

FRIEND OF SINNERS

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.” (Matthew 11:19; cf. also Matthew 1:1-16)

A. Matthew has his reasons for including this genealogy

1. First, in Israel, they loved genealogies
2. Second, it was an oral culture
3. Third, Matthew is determined to identify Jesus as the promised Messiah

B. There is an incredible surprise in these verses: sordid characters!

THE INTRUDERS

A. 1:3 - “...the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar”

1. Judah chooses a Canaanite woman, Tamar, for his son’s wife (Genesis 38)
 - a. Er dies; Judah breaks covenant; Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute
“[Judah:] *Bring her out and have her burned to death before me.*” (Genesis 38: 24)
 - b. Tamar has twins. The first boy receives a scarlet cord around his wrist
 - c. One day Messiah will be born from his line; the scarlet cord is a reminder
2. Matthew puts Tamar in the Book

B. 1:5 - “Salmon, the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab”

1. Rahab. Another Gentile! A prostitute living in Jericho!
2. Joshua sent spies to scout Jericho; they end up at Rahab’s house
3. The spies promise: we’ll spare everyone in your house - just hang a scarlet cord (the sign of salvation, cf. Joshua 2) from your window
4. Again, Matthew includes this scandalous Gentile woman in Jesus’ ancestry

C. 1:5 - “Boaz, the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth”

“Wherever you go, I will go, wherever you stay, I will stay, your people will be my people, your God will be my God.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

1. Ruth is not just a Gentile; she is a Moabite
2. According to Genesis 19:37, the Moabites are the result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters

“No Moabite or any of his descendants may enter your assembly, may be a part of your community, even down to the tenth generation” (Deuteronomy 23:3)

3. Jesus’ line includes incestuous blood; Matthew puts it in his story!

D. 1:6 - “David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife”

1. Bathsheba. Another Gentile. Another sordid story!
2. Matthew reminds us David committed adultery (scarlet letter) with Uriah’s wife and then had him killed
3. Matthew (i.e. the Holy Spirit) deliberately underscores this sin
4. Matthew is preparing people for Jesus’ ministry

THE IDENTITY

A. Jesus is going to identify with sinners

1. The Kingdom is coming. It will look scandalous! (Full of sinners!)
2. His Kingdom will accept anyone because Jesus wants everyone to follow him

“It is as though God intended for people to hear this genealogy and say to themselves: Oh, Christ is the kind of person who is not ashamed of sinners, see, he even puts them in his family tree. Isn’t that great?” (Martin Luther)

B. Jesus was so deeply committed to this, he was known as “friend of sinners”

1. It wasn’t offered as a compliment; it was an accusation
2. Matthew says when the soldiers mocked Jesus, they put a scarlet robe on him
3. The scarlet thread runs all through the Bible to the one who carried our sins
4. People read this genealogy of Jesus, follow Him, and find their heart starts to bleed for people who are far from Christ!

THE INVITATION

A. Jesus came to create a church that loves to hang out with sinners like He did

1. That’s why the church exists. That’s why we’re here
2. That’s why Matthew writes what he writes
3. Messiah is always looking for people who are a long way from Him - and calling them home
4. Pray for them. Step boldly out of your comfort zone. Model Jesus

B. Because if God should use you to bring someone home, it won't get any better