list of names. This list of names represents who Jesus is in that He is our Gracious King. What we are going to see this morning is the mercy and grace of God through this list of names.

Now first, we need to understand who is writing this for us. His name is Matthew and we know him to be one of the Apostles of Jesus and we also know he was a hated tax collector when Jesus called him.

Here’s an image I want you to get in your mind of a first century tax collector.



See how this man is pictured as mean and hateful? Tax collectors were some of the most hated and despised people of that day. Remember, the government of Rome was running the world and they collected high taxes of all of their subjects and they used common people to collect the taxes for them. In the case of Matthew, he was hired by Rome to collect taxes from his own people. Think about that... a Jew collecting taxes from other Jews. Matthew was seen as a traitor, because he was gathering taxes from his own countrymen to give to people of a foreign nation. Therefore, tax collectors were seen as hired prostitutes for the Roman government and they were hated by the people and seen as scum of the earth.

Yet, it is here we begin to see the mercy and grace of Jesus displayed in full view. Jesus saw something in Matthew that was salvageable. No...it was better than that. Jesus saw in Matthew what he could be and what he was meant to be. **Turn to Matthew chapter 9.**

Listen, if you are here today and you are lost...you don’t know Jesus as Lord of your life... Do you

understand this morning that Jesus sees in you what you can be...not what you are right now? He sees what you are meant to be and He desires to come into your life and transform you. That's exactly what He did for Matthew. Matthew would surrender his life to Jesus.

Matthew 9:9-13

9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. **10** And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. **11** And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" **12** But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. **13** Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Some of you here this morning need to hear that you are loved. You need to know that Jesus is our merciful and gracious Savior and He wants to save you. Matthew surrendered his life and it's through the eyes of a Jewish tax collector that we see the genealogy of Jesus.

You might ask, "Why in the world do we even need this genealogy? What's the big deal about a family tree?" Well, it's a fair question and here's the main reason. With this genealogy we will see that Matthew can prove to his Jewish audience that Jesus has the right pedigree to claim to be the Messiah, the Promised Savior and Deliverer. You see for the Jew, their ancestry was inseparably intertwined with the covenants and promises of God.

The Messiah had to come from the line of Abraham and from the line of David. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation and David was the King of Israel and God promised the Messiah would rule and reign from his throne. So, we understand that the OT Scriptures prophesied over and over that the Son of God, the Savior of the world, would come from Abraham and David. We know Abraham places Jesus in the nation of Israel and David places Jesus in line as heir to the throne.

Now stay with me here. This is critical that we understand this. In order for Jesus to make the claim that He was the Messiah, the Anointed, Promised One, He had to prove that His genealogy and legal claim as the Messiah was correct. And here's the cool thing. We have two genealogies to prove it. We have this one and we have one in Luke 3:23-38. Here in Matthew we see Jesus' **legal** connection to Abraham and David, while in Luke's we see Jesus' **biological** connection to Abraham and David. Matthew's genealogy is traced through the line of David via his son Solomon, while Luke's is traced through David's son Nathan. Matthew shows Joseph's lineage, while Luke shows Mary's lineage and they both end up at David. Isn't that cool!!!

Now here's something else that's pretty amazing. See this picture...

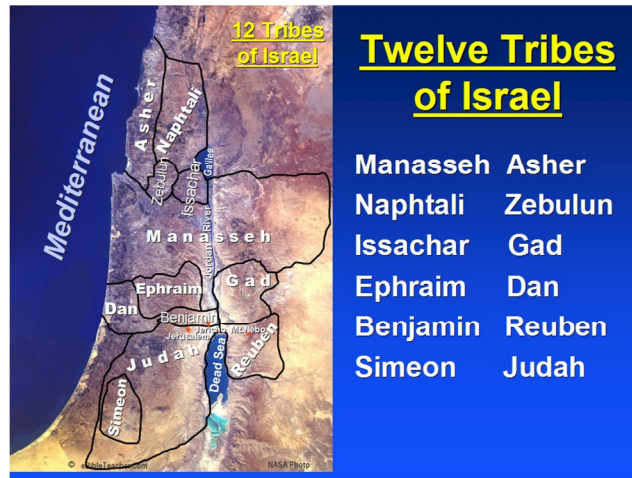


That is a picture of the western wall of the Temple area in Jerusalem. It's called the "Wailing Wall," because it's there that the Jews still gather to this day...



...and pray for the Messiah to come. But, they've missed Him... He's already come and Jesus proved it through the two genealogies we have in Scripture. And here's the point I wanted to make. If a man showed up on the scene today claiming to be the Messiah, he could never prove it. You want to know why? Because all of the Jewish records and genealogies were destroyed in 70 AD when Jerusalem and the Temple were burned by the Romans. Jesus Christ is still the only Jewish born man who can actually prove His claim to the throne of David. No one else could even do that today.

You see back in the OT to even get a piece of land in the Promised Land (Israel), you had to prove you were part of one of the 12 tribes (or sons of Jacob, aka Israel). In Numbers chapters 26 and 35 Moses indicates that you had to know your tribe in order to get a piece of land in the Promised Land of Canaan, known today as Israel. See this map:



There are the 12 tribes of Israel (aka Jacob) and where their allotted land was located and you had to prove you were part of one of those families in order to get any land. In Ezra 2:62, there is recorded where two men were excluded from the priesthood because they couldn't prove they were of the tribe of the Levites and thus were excluded from the priesthood.

Ezra 2:62

62 These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there, and so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean.

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian chronicles in his writings the use of ancestral files as part of Jewish culture, establishing who you were. The Jews were big-time into laying out proper pedigree. Even the Apostle Paul knew he was from the tribe of Benjamin. So Matthew establishes without question that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the promised deliverer and King. But there is something more I want us to see. Something else that I saw as I read that I want you to see. I want you to see five names and the five names I want you to see are all ladies.

In verse 3, you will see the name of a lady named Tamar. In verse 5 there are two ladies listed, Rahab and Ruth. In verse 6 you see the words, "wife of Uriah," which is Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon and in verse 16, you see Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Please turn to Luke, chapter 8. As you are turning, **you might ask**, "What's so important about these five ladies?" Well, first and foremost women were NEVER listed in any genealogy in the first century. Only the men were listed. It was a very male-chauvinist culture. Jesus changed all of that. Jesus allowed lady disciples or followers as Luke records in Luke, chapter 8.

Luke 8:1-3

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, **2** and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, **3** and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

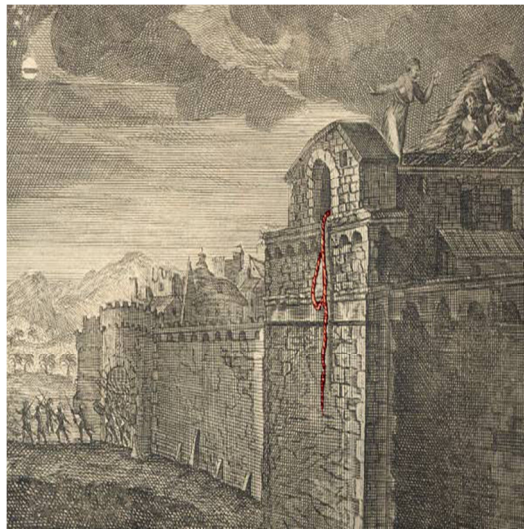
Luke shows us how Jesus elevated the status of women when He came. And Matthew's genealogy does the same. Friends, the ground is level at the foot of the cross. Paul said as much to the Galatian church...

Galatians 3:28

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

You might ask, "Why did Matthew list these ladies." Well, I'm convinced it's because through these ladies that we see our Gracious and Merciful King. Tamar committed incest with Judah, from which Jesus comes from the tribe. If I had been Matthew, I'd left that out. But, the Bible is always honest. The Lord sugarcoats nothing. Rahab was a prostitute and yet it was through her that the two spies, Joshua and Caleb would be given protection and refuge while trying to see how they might overtake the Canaanites and retake the promised land.

Do you remember the account as found in Joshua chapter 2? And God showed mercy on her and her family and because of a...



...scarlet thread...the red rope that she left hanging out of her window from which she would be identified and rescued. It was Rahab who would marry a man named Salmon and she would give birth to a son named Boaz. Look at Matthew 1, verse 5 again.

Matthew 1:5

5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of David the king.

You see...there was Rahab a prostitute and Ruth a Moabite (a pagan) and it was from them that King David would come. Rahab was David's great, great grandmother and Ruth was his great grandmother. Two people whom you would never have thought in a million years you would find in the genealogy of the Son of God, but there they are! And then there is of course, Bathsheba who would be the mother of Solomon, that David took to be his wife through lust that led to murder, by the killing of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. Amazing!

And then there is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Matthew 1:16

16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

By the way you will note that Joseph is not listed as the “Father of Jesus,” he is listed only as the “husband of Mary.” Matthew makes certain that the doctrine of the virgin birth is understood quite clearly and succinctly by how verse 16 is worded. Jesus was born of Mary, whose husband was Joseph. Jesus is the Son of God. Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit, according to Matthew chapter 1 verse 18, (which we will see next time).

One quick comment about Mary. The Catholics say that she never sinned. They say that you have to pray to Mary to get your prayers heard by God. They say Mary stayed a perpetual virgin and she never died. Folks, none of that is in Scripture. In fact, we know that Jesus had brothers and sisters.

Mark 6:3

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

As we talked about from the beginning, here’s another example of a false understanding of Scripture. The Catholic Church continues to be deluded and duped by false teaching about Mary, because you understand, Mary was a sinner just like us. Yes, she was a wonderful young lady and yes, she was without question a young lady of high character and impeccable morality, but she needed a Savior too. And so there you have it... the family line and genealogy of Jesus...

Honestly...what a mess! Jesus’ family line seems more like something you’d see on one of those sick “day-time” talk shows. What a dysfunctional mess: incest, prostitution, pagans...liars like Abraham, who lied that Sarah, his wife was his sister. David, yes...a King...but, a man who would become so filled with lust that he’d kill to have Bathsheba as his wife. Solomon who lived a life of appalling stupidity and folly... A man who was hooked on the pornography of his day...and had 700 wives and 300 mistresses called concubines.

All these are in the line of Jesus. All these sinners. All these messed up people. Just like me and just like you. Yet, isn’t that the grace and mercy of God...in that while we were yet sinners...Christ died for us!

Who is Jesus? The Bible calls Him a friend of sinners. Jesus said about Himself:

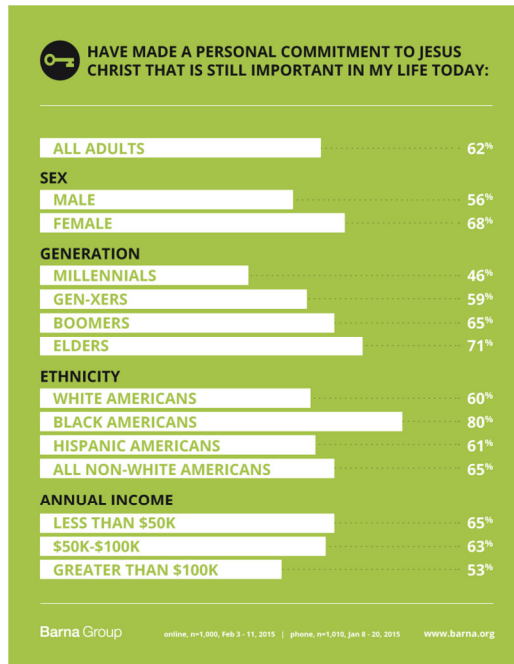
Luke 7:34

34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

Sinners...that would be you and that would be me. And yet, if we recognize that we’re sinners and we confess that sin to God and repent of those sins, calling on the name of Jesus...we can be saved.

How bad have you blown it? How bad have you messed it up? As bad as these people in the genealogy of Jesus? Murderers, liars, pagans, family incest, prostitutes, adulterers. Hey...Jesus came for us all. He came to give His life as payment for sin so that we might be delivered from any lifestyle of sin.

See this chart one last time...



Where do you fit in? Have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, that is still important in your life today?

If you haven't, you can do that right now. Because the Gracious King of Kings and Lord of Lords is waiting to make you part of His family...to place you in His family line. Repent, believe and call on the Gracious King today.

Let's pray.