

Joke: One day, eight-year-old Melissa asks her mother, "Mommy, I've been thinking about us humans and I'm a bit puzzled. How did we first appear on Earth?"

"That's a very good question, darling," her mother replies. "God made Adam and Eve and they had children and then their children had children, and as a result, mankind began."

Later that day, Melissa asks her father the same question. "Daddy, how did we humans first appear on earth?"

"That's an intelligent question, Melissa," he replies. "Millions of years ago there were monkeys and gradually, the human race evolved from them."

Melissa now really confused by the two different answers goes back to her mother. "Mommy," she asks, "how come you told me the human race was created by God, yet daddy said we came from monkeys?"

"Well darling," replies her mother, smiling, "the answer is simple. I told you about my side of the family and your father told you about his."

The Star (A Star of Hope)

For years people have been fascinated with their family tree. You can go online and use Ancestry.com, Family search, and others to help find your family tree. You can even order DNA tests from the likes of 23 and me.

And the truth is we all have a family tree. Some of us come from magnificent trees that have been firmly planted and stand tall, providing shade from the harsh sun and a nesting place for God's sparrows. Others of us come from mangled trees that passerby's shield their children's eyes from. But either way, we all have a family tree.

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The Gospels provide two different places to see Jesus' family tree. Matthew 1 and Luke 3. And it might be surprising to you to find out that the Messiah's family tree wasn't necessarily one of those magnificent trees, rather a closer look seems to show it as more mangled!

Yet, God used each of these imperfect individuals to bring about his perfect plan.

And let me give you things that really tell us something incredible about God's character and his approach to us.

1. God's People Are Imperfect

The genealogy of Jesus is filled with individuals who had significant flaws and failures. Think about it:

Rahab: The book of Joshua tells us:

Joshua 2:1 (NIV): Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

Rahab was a what? And she is in the genealogy of the Savior.

Ruth: The Bible describes Ruth as:

Ruth 4:5 (NIV): Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."

Let me pause here to say this, I am by no means saying that being a widow is bad and messes up the family tree, but. . .

During this time, a widow's only hope for security would be her son's ability to provide for her, and Ruth had no children. And one more important thing is, not only was she a widow, but she is a widow from a despised nation.

And consider David: We know David as a man after God's own heart, a shepherd, a giant killer, and a king.

But what we also need to remember that he was an adulterer and murderer. In fact, in the book of First Chronicles, we see God say,

1 Chronicles 22:8 (NIV): But this word of the Lord came to me: 'You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.

David wanted to build a fabulous temple for God, but God said no you're not the one that is going to do it but your son will. And so Solomon comes along and does that but. . .

Solomon, David's son would become the king of Israel and be known as the wisest man who ever lived. However. . .

1 Kings 11:4 (NIV): As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

What did Solomon do? He turned away from God.

This is merely 4 of the people listed in the lineage of Jesus. And it reminds us that God's work is not limited to the perfect.

And that is good news because, according to James 3:2:

James 3:2 (NIV): 2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

Speaking of Jesus' family tree, James is in there. He was Jesus' half-brother.

And James growing up around Jesus knew all too well what a perfect person looked like. Talk about pressure could you imagine in school the principle looking over at James and saying why can't you be more like Jesus...James.

He knew perfection is impossible for us in ourselves.

And so an older, wiser James says, “We all stumble in many ways ”

The Apostle Paul made the same point when he wrote to the believers in Rome:

Romans 3:23 (NIV): for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Now let me address one very important thing.

Hebrews 10:14 (NIV): For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

This verse is not talking about being flawless in behavior, it is talking about believers been made perfect in terms of our standing with God. The Old Covenant with all of its sacrifices could never make the worshippers perfect in conscience. But because of the sacrifice of Jesus we have come into right standing before God.

In other words, it means we are fully accepted and loved by God, not based on our performance but on Christ's perfect work.

It's encouraging for us as believers because we can now live confidently in our new identity and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide our lives.

God isn't waiting for you to get your act together before he can use you.

God's not looking for perfection - he's looking for willingness. Jesus' family tree wasn't filled with all perfect people, yet God used them to bring about the Savior of the world and God can and will work through you and me flawed as we may be if we will just trust Him along the journey.

1 Corinthians 1:26–29 (NIV): Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.

I mean look at the one's Jesus choose as he disciples. We have a thief, tax collector, and everyday fishermen.

And let's not forget Paul who wrote over half the New Testament. Before he was Paul he was Saul and persecuted the church. Jailed many, killed some, wrecked havoc on the Body of Christ. . .but God.

Which brings me to point number two. . .

2. God's Plan Is Redemption

Each person in Jesus' lineage has a story of redemption. God took people from diverse backgrounds and transformed their stories into a beautiful narrative of hope.

Remember Rahab? James 2:25 says:

James 2:25 (NIV): 25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?

Let me pause once again to say this, James mentions Rahab here to show us that faith should result in a response. Faith in God should lead to righteousness. It doesn't mean that works earn righteousness but rather that genuine faith naturally expresses itself through action.

Paul said it this way, faith without works is dead.

Ruth despite her situation and being from a despised nation, she said to her Israelite mother-in-law, "Your people will be my people and your God my God "

David with all his flaws is still known as the greatest king of Israel and wrote many of the Psalms.

Likewise, Solomon built the first temple and is credited with two books in the Bible.

God doesn't grade us by our faults, he guides us by our faith. He has always had a plan to provide redemption through his grace. Jesus the Savior of the world was planned out from the foundation of the world to bring redemption.

And Paul would explain that the reason Jesus came was to accomplish God's great plan of redemption.

Titus 2:14 (NIV): who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Eager to what? Do what is good.

Remember that whole "imperfect" point we talked about just a few minutes ago? Our imperfections don't mess up God's perfect plan.

Remember Romans 3:23. . .

Romans 3:23 (NIV): for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

But the very next verse goes on to say:

Romans 3:24 (NIV): and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

And Paul said. . .

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 (NIV): But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Truth is church it's in our weaknesses we learn that we can't do it in ourselves and that we need Jesus and the Holy Spirit to help us, guide us, strengthen us.

The lineage of Jesus isn't about showcasing a perfect bloodline. It's about demonstrating God's grace, his ability to redeem, and his commitment to his promises.

And no matter your past, God can redeem your story. His grace is powerful enough to turn your mistakes into a testimony of his goodness.

And my last point I want to make today is this. . .

3. God's Promises Are Unshakable

The lineage of Jesus shows us that God is faithful to his promises across generations. Despite the ups and downs of those in Jesus' family tree, God's plan for salvation remained intact. This lineage is a testament to God's unwavering commitment to see you and me come to know Him as our Lord and Savior.

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV): The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Long before Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem, God had made a promise to Abraham.

Genesis 22:18 (NIV): and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

God made a promise to an imperfect person in Jesus' lineage. This promise was a part of God's plan. What we need to keep in mind is that God is going to keep his promise. . .no matter what! His promises are unshakable.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV): For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

And it gets even better, in spite of our imperfections, God allows us to benefit from his great promises:

Galatians 3:29 (NLT): And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

Jesus' family tree is a reminder that God's plan is bigger than our mistakes and stronger than our weaknesses.

When you feel uncertain or lost, remember that God is faithful. His promises endure, and he is working out his plan in your life, just as he did through the generations leading to Jesus.

Job 42:2 (NIV): 2 "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

We can have faith because He is a Faithful God

So, the next time you feel disqualified because of your past or your shortcomings, remember Jesus' family tree. It's not about where you've been or what you've done. It's about where God is taking you and what he wants to do in you and through you.

Not only that, but the Lord will hold on to you no matter what your struggles and weaknesses may be. He will never leave you or forsake you.

1 Corinthians 1:8–9 (NIV): He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is the beauty of the gospel - it's not about perfect people, but a perfect Savior. Jesus didn't come from a line of flawless individuals, but he came to make flawed individuals like us righteous through His perfect sacrifice.

That's the power of God's love, and that's the message at the heart of Jesus' lineage.

Next week we will continue our journey looking at angels and shepherds.