

“God’s ‘Perfect’ Plan to Bring Jesus to Us”

Matthew 1:1-17

We’re now in December and the countdown is on; only 22 more days until Christmas. And no doubt we’re in planning mode so I’ve got some helpful tips on how to have the perfect Christmas – and I’m going to back it up with Scripture in a few minutes. Here are some tips on how to have the perfect Christmas:

- 1) Do not force everyone in your family to come to your place, at your specified time on your specific date regardless of what the other family members are doing. Because as much as people think a perfect Christmas happens that way, it doesn’t. All it does is make people resentful.
- 2) Don’t force people to be on their best behaviour and be in their best clothes and make sure they pretend they have no problems in life by not talking about their problems in life. Life can be difficult and as much as we’d like to pretend at Christmas gatherings everything is fine, it’s not fine. And make room for hurts to be heard if it can bring healing.
- 3) Don’t exclude those non-family members when someone a few days before Christmas says, ‘Oh, can so-and-so come? She has no family to go to for Christmas this year so I thought she could come to ours. Real Christmas is not an exclusive time for family; it’s about Jesus coming to the world to make His family bigger.

So why can I say that I can back this up with Scripture? As we read the exciting, cliff-hanger, how’s-it-going-to-turn-out genealogy in Matt.1:1-17 we see God’s perfect plan to bring Jesus into the world included interruptions and delays; it included a mixed bag of sinners and saints; some of whom were down right embarrassing to be part of Jesus’ line and a number of untypical family members who squeezed into Jesus’ line.

And yet God said in Gal. 4:4

⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

So God had a plan in place and a specific time (which we’ll see even more closely next week) that unfolded to bring Jesus to us. But as we see in Matthew’s genealogy in Matt. 1, we might not think it was perfect. We might even doubt God’s involvement, and yet it was all part of God’s plan.

Why does Matthew begin his gospel with a genealogy? This is very Jewish of course. Matthew wants his (mostly) Jewish audience to understand Jesus is the Messiah; His lineage proves He alone qualifies as the prophesied Messiah, the fulfilment of God’s covenants to Abraham and David. That’s why he starts there:

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

The Old Testament prophesied many times that a descendant of David would one day come and rule on David’s throne and bring in the kingdom where He will rule from Jerusalem. Isaiah 9 said of Jesus He is the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace and of His government there will be no end. Back in Gen. 12 God promised through Abraham that he would have many descendants who will inherit the land of Israel and that the world would one day be

blessed through Him. So immediately Matthew says Jesus is the heir of Abraham and the Son of David who will fulfil God's covenant promises.

And yet while the genealogy will prove Jesus' Jewish claim to the throne it also shows us . . .

Jesus is the Promised Saviour for Everyone (1:1)

The references to Abraham and David give a clear link to Jesus' Jewish heritage. As a physical descendant of Mary and a legal descendant of Joseph (will explain more in a few minutes) Jesus was clearly of Jewish descent.

But the link with Abraham also shows Jesus is Saviour for Gentiles too. Gen. 12:2-3 says,

² "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Abraham is the father of everyone who believes God's promises. In Rom. 4 we read,

¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴ For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵ because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

The irony will be that in time most Jews will reject Jesus as their Messiah/Saviour but more Gentiles will place their faith in Jesus. However, when Jesus Christ returns and sets foot on the Mt. Of Olives, at the end of the 7 year tribulation when 2/3 of Israel's population will have been wiped out, Zech. 12:7-14 tells us every surviving Jew will mourn and repent when they see Him and turn in faith to Him which is what Paul refers to also in Rom. 11:25.

So from vv.2-6 Matthew traces the Patriarchal line from Abraham to the kingly line of David. Matthew's purpose is not to give a full genealogy so the Spirit of God guided him to selectively choose those ones through whom line continued and even in some cases was spared. But when you look at the names that he includes (and note the ones he excludes) we realize . . .

Jesus Came from a Messy Family (1:2-6)

It amazes me that God did not choose the perfect circumstances or the godliest people in bringing His Son to the world. And He did choose the path of people through whom He would eventually bring Jesus which . . .

Included some unconventional choices (v.2, 6b)

God made Abraham and Sarah wait 25 years to see their promised son, even though in their impatience Abraham fathered a son (Ishmael) through Sarah's Egyptian servant Hagar. God chose Isaac over Ishmael. When Isaac's wife Rebekah gave birth to twin boys, God chose Jacob the second born over Esau the firstborn. When Jacob had 12 sons God chose the 4th born, Judah to be the one through whom His promises through Abraham would be fulfilled. Even David was the last of 8 sons of Jesse and God made Samuel go through each of the 7 asking 'This one Lord?' before God settled on the son that Jesse left in the fields because no one thought much of David. So in bringing Jesus into the world, God sovereignly chose this one over that one making from a human perspective "unconventional" choices but God chose the path to bring Jesus into the world that best glorified Him. And as we skim over this list of names we also realize Jesus came through a messy family . . .

Not without embarrassing incidents (vv.3, 5, 6a)

The reason Judah was chosen over his older brothers was because Reuben humiliated his father by sleeping with his concubine and Levi & Simeon killed the sons of Shechem by deceiving them into a covenant of peace through circumcision in order to allow them to marry their sister Dinah. But Judah fared no better. Matthew mentions 4 women (a very unusual addition to genealogies). Judah's first son married Tamar but he was a wicked man and God took his life. According to the Law Judah's second son was to marry Tamar – which he did –but he refused to impregnate Tamar so God took him. Judah refused to give his 3rd son to Tamar in marriage so Tamar tricked Judah disguising herself as a prostitute with whom Judah slept and she bore Judah twins, again God choosing second born Perez over first born Zerah. Can you imagine the headlines in the news today when you think of the heyday the news has had over the sexual fax pas of all these famous actors and newscasters?

Then there's Rahab, the prostitute who hid the two Jewish spies when Joshua sent them into Jericho. She ends up marrying Salmon who is the great-great grandfather of David. Salmon and Rahab have a son named Boaz who marries a Moabite girl names Ruth. The Moabites and Ammonites were never to enter God's sanctuary, yet God chooses these embarrassing incidents to further along the coming of the Messiah.

Then to top them all we have Bathsheba, whom David committed adultery and had her husband Uriah killed in battle to cover up his sin. So why then all these embarrassing incidents of non-Jewish descendants in the line of the Messiah? Because all these Gentiles showed they had more faith than their Jewish counterparts. Tamar showed more faith than Judah. Rahab believed God was going to destroy her city Jericho. Ruth showed more faith than Naomi and her sister-in-law who left Naomi. Uriah showed more faith than David by refusing to enjoy the company of his wife while his fellows Israelite soldiers were at war –something David wasn't doing when he should.

So God's not concerned of embarrassment because these were all people who showed faith. That's the kind of people included in the line of the Messiah.

As the genealogy continues from David to the exile we have a list of some of the kings of Judah – some are skipped here. When you see this list of names you realize some were spiritually faithful, others were inconsistent and a few others were downright wicked. Here we also learn that . . .

Jesus Family was Spiritually Imbalanced (1:7-11)

We just went through the good kings in Chronicles this summer and recognize some names. But if you recall even some of the good ones had bad finishes. Abijah's heart was not fully devoted to the Lord (1 Kings 15:3). Asa served God well for 35 years but then he made an alliance with the king

of Aram to defeat the king of Israel in the north. God rebuked him through the prophet Hanani and Asa got all angry, arrested Hanani and was stricken with a disease in his feet but he refused to repent and died from his disease.

His son Jehoshaphat won some great battles but he let his son marry the daughter of Jezebel! And the stories keep piling up of godly people and not so godly people in Jesus' background. Yet God was pleased to make this His plan. When you read the Bible and come to the gospels and understand how God brought Jesus into the world in the fullness of time we understand more clearly that in spite of the messy and embarrassing family and the spiritual roller coaster of some of the kings of Israel,

Jesus' Coming was Perfectly in Line with God's Timing (1:12-17)

And God's timing also included hardships in the life of Israel. But we see that . . .

Hardships couldn't prevent his birth (vv.12-15)

Matthew breaks up the genealogy in 3 sections: Abraham to David, David to the exile, the exile to Jesus. The exile is the only non-human part of the genealogy so it marks a significant aspect of Israel's life. God warned Israel in the Law in Deut. 28 that if Israel rebels against God as to not want Him in their life, God would send them to a foreign nation far away. But when that day came during the ministry of Jeremiah, God in His grace promised that it would only last for 70 years. And the exile signified the last Davidic king on Israel's throne. Since then they have never had complete sovereignty over all their land. Since 1948 Israel has finally been a sovereign state under its own rule but not all the land God promised nor are they under a son of David king.

The last ruling son of David king over all Israel was Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was obstinate. When the prophecies were presented to him about Israel's captivity to Babylon and his downfall, he burned the prophecies in the fire. So God took Jehoiakim and his son Jehoiachin to Babylon and said there will never be a son of Jehoiakim on the throne of David ever again.

But that's a problem because Jeconiah (v.12 is another name for Jehoiachin) is part of the genealogy of Jesus. So how can Jesus rule? The genealogy in Matt. 1 is Joseph's genealogy but Matthew carefully points out that Jesus is not a blood relative of Joseph's only a legal descendant.

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

The whole chapter is a list of 'this one begat that one' except when you come to Joseph. Joseph was not the earthly father of Jesus. Matthew points out only that Mary bore Jesus. And this lines up exactly with the prophecy in Gen. 3:15,

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

This prophecy about the Saviour coming to crush the head of Satan the serpent says that He is the offspring or seed of the woman only. Since it is through the union of man and woman that passes on our sin nature, Jesus had to have been born not through a normal pregnancy. Jesus' coming was perfectly timed in that not even

Our sin could prevent Jesus' birth (vv.16-17)

Jesus was sinless. Gabriel told Mary the Holy Spirit would come upon her. Joseph would refrain from sexual relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus.

So God's plan to bring Jesus into the world was perfectly timed and planned. The line of the Messiah included gentiles, imperfect believers and some downright scoundrels. Yet God chose all of them to be part of His plan to bring Jesus to the world.

That should encourage us because we're not perfect; we have messy lives; we're not the most logical choice to follow Jesus. The history of the family of God is strewn with embarrassing incidents of sin and disobedience and is full of spiritually imbalanced people.

And that's what makes the gospel attractive. And that's what qualifies you and I to share the gospel; our messiness and imperfectness! Jesus died for messy, imperfect sinners. If we had to be perfect to share the gospel then the gospel would never get shared! Do we embarrass Jesus some days? Sure we do, but listen to Heb. 2:10,

¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹² He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." ¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

The message of Christmas is Jesus became one of us. He is not ashamed to be associated with us, in spite of our messiness and spiritual imbalances. The angel told the shepherds that *"I bring you god news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born you, he is Christ the Lord."*

Jesus and God are quite content to entrust the gospel to us. Jesus' messy family line tells us He's okay with that because God used those people to bring Jesus into the world. Now He wants to use us to bring Jesus to our world to help other imperfect sinners join Jesus' family of other imperfect sinners. And anytime someone accepts Christ, the angels in heaven throw a party.

Know any imperfect people who need Jesus? Tell them He can sympathize with them and wants to come into their life and give it an eternal purpose.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us
at olivet@rideau.net