



52 THE PURSUIT OF JESUS

Is Life Random?
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our Quest 52 series in our year-long Pursuit of Jesus. We are on a journey with Him from the time He arrived on planet earth through His crucifixion and resurrection. In this next year, we will study the **Person of Jesus or who He is; the Power of Jesus or what He can do; the Preaching of Jesus or what He teaches; and the Passion of Jesus or the significance of His sacrifice**. This week we are looking at Jesus' genealogy as recorded by the Apostle Matthew in his Gospel. Through the selections of people chosen for inclusion here, we will have a greater understanding of God's love for us and know that nothing about His plan for our lives is random.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 1:1-3a This is the genealogy of Jesus the *Messiah* the son of *David*, the son of *Abraham*: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was *Tamar*,

Matthew 1:5-6 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was *Rahab*, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was *Ruth*, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been *Uriah's wife*,

Matthew 9:9-13 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "*Follow me,*" he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many *tax collectors* and *sinners* came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "*Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?*" On hearing this, Jesus said, "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'* For I have not come to call the righteous, but *sinners*."

Ephesians 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out *everything* in the conformity with the *purpose of his will*.

2 Corinthians 12:9a But he said to me, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*"

Romans 8:28 For we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

OBSERVATION

So what is a genealogy? It is our family tree which lists our ancestors, their births, marriages, vocations, and deaths. Some go back centuries and include people we like to brag about as ones who contributed much during their lives and some include those who we are not as likely to be proud of. In any case they can make us wonder if life is random. For instance, some have George Washington in their lineage while others have John Wilkes Booth in theirs. Some have Winston Churchill and others Hitler. Matthew and Luke record Jesus' genealogies. In some cases, there were common ancestors such as King David and they included women, non-Hebrews, heroes and seemingly unimportant humans. But none were included randomly.

QUESTION: Have you signed up to have your genealogy written or DNA evaluated? Which ancestor surprised you the most?

QUESTION: Tell us about the grandparent you most admire. Why?

Genealogies were important to the Jews. They meant that they were a part of God's bigger story; they were included in God's salvation of His people; they were biographies of God's people and how they were connected. The word Messiah means Christ, Anointed One or Chosen One so Matthew makes a bold claim in the first sentence of his book. He wants the Jews to know that Jesus is related to all of the **right** people: David and Abraham, for example. In Bible times, wealthy people paid extra to leave out any bad characters in their genealogy, but Matthew does the opposite: he puts them all in – even women. There are four of them: **Ruth** who was a Moabite or foreigner; **Rahab** who was a foreigner and a prostitute; **Bathsheba** who was “**another man's wife**” (not listed as King David's wife and Solomon's mother) and Tamar who seduced Judah, her father-in-law, and had children by him. Why did Matthew include them? Because there is a point to his story that needs to be told. Matthew wanted everyone to know that Jesus didn't just come **for** sinners – He came **from** sinners. People like the four women were part of His own story. They were His kind of people – these kinds of men and women were His friends. Matthew himself was a tax collector, one of the greatly reviled citizens in his community. He worked for the Romans and cheated the Jews yet Jesus chose him. Jesus ate with sinners. He chose them. The story of Jesus isn't just some random story from a dysfunctional family. Jesus is God drawing near to **all** people. Matthew wants everyone to know that Jesus is connected to all the **right** people because otherwise He couldn't be the Messiah and He is connected to the **wrong kind** of people because that makes room for **you** and **me**.

QUESTION: When have you felt that your choices don't matter or are only by chance?

APPLICATION

When something bad happens we try to find meaning and purpose behind it so we use phrases like, “Everything happens for a reason,” or, “I don't believe in coincidences,” or “I guess it wasn't meant to be,” or “I guess her time had come.” We want to know that there is purpose in our pain. We've never heard someone trying to make sense out of the good things though, do we? “Why did I get such a big bonus?”, or “Why are my kids so happy and healthy?” or “Why are all of my relationships so good?” We kind of expect those things.

QUESTION: During what painful experience have you asked one of those questions?

QUESTION: When everything is going right for you, what is the condition of your devotional time?

QUESTION: When things are going wrong for you, what is the condition of your prayer life?

Matthew begins his gospel with Jesus' genealogy because he wants to connect the dots for us. He wants us to know that Jesus' birth is not random. It is a divine story and our genealogies aren't random either. They may seem disconnected and without purpose, but God uses every experience in our lives for His good and glory. What the genealogy of Jesus teaches us is that God has a plan and that we are a part of it; He wove together His plan over 2000 years, generation by generation and now, in Christ, it includes us. **1) God always uses people to accomplish His purposes:** He allows bad things to happen and allows suffering so that we can be used to alleviate and ease pain with our hands reaching out for His glory; He calls us to give and serve the least of these and invest in missions; He uses our gifts and failures and past mistakes to accomplish His will. **All** of the details

of our lives can be used by God. **2) God uses people who are always imperfect.** (What good news for us!) Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David had many faults; Tamar, Bathsheba, Rahab and Ruth were victims of sexual sin or racism. **3) Life is not random.** God redeemed the pain of all of these people and He can do the same for us. All of our pain and mistakes can be used for His purposes. When we are weak, God's grace is sufficient for us – His power is made perfect in our weakness.

QUESTION: As you reflect back on your life, how has God taken your mistakes and redeemed them for His glory?

QUESTION: How does the knowledge that your life is not random change your relationship with God and your understanding of His plan for you?

QUESTION: Ephesians 1:11 speaks of the chosen people being predestined. What does this scripture mean?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to recognize how precious we are to You. Your plans for us before we were conceived ask us to only be obedient and love You in order for those plans come to fruition. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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