



## Home for the Holidays

*A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:  
This is how the birth of Jesus came about*

Matthew 1:1, 18a  
Lesson One: Traditions

How far back can you trace your family tree? It's important to think about family at Christmas.

Notice I didn't start with the elephant in the room. Why are we talking about this passage of Scripture as we are starting to talk about Christmas? This isn't the traditional Christmas story. The first eighteen verses of Matthew have a bunch of names that I cannot pronounce! **These words really wouldn't be important to anyone ...**

**Except to Matthew.** He's the one who decided to include this list in his gospel account. Matthew was a tax collector by trade – an accountant, if you will. Matthew was concerned with columns and bottom lines. Number of people in one column; amounts of taxes collected in another. Family trees and genealogies were a part of his business.

Which makes me stop and think. We don't know how old Matthew was as a disciple. I wonder if Matthew, or his father, was somehow involved in this census. I wonder if these names were important because he had seen them before.

Matthew thought it was important to include this list to help us see why Joseph had to go to Bethlehem for the census. But his real focal point may have been found in verse seventeen. There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the exile to the birth of Jesus. I wonder if Matthew – a purveyor of numbers – was fascinated by the balance. I wonder if he saw the fingerprints of God over all time.

Genealogies were man things – tracing generations from father to father. But Matthew includes the name of four unique women in this genealogy. Tamar (verse three) had a tragic set of circumstances in her life and posed as a prostitute to have a child. Rahab (verse five) was a prostitute in Jericho and provided assistance and safety for the Israelite spies. Her reward was her safety – and she ended up being in the lineage of the Messiah. Ruth (verse five) was also not an Israelite – a Moabite who left her own people to become a part of her mother-in-law's people – and the grandmother of King David. The final woman isn't even listed by name, but by consequence. She was the wife of Uriah, neighbor of the King (verse six), the mother of Solomon, Bathsheba.

Are you looking for God's fingerprint? If you were going to include women in this list, you would have picked the best women – Deborah or Queen Esther. Instead Matthew picked ordinary women who were touched by the hand of God and allowed ordinary circumstances to be changed by extra-ordinary faith.

The next time you are swallowed by mundane, ordinary circumstances,  
Allow them to be changed by your extra-ordinary faith.

