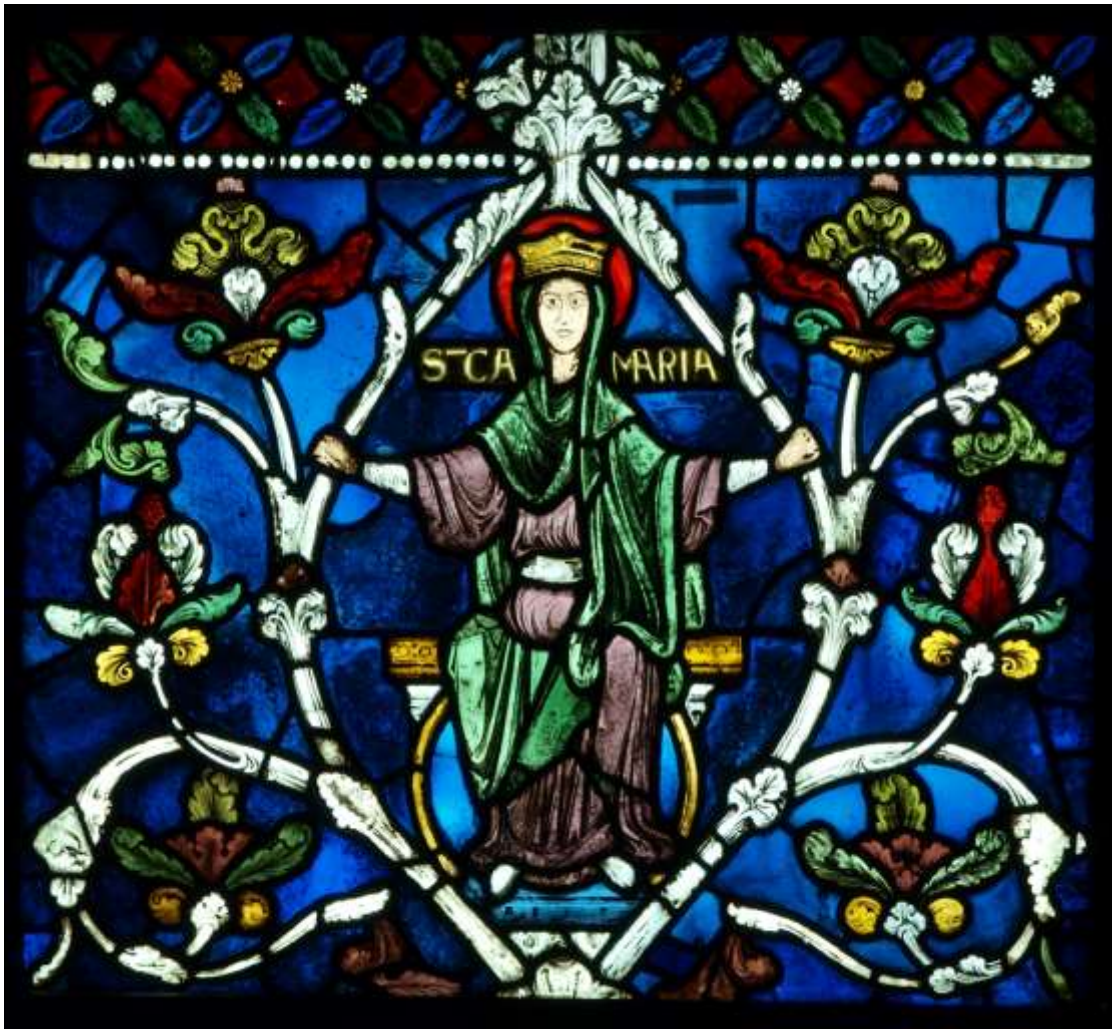


The “making” of Jesus

The Genealogies of Jesus
in the gospels of Matthew and Luke



(Image: Corona Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral)



North Balwyn Uniting Church,
Rev. Anneke Oppewal,
Christmas - Epiphany 2013-2014

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**NORTH BALWYN UNITING CHURCH
SUNDAY 29 DECEMBER 2013
Rev. Anneke Oppewal
Matthew 1:1-18; Psalm 72**

“Family!”

Introduction

Over the last week, most, if not all of us, will have experienced some of the positives, as well as some of the negatives, of family relationships and dynamics. Hopefully most of our Christmas family gatherings have been full of warmth, but undoubtedly most, if not all of us, will have encountered some tension, irritation and frustration here and there. Not all family is likeable and loveable, just because they are family. And some can be really trying if you have to get on with them for a couple of hours on a day where there is nothing much else to distract you from what makes them difficult to live with at other times of the year. There may be families where everyone loves everyone else in continuous happiness and bliss, but I haven't come across many in the course of my career as a minister.

In the way Matthew begins his gospel, it is made clear that this was no different for Jesus. According to the account Matthew gives, there were more than a few shady, irritable, easily combustible characters in Jesus' family. Hotheads, liars, cheats, adulterers, harlots, strumpets and even murderers; a number of which you would definitely not invite to a Christmas or New Year's Eve party if you had any choice in the matter.

Something about gospel writing

But before we come to that, first something about gospel writing: The gospel is a uniquely Christian invention, somewhere between a biography, a history and a proclamation of a message. It's more than the telling of the story of a hero, more than the recounting of important historic events. It is also more than a message proclaimed to the benefit and edification of the listener. It is all of that, and more. It is an invitation to become a participant; a participant in the ongoing journey of the main character, Jesus. An invitation to become part of

the history that God in Jesus is part of. An invitation to not only accept the message it proclaims, but also become actively involved in expanding its radius. An invitation to become part of a lifestyle, a community, a dream encompassing past, present and future, here, now and forever, for the individual listener and his or her whole community. Gospels are writings with a program, a purpose, a goal that lies way beyond their immediate content.

To achieve this purpose, to activate the program in its readers, in every gospel there is an intricate, complex interplay of various sets of story lines, themes and narrative structuring that tell the story of Jesus, but at the same time also convey a message that goes way beyond the story. Every word, every phrase, every image serves the ultimate goal of inviting readers to become new or better participants, put together with very careful consideration.

Every word, every phrase counted, and not only because the content was considered to be precious and important, but also because every phrase, every word and every letter was a precious investment of money and time. Gospels were unimaginably expensive to produce! With no word processors, tipp-ex, note sheets, or draft versions, the authors made sure they thought through the structure and message of their story very well before they put pen to paper, and that every word counted at least once and preferably multiple times in the conveying of their message.

It is difficult to understand how that worked now. How whole works were conceived without the possibility of working with notes and draft versions. But judging from the works that still remain, we know that intricate, complex writings of a high literary standard were nevertheless achieved.

It is difficult to put a price on it, but we know that at the time the gospels were written, a complete Old Testament would have been valued at about 150.000 denarii. With an unskilled worker or common soldier earning about 1 denarius a day, this would be the equivalent of millions in today's money. A gospel is of course a lot shorter than the whole Old Testament. By using cheaper parchment (one of the explanations why we have none of the original manuscripts today) and cramming in more words per page, it would, presumably have been

possible to bring the price down. But it would still have been something you'd put a lot of thought and care into before sitting down to write. Commissioning or owning a book at the time the gospels were conceived involved serious money, comparable with the commissioning or collecting of fine art in today's world. If you didn't have that money, you could not afford to write a book, and writing anything, including a book, involved a significant investment.

Why this long(ish) introduction? Because I think it is important to realise, before we start thinking about today's (and next week's) texts, that it is highly unlikely there are any words in the writings of scripture that have been slipped in by accident or that are superfluous. It also justifies preaching on only one verse this week.

Paper at the time, writing at the time, was simply too expensive for anyone to be able to afford random, leisurely, unfocussed writing, or to be careless with their words, unless they were extremely wealthy. And as far as we know, although there were some wealthy benefactors, at the time the gospels were conceived, such extreme wealth was either rare or non-existent in the Early Christian Movement (for more on this topic, read Peter Brown's "Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD", a fascinating book on money and wealth in the first few centuries of Christianity).

There was no such thing as doodling at the time! We can safely assume that Matthew, when he started his gospel with a genealogy, did not do so just because he wanted to fill a few pages with some difficult to pronounce names, most of which would have been, even at the time of writing, fairly unfamiliar to most of his readers. Instead, we can be sure that behind every name must lie a world of intention, designed to set the tone for what is to follow.

Biographies in antiquity often started with genealogies, providing the reader with a background and context for the hero they were about, but Matthew's is more extensive than most and in a much more prominent position. Also, only two of the four gospels have a genealogy for Jesus, Matthew and Luke. Where Matthew starts his gospel with the genealogy, Luke only comes up with it towards the end of chapter 3. So, giving it such a prominent place it is more than

likely that this genealogy was important for Matthew, and therefore important for the understanding of the message he tries to convey about Jesus through his gospel. Today we will look at the first sentence of this genealogy, letting the rest of the chapter wait until next week. In the sentence: “An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham”, there is already more than one sermon worth, even in those few words.

To begin with, the word genealogy in English is a translation here of the Greek word “genesis”, and a very clear reference to Genesis 2:4 and 5:1, where the same Greek word is used as a translation of the Hebrew word, “toledot”. The word Genesis comes from the Greek “geneo”, which means becoming, coming into being, whereas toledot means generations, beginnings, an orderly sequence, pointing to something far more complex and meaningful than just the recounting of a list of forebears.

This start also echoes the beginning of the gospel of John, who quotes the first verse of Genesis 1 in his gospel: “In the beginning”.

The word translated with “account” in English is the Greek word “biblios” that can mean both account or book. It could refer to the list that is to follow, but is more likely referring to the whole gospel. Staying closer to the Greek, we could then translate those first few words more accurately as the book about the becoming, the generating, the making of Jesus Christ. Or what led to Jesus (becoming) the Christ.

Son of David, Son of Abraham

The first two qualifications of Jesus are that he is a Son of David, and a Son of Abraham. A few things about sonship in those days. There were two kinds of father/son relationships. The biological and the legal, with the legal, if push came to shove, taking precedence over the biological. Or, to put it differently, to be someone’s son could mean there was a biological relationship. It could, however, as easily refer to a legal relationship that was considered even more valid and important than the biological one.

This is very important to keep in mind when we read the genealogy that is to follow later on. But for now, the first thing Matthew tells us is that Jesus, the main character of his book, is a son

of David and a Son of Abraham. To the first readers, that would not necessarily have said anything about biological ties as yet, but everything about the recognition of communal characteristics and shared legal claims.

Son of David. Son of the King that stood at the cradle of Israel as a nation, a righteous King, a shepherd for his people, a pious, God fearing redeemer, save only for the matter of Uriah the Hittite, as it says in 1 Kings 15:5.

Son of David, which also means he was closely related to, a brother, to Solomon, the king who had gone down in history as a wise man, a powerful healer, exorcist and magician. Solomon the King, who built the first temple, and brought great wealth and prosperity to his people. Both David and Solomon were archetypes of the Messiah in the Davidic line that many believed would finally produce the promised Messiah.

Son of David, but also, Son of Abraham. Son of the father of all believers, of the man who walked with God and in whose offspring God had promised all the nations would be blessed. If David is the personification of Israel, with Abraham, all the nations enter into the text. At this point Abraham, the person where God's promises first take shape; dreamer, visionary friend of God. Brother then also to Isaac, also son of Abraham. The only son, put on the wood to be sacrificed by his father, carrying that wood on his own shoulders to the place of sacrifice, in the wilderness, up a mountain. Saved by the divine grace and mercy of God (Genesis 22:1-19).

Even in those first three word pairs, account of the genealogy and son of David/Son of Abraham, the associations tumble over each other and a whole world opens up for the reader who is prepared to hear the echoes, and see the glimmers, of past, present and future they represent. Not only the whole history of God with Israel is here, but the history of God with all the nations. Abraham, David, and their sons, Israel and the world, individuals as well as whole communities journeying with God, encompassed in these few words. It's all there to be unfolded in even more detail in what is to follow.

It recognises that the present and the future have deep roots in the past; that God's journey with his people is full of parallels and

references that reach a long way back; indicating that there is a purpose, a plan, a pattern to be discerned, archetypes to be discovered, a journey to be continued. For the young Christian movement in Matthew's day, this was important. To show that Jesus had connections that reached deep into the past. That he was not just a fad, a nine-day wonder, but part of a venerable, long, historic pattern of relationships of God with his people.

For us

For us it offers the opportunity to understand the man Jesus, the Messiah and what he became in context. Jesus did not come out of nowhere, He was not just a one off, a freak of history and humanity, but he is part of a long line of divine involvement and interactions with humanity. We are invited to become part of a line, a history, through following Jesus and becoming part of the message the gospel conveys. As we shall see next week, Matthew very cleverly writes the Church, those who come after Jesus, into the line, the becoming, the making of this son of David, and his Kingdom. It makes us, makes the church, part of the toledot, the generating that has been part of God's order and God's journey with the world from the beginning, from the days of Abraham and David the King, to the days of Jesus, the Christ and beyond. A beautiful message to close to on New Year's Eve, don't you think? We follow a Messiah whose connections go a long way back. In his story, we hear echoes of many others who lived the faith. Abraham, Isaac, David and Solomon for starters, are part of our "becoming", our "generations", our "making". A becoming, a making, a begetting, that continues to the present day wherever Jesus is recognised and served as Christ. A work in progress that has been in the making from the first chapters of Genesis, and is still in the making, through and in us. The making of a Kingdom, a world, a future, where Abraham's faith, Isaac's trust, David's Kingship and Solomon's wisdom combine in the rule of Jesus, as he has become known to us through the gospels. Amen.



**NORTH BALWYN
UNITING CHURCH
EPIPHANY
SUNDAY 5 JANUARY 2014
Rev. Anneke Oppewal
Jeremiah 23: 5-6; Matthew
1:1-18**

“The Missing Link”

Introduction

The Church of the village I grew up in is undergoing a major refurbishment. Some

beetle or other has got to the woodwork and every wooden item in the Church is being taken out and replaced. Rafters, window frames, pews, floors, everything except the pulpit and the organ front, which will be treated with a chemical substance. I have been following its progress on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/numansdorp.kerkrestauratie?fref=ts>), where they have been posting photos and stories of what has been happening for months now. The preparation and fundraising has taken years, and, because it is a seventeenth century heritage building, the government has also chipped in considerably. A lot of the work is being tackled by volunteers and over the last couple of months their enthusiasm and involvement has been incredibly encouraging to watch, especially while, on this side of the globe in our Uniting Church, the Uniting our Future process saw Churches close and congregations disbanded to cover the debt incurred by the synod. In an environment that is as secularised as ours, or possibly even more so, something actively positive seems to be happening over there, involving a lot of people of various age groups, investing in a long-term future for their Church.

In August, a photo was posted on Facebook of the inside of the small, top attic in the roof, a place nobody would ordinarily venture into. I had certainly never been there, even though my father, who was

a warden of the Church for many years, showed me pretty much every nook and cranny of the building.

So it was a surprise to see his name there, on one of the rafters, together with two other names: Arie Korbijn. I came across the photo while quickly scrolling through my Facebook newsfeed in the morning, and I started the day with a smile on my face and a warm and fuzzy feeling inside. A message in a bottle. During the day, however, something kept nagging me about that photo. Something that wasn't quite right. So, when I got the opportunity, I went back to Facebook and had another, closer look at it. Sure enough, it said: "Arie Korbijn", but it also said: Jz 1909.

Suddenly it dawned on me that this could not possibly be my father! My father was born in 1934, so 1909 was definitely a bit early for him to leave graffiti in the Church attic. Casting my mind back, I realised it must have been my great-grandfather who had left his name there as a very young man (he must have been around 16 years old at the time), and not my father. He was also a Jan's son, a Jz, and what I was looking at went back a lot further than I had first assumed. This was Arie Jan's son, who was working as a builder in 1909, and not Arie Jan's son who was born in 1934, and started working as a builder in the business his great-grandfather and some of his great uncles were running in 1946!

A small example of how confusing genealogies can be, especially in an environment where few written records were kept and, because of the custom of naming people after their grandparents, people with the same name popped up every second generation. Who are you? Where have you come from? In the village I grew up in, everybody knew I was Anneke, Arie's daughter, who was Jan's son, who was Arie's son, the builder. There were many more Arie Korbijn's and Jan Korbijn's in the village, but if I gave my "pedigree", people knew immediately to what branch of the family I belonged, and what my "antecedents" were. The virtues and sins of past generations immediately surfaced in the collective memory as soon as people knew whose daughter I was.

Matthew

What Matthew does for Jesus in that first chapter of his gospel is similar to that, but different. Because what Matthew comes up with are not so much biological facts of genealogy, but a series of relationships that, in his mind, characterise Jesus. Luke, who also presents us with a genealogy, comes up with something completely different. We check both those New Testament genealogies against the information we can glean from Chronicles and Kings in other places of the Old Testament, and we soon realise the information does not add up at all. I attached an example of an attempt to solve these issues to your order of service today, and one glance will make it clear to you that if there is a solution (and I don't believe there is), it is so complicated it is impossible to follow.

I believe that this is not because one or the other got it wrong. It is because I know that genealogy, in antiquity, was not so much about biology as it was about relationship and character development. It was about listing what “added up” to someone becoming who they were, about the “making” of someone in the line of history. What Matthew and Luke try to tell us with their genealogies is more about what they believed Jesus was “made of” than what particular gene pool had generated him. It is almost like telling Jesus' story backwards, into the past, and finding meaningful connections, both positive and negative, and with a few surprising twists and turns.

Last week, we discovered that Matthew writes the name David and Abraham in capitals over the genealogy, the book of the making of Jesus. David the King, and Abraham the father of all believers in whom all nations are to be blessed. In the same breath, he connects Jesus with Isaac, Abraham's son, and Solomon, David's son, who each, in their own way, are “brothers” to Jesus, pre-figuring what Jesus will be. The son taken to be sacrificed by his father and saved, and the son who brings wisdom and healing to his people.

The genealogy that follows further elaborates on this, in a variety of ways. It is so laden with information, and so layered in its meaning, I could easily preach another Sunday on it, and another (but I won't).

Numerology

First of all: 3x14 names. That's not a coincidence. In Hebrew, David has three letters, and the numerical value of these letters adds up to 14. Hebrew didn't have any numbers, so they used letters, with every letter having its own, unique, numerical value. So: the whole genealogy hangs on the name of David, the King.

Except that, if you count carefully it is not 3x14. It is 2x14 and 1x13. There is one name missing.

The formula is very Old Testament (which is different from Luke, who uses another formula); so and so fathered so and so, fathered so and so. The King James translation is much closer to the Greek and the Hebrew with "begat", an active word. Abraham begat (got himself) Isaac, begat Jacob, begat....

When reading the list out loud, this repetition will get you into a rhythm, and was probably designed for that purpose: to get you into a rhythm which would make it easier to remember. And.... to draw your attention to the few spots where the rhythm is broken to add a few bits, or leave them out. The first of these anomalies happens in verse two, where it says Isaac begat Jacob, Jacob begat Judah and his brothers. Writing at a time when the tribe of Judah was considered to be the true and only remnant of Abraham's inheritance, this signals that, according to Matthew, the whole nation is still part of the picture, including those descendants not of Judah, but of other sons of Jacob.

Meaningful anomalies - women, brothers and forgotten generations

Then there are the women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. Four mothers in a list of 42 fathers! All four women with questionable sexual morals, all outsiders, all gentiles. Even Tamar was thought to be gentile by the ancient rabbis, who deemed her behaviour, even though it saved the nation, unsuitable for a decent Jewish woman. All strong, independent women who were prepared to think and act outside the box. There is a fifth woman, of course – Mary, the mother of Jesus – about whose sexual morals questions could, and would, have been raised at the time. And who also proved to be a strong, independent woman. Matthew shows she was not the first such woman in history that led up to Jesus becoming who he was. Five in

Hebrew numerology is the number for the law, the five books of Moses. Could it be that the women are spelling out the law in the ancestry of Jesus? Notice also that while Tamar and Rahab and Ruth are all named, Bathseba is “the wife of Uriah the Hittite”, drawing attention to what David did to her and her husband: first adultery, and then murder. If any of these names are new to you, and I suspect Tamar especially, may have been absent in your Sunday school story books and subsequent guides for daily bible reading, read up on them - they are worth it. (Tamar: Genesis 38: 6-24; Rahab: Joshua 2,1 and 6: 6-17; Ruth: Ruth; Bathseba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite: 2 Samuel 11: 1-27)

In verse 11, we hear about brothers again, just before exile cuts in, indicating that the whole nation went into exile.

Then, in the last 14 names, if we compare the list to the list given in Chronicles, three names are missing. It’s not quite clear why, but it could be because they are the three kings accused of the most heinous crimes in the history of the Jewish people, or, alternatively, it could be because they are all offspring of Athalia, the daughter (or sister) of Ahab the King and part of a particularly godless period in the history of Israel, and cursed by the prophets unto the second and third generation. As if Matthew wants to say: There may be all sorts of things wrong with a lot of these kings, but these three are so bad I believe they are not worthy of a place in Jesus’ history. Jeremiah prophesies about one of them that his name will not be remembered, so it may be that that’s what Matthew is doing: making sure the name is not remembered.

Solomon and Joseph

Comparing the genealogy to Luke’s, there are another two very important differences. In Matthew, Jesus is a descendant of Solomon; in Luke, he is not. He comes from another line of the house of David. This is significant, but we will talk about that next week, when we get to Luke. For now, it is enough to notice it. Jesus is akin to Solomon in Matthew’s mind, and the descendant of the line of kings that sprang from him.

Then there is the father of Joseph. In Luke’s gospel, Joseph’s father’s name is Eli; in Matthew, it is Jacob. It is so different, it can

hardly be a mistake in hearing or copying the name. According to Matthew, Jesus' father (and we'll talk about that in a minute) is Joseph, the son of Jacob.

Anybody who knows their Old Testament will be familiar with the story of Joseph, son of Jacob, who ended up in Egypt in order to save his people (Genesis 37-49). He was someone who cared for his family, in spite of betrayal, who was faithful, a forgiver, and a dreamer of meaningful dreams. Guess what? That's exactly the Joseph as we know him from the first few chapters of Matthew. A faithful, forgiving carer for his family, who dreams dreams and ends up in Egypt to save his son, and through his son, his people.

This Joseph is the husband of Mary who does not father, or beget, Jesus. If you've followed the rhythm of fatherings from the start, you'll get it immediately: no active involvement of Joseph is mentioned here. Jesus is Mary's son. And if, for just one moment, you can push aside your twentieth century hang-ups about virgin birth and biological fatherhood, listen to what that says:

Where all the others are the product of their father, and father's father, Jesus is his own man. Although he has been in the making since Abraham, he is not the product of all that begetting, all that fathering that has been going on since time immemorial. Jesus is not a product of male progeny and pride, but he is the son of Mary, a woman, questionable, independent, strong, in the tradition of such women as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathseba. Akin to a line of Kings going all the way back to David and Solomon, Jesus is, in the end, not the product of that line. Instead, he is the son of the underdog, of a woman of questionable mores, with no pedigree.

Not a princess, not one of the earth mothers (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, who don't even get a mention in this genealogy), but a girl engaged to a carpenter, who has to flee to Egypt.

(From where he will return to save his people, as the prophets have said the Messiah would, from where Moses led his people to the promised land, where Joseph saved his people from famine, where Abraham discovered God was more powerful than the Pharaoh, mighty ruler of the world. But let's not get too overexcited about all

the possible references connected to the word “Egypt” here, as that part of the story is not part of our readings today).

Jesus the King, the Church his offspring

From here on, the story continues, telling the story about Jesus, King in the line of David, in whose stories all these other stories reflect and continue, are developed further and taken to a new height.

Jesus is the 13th name in the third set of names. Some try to solve this issue by doubling the name of Jechonian, but I don't believe that is the right way to go about this. I think Matthew, on purpose, makes us think of another name to make it 14, a “missing link”, the offspring of Jesus, which is the Church. Here, through Jesus Christ, the generations of David the King, and Abraham the faithful, come to fulfilment; 3x14, 3x the name of David, but also: 2x3x7, double God's fullness in the fullness of time.

That's what this book is about, this gospel. It tells us how that takes shape in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, the new Abraham, the King, the healer of nations. It invites us to become excited about the invitation to become part of the offspring, part of the living Christ, the next generation, in the fullness of time.

On the threshold of the new year, this story tells us of an ancient story that has been going for many generations; a journey that continues to the present day, wherever Jesus is alive in his offspring; a journey with God, through thick and thin, through highs and lows, with vulnerable, fragile people, with Jesus; a journey living towards the fullness of time and the coming of the Kingdom that all these generations have lived towards, which has been in the making forever.

Amen.

NORTH BALWYN UNITING CHURCH
SUNDAY 12 JANUARY 2014, EPIPHANY 1
Rev. Anneke Oppewal
Luke 3: 21- 4:13

“The new Adam”

Introduction

Over the last two weeks, we've been looking at the genealogy of Jesus, as we encounter it in the first chapter of the gospel of Matthew. This week, we will look at the genealogy of Jesus, as we find it in the third chapter of the gospel of Luke. And we'll discover that they are two very different accounts of what went into “the making” of Jesus the Christ.

While reflecting on Jesus' roots, thoughts about our own roots are bound to surface. And I, for one, have been thinking quite a lot about my family tree in the last few weeks. What went into “my making”, what do I know about my own genealogy, and how important is it for who I am now?

There is not only the tracing back to personal and individual roots though. There are also our communal roots to consider when we reflect on where we come from. National roots, religious, spiritual, cultural, and denominational roots. They have all influenced who and what we are.

If we look at our community here at North Balwyn Uniting Church, we discover a rich history, and many different influences that have contributed to the unique mix of who we are now. St Aidan's, Trinity, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, the three “official” streams that came into Union, with ex-Anglicans, Catholics and others added to the mix as well.

We may wonder what we, if we wanted to make a genealogy of the congregation, would put into it now. There are booklets available about the history of St. Aidan's, Trinity and the congregationalist congregation, which became part of our community as it is now. But I'm sure that since they were written, our perspective has changed, and putting them together would generate a different picture of the past than they each do individually now.

I imagine if we were to write a genealogy now, we would include the amalgamation of Trinity and St. Aidan's as a new milestone, as well as the selling of the Trinity properties as part of the Uniting Our Future process. But what else would we include? What anchor points, key names and key dates would emerge if we were to write a genealogy of our congregation now? And would it be different for different people, writing from different perspectives? I would think so.

Matthew and Luke, a different focus

Both Matthew and Luke write their own genealogy of Jesus, and they both write it from their own perspective, with their own bias, finding their own key names, dates and anchor points in Jesus' history to tell us what they figure went into "the making" of Jesus. As I've said before, at the time they were writing, genealogy was not so much about biology as it was about character development and roots. This is reflected in both these genealogies.

As we have seen, Matthew writes his genealogy forwards, from Abraham, through David, through Jesus, to the future. He shows there is a continued line of "begetting", of offspring moving towards the reign of the true Davidic King, the Messiah, at the end of time.

Luke writes backwards, back from Jesus, all the way to Adam, and ultimately to God. He presents Jesus as Adam's twin, his mirror image, his historical counterpoint. I'll talk more about that a little bit later on in this sermon.

In Luke's genealogy, Jesus descends from another branch of the Davidic line than in Matthew's. Where Matthew has him connected back to the great King Solomon, Luke connects Jesus to a more obscure, other son of David's, by the name of Nathan. This, on closer inspection, happens to fit in really well with Luke's focus.

Maria's 'Magnificat' (Luke 1:46-56) at the beginning of the gospel has already set the scene for that focus on the poor, the weak, the needy and the powerless in his gospel as she announces the program that Jesus' life is to follow: 'the powerful brought down from their thrones, and the lowly lifted up'. In the genealogy, Jesus is presented not as a descendant of a glorious line of kings and powerful rulers (as in Matthew), but as the descendant of the less powerful other son of David. On top of that, instead of kings travelling from

afar to visit at Jesus' birth, with no mention of a stable, as in Matthew, in Luke, Jesus' birth takes place in a stable, with lowly shepherds watching over him.

There are more and different names in the genealogy of Luke than there are in Matthew's. With the genealogy consisting of 77 names in Luke, against 42 in Matthew. I won't go into the detail of all these names, but I would like to highlight two that are especially important.

Nathan and Eli

As I said, in Matthew, Jesus descends from Nathan, the "other son" of David, and not from his half-brother Solomon. It makes Jesus a descendant of a less powerful and kingly branch of the Davidic tree. Another important difference in the names is the name of the father of Joseph, who in Matthew goes by the name of Jacob, but is called Eli in Luke. (note: in neither Luke or Matthew is Jesus the son of Joseph, see second sermon on Matthew)

As we've seen, one of Matthew's key themes is that he presents Jesus as the new King, who has come to establish his Kingdom amongst the nations, the world.

Luke has a different take on things. The two names that are so significantly and prominently different in his genealogy, Nathan and Eli, are connected with the prophetic and the priestly traditions of Israel. Nathan was the namesake of the prophet that kept King David on the straight and narrow (sometimes, in some writings, even confused with him), and Eli was the priest with whom Samuel was living in the temple, when he was called to be a prophet.

Jesus, in Luke's story, has not so much come to re-establish a kingdom, as he has come to take faith to a new place, and bring it, quite literally, home. It's not so much about re-instituting and reforming what has been, as it is a move away from that institution, to a broadening and widening of the understanding of how and where and by whom, God can be encountered.

From Temple to home

Luke's gospel does not begin with the genealogy, like Matthew's. It begins in the temple, with Zachariah the priest, and the birth of John, the prophet, both very much representatives of the old order of

things. Both, in their own way, descendants of a long line of priests and prophets, of Nathan's and Eli's in history. The gospel moves, and is structured around (I'll tell you about that some other time), the religious and spiritual move from temple to home, to house Churches; from Jewish faith practices in the gospel to a more general faith practice for all the nations in Acts. The new more inclusive faith is open and accessible for all, with worship and fellowship moving around open meal tables and communities that meet and worship at home.

At the end of Luke's two-part story, faith and God are no longer confined to the temple, or subject to the traditional boundaries around Jewish institutional religion. In the new Christian faith, prophets and priests can be called anywhere in the world. Their service is no longer confined to the temple or the synagogue, but takes place in the homes of friend- and family groups.

Access to God through the authority of temple and priest starts breaking down the minute that Zechariah the priest is dumbstruck by the angel's message about the birth of his son, and ending up, at the end of Acts, with Paul opening the way to God to anyone who will listen from a prison cell in Rome.

A direct line of communication opened up

From the beginning of the gospel, heaven communicates directly with ordinary people, who are actually, extraordinary people in Luke. The stories about Jesus' birth and boyhood indicate that he, and people around him, are breaking the mould of the traditional religious order from the beginning.

God's word and future programme for this child are given to and heard from ordinary people, with Elizabeth, Mary, the shepherds, Simon and Anna receiving messages from angels and visions from above, and prophesying, in turn, about his life and future.

When Jesus visits the temple as a twelve year old, teaching roles are reversed, with the priests marvelling at the wisdom of this child, and Jesus referring to the temple as his father's house, rather than giving it the awe and reverence it should have inspired in a normal twelve year old at the time. The story brings the temple down a few

notches, and puts it among other homes where Jesus will be preaching and teaching.

Where in Matthew's gospel we can recognise a structure that makes it possible to identify the whole gospel as being shaped along the lines of a traditional 'king's speech', announcing the king's identity and programme at the beginning of his reign, Luke sets out to show that God in Christ is at home anywhere in the world – in the temple, outside the temple, outside the traditional institutions of the Jewish faith, with ordinary people.

The context of the genealogy in Luke

In Luke, the first four chapters of the gospel offer an introduction, before getting to the genealogy.

First, Jesus' programme, his context in the here and now, is set out with the stories about his birth and childhood. Then, at the beginning of his ministry, in baptism, the Holy Spirit descends on him. The Spirit hovering over the flood as in Genesis 1, indicating that here, once again, creation is starting all over again. A voice announces, and affirms, the message of the angels to Mary and the shepherds in the fields, that what we are dealing with here is no less than God's own son.

Only then does Luke come up with the genealogy; after the birth stories, after Jesus' baptism, when he is thirty years old. Luke is the only gospel writer who mentions Jesus' age, and that, again, is no coincidence. Thirty was the age at which priests were allowed to start service in the temple. It is only fitting that Jesus, priest and prophet of a new religious constellation, would, at that significant age, be anointed and confirmed by the Holy Spirit in a direct acknowledgement and confirmation from heaven. The genealogy then provides a pedigree, as before all new priests could serve, they needed to show to the temple authorities that their ancestry was pure, and worthy of their call.

It is likely that there is irony hidden in the way Luke presents Jesus with this pedigree. At the time, King Herod had trouble tracing his lineage back to anybody of substance at all, and apparently (according to Josephus) tried to destroy all the genealogical evidence in the temple archives to cover up this fact. What Luke says is that

Jesus is proud NOT to be of the Solomonic line that Herod would have given everything to be able to trace himself back to. Instead, Jesus is proud to be a descendant of a much less important line, but nevertheless, still better connected than the mighty Herod. His genealogy also goes a lot further back than even David, which is an added bonus. This is because what is more important than providing Jesus with a long pedigree going back all the way to Adam, is the actual connection to Adam itself.

77 Generations, the fullness of time, a new creation

77 generations connect Jesus and Adam, that is 7×11 , which, in biblical numerology is close to the number of the fullness of time, which is 7×12 . In other words, with Jesus we are now only a “world week” away from the fullness of time. 11 “world weeks” have already passed, and, to speak in a more modern metaphor, with Jesus we have now come to five minutes to twelve.

In this man Jesus, the fullness of time has arrived, building God’s home (with words from Revelations 22) among God’s people. A new story is starting, a new Adam has appeared, a new creation is getting into swing.

The story immediately following the genealogy attests to this in another way. In this story, Jesus resists temptation, resists the devil, three times, reversing what happens with the first representatives of humanity in the Fall, in Genesis 4.

In Jesus, the clock is turned back (or fast forwarded) to before the Fall, to the moment of “Adam”, where humanity walks freely with God as God’s children with nothing between them to divide or alienate.

Conclusion

So what does that mean for us, in the current context of our Church and culture? With the traditional structures, institutions and authorities collapsing around us, losing what has provided us with strength and security for generations?

For me, what I have realised, is that letting these genealogies, and their contexts, speak in the last three weeks, is that what we find in scripture is not a static faith, but a journey that is in perpetual flux –

with many upheavals, diversions, mistakes, dead ends and new beginnings. Where the journey of our community may have started with Jesus, the making of Jesus, the journey of God with humanity goes back a lot further. A journey that continued with the apostles, Paul and others following in Jesus' footsteps until the present day.

Luke and Matthew both indicate, through their different genealogies, that the past is only important in as far as it pre-figures, and prepares for, God's future. A Kingdom needs to be built, and shaped according to what Jesus lived and died for. Homes need to be found for the gospel, where the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth will bring what Mary sings about in her Magnificat: The proud scattered, the powerful brought down, the lowly lifted up and the hungry filled with good things.

Luke, in particular, made me realise that the move away from the institutional Church and traditional organised religion is inherent to our faith and as old as Christianity itself. It started before Jesus was born and continues to the present day. It was one of the main themes of the reformation and other religious revivals over the centuries. It was even at the root of the building of large numbers of suburban churches after the war. It brings God close to home, in an open faith, of people gathering wherever there is a table to gather around, worshipping and practicing their faith.

That's what our faith is about. Living the program Mary set out in her Magnificat and that Jesus lived and died for, creating spaces for God to come close and ensuring that access to the divine is made accessible to all.

The way that will take shape will always be changing, right until all of creation has found its way back to where God lives among his people, as before the fall, creation renewed, with Christ as priest and prophet leading his people home, the new Adam. Amen.

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Matthew 1:1-17

1. Abraham
2. Isaac
3. Jacob
4. Judas
5. Phares
6. Esrom
7. Aram
8. Aminadab
9. Naason
10. Salmon
11. Booz
12. Obed
13. Jesse
14. David

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations

1. Solomon
2. Roboam
3. Abia
4. Asa
5. Josaphat
6. Joram
7. Ozias
8. Joatham
9. Achaz
10. Ezekias
11. Manasses
12. Amon
13. Josias
14. Jechonias

and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations

1. Jechonias
2. Salathiel
3. Zorobabel
4. Abiud
5. Eliakim
6. Azor
7. Sadoc
8. Achim
9. Eliud
10. Eleazar
11. Matthan
12. Jacob
13. Joseph
14. Jesus

and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations

Genealogy of Jesus

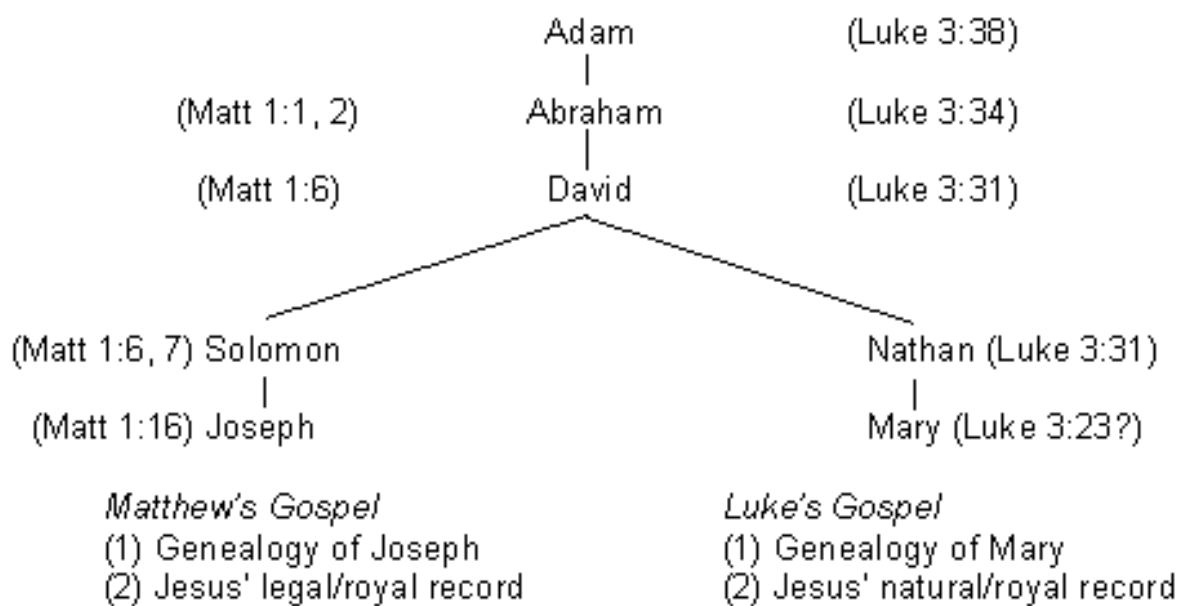
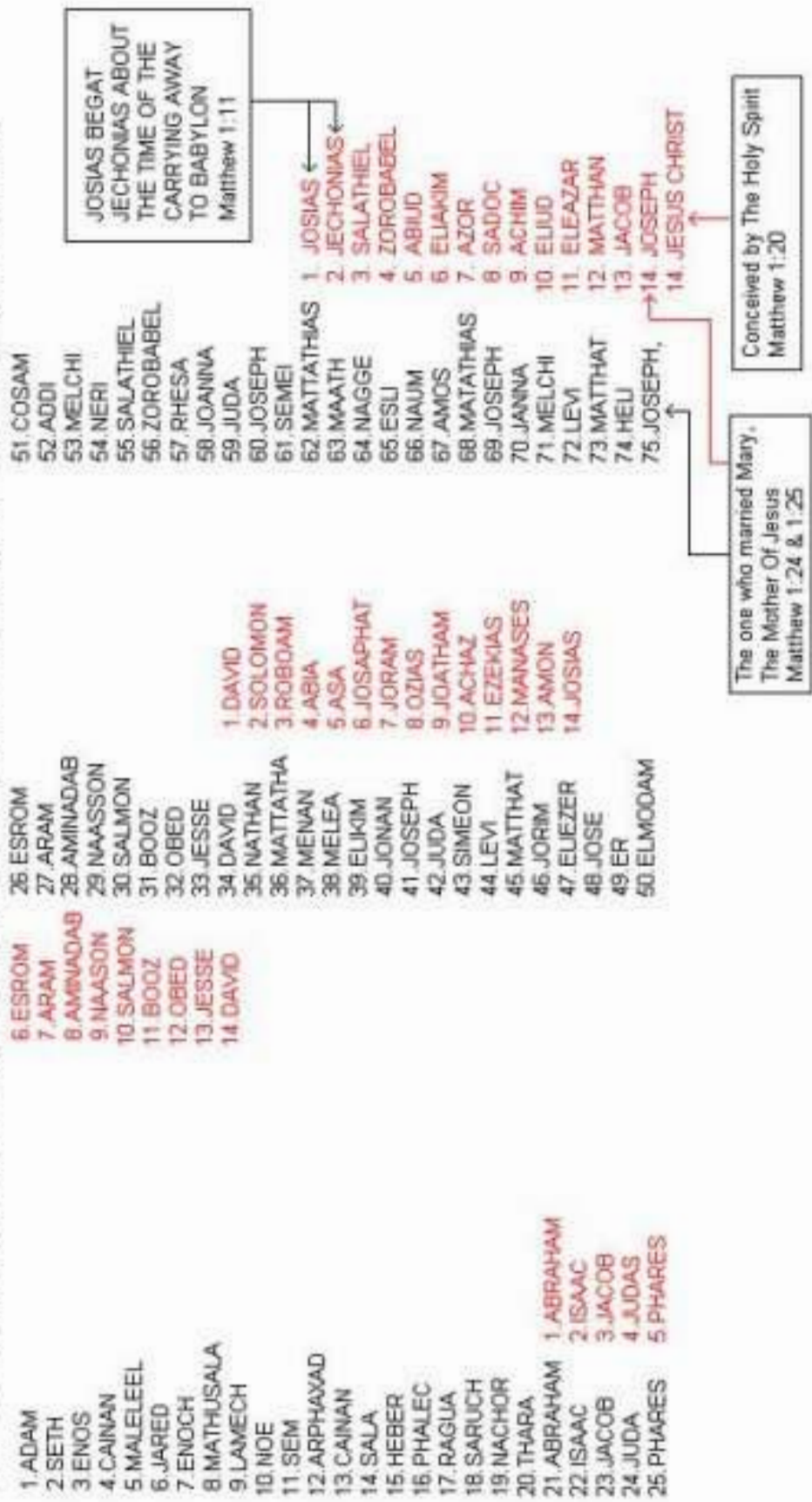


CHART # 5

GENERATIONS OF FAITH

GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

GENEALOGY OF JESUS FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE CHAPTER 3 IS IN BLACK PRINT, THE NAMES ARE LISTED IN REVERSE ORDER, TO SHOW COMPARISON WITH THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW CHAPTER 1 WHICH IS IN RED PRINT. TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE NAMES LISTED ARE DIFFERENT, ONE SHOULD FIND A GOOD BIBLE DICTIONARY, AND SEARCH FOR GENEALOGY, THE EXPLANATION IS TO INVOLVED TO INCLUDE ON THIS CHART HOWEVER, FOR THE GENERATIONS OF FAITH STUDY, THE NAMES ON THIS CHART WILL HELP US TO GAIN A CLEARER PERSPECTIVE WHEN WE LOOK AT THE INFORMATION ON THE OTHER CHARTS.



THE SOLUTION TO MATT. 1-1 and LUKE 3 BY CHART BRIEFLY EXPLAINED

1 Chron. 5:1-2-3 ADAM Gal. 3:16
 Luke 2:4, Mary and Joseph of the "House of David" Matt. 1:1, The Book of "The Generation" (Genesis) of Jesus Christ.
 Patria ABRAHAM Gen. 12:1

DAVID 1 Chron. 17:11
 BATHSHUA

