

# THE BORING LIST

Do you like reading biographies?  
Neither do I.

But over the years (because I tend to read a lot), I've read a fair few.

And often the ones I don't like are the good ones.  
That's going to sound crazy – but here's what I mean.

Sometimes the author does so much research, puts in so much work and gathers up so many facts and so much detail it's overwhelming.  
It's like *"too much information!"*

One biography I have at home is on singer and musician James Taylor.  
It's a big book written by a guy called Timothy White.  
James Taylor doesn't appear until page 62!  
We get stories of his great grandfather living in the UK and making the journey out to the USA, and it seems like Timothy White has got the names and addresses of everyone that that guy ever met.

Too much family tree for my liking.....

So we've got our reading for today.

Most churches wouldn't want to read it out.  
Its too boring for even the most boring churches.

The fancy title given to this opening of Matthew's gospel is: **THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS.**

The title is as dull and as boring as the content.

Matthew obviously didn't know the bit about *'If you are writing a book the beginning is vitally important. You've got to grab people's attention at the start!'*

If you've just picked the book up you're thinking to yourself: ***"This is gonna be a right good read!"*** Or not....

Jesus' Family Tree. Why give us this Tree?

Now you might say that a family tree is one of these things that you will often get in a biography. The problem is that this ***isn't*** a biography.  
There are no biographies of Jesus.

We've got four accounts of Jesus' life in the Bible – but none are what we would call biographies.

They are only concerned to tell us about that short period of Jesus' ministry – what he did and said and taught then. And what happened as a result.

We don't have all the details we would like.

*What did Jesus even look like, for goodness sake?*

*What happened to him as a child and a young adult?*

*Who were his friends growing up?*

*Who was his best pal?*

*Did he have a girlfriend?*

*Where did he go to school and for how long?*

*Did he really work in his dad's carpenters shop till he was 30?*

*As a carpenter, was he any good?*

*What was his favourite thing to make?*

There are a million unanswered questions about Jesus because we don't have a biography.

It surely means that all this detail at the beginning is totally unnecessary. If we are not going to get a basic life story why bother with this list?

Here's the "official" answer.

So people know that Jesus is descended from some key people in the OT.

Jesus has got some significant ancestors.

That's the official line.

But that's not the important part.

Just like the important bit about all the Christmas stories is not to say what actually happened the night Jesus was born.

Jesus born in a stable – unusual but so what?

Visits by some shepherds and foreign wise men – unusual but so what?

The real purpose of the Christmas stories is for us to look carefully and probe below the surface.

In other words the stories are deliberately telling us things to help us reflect on a deeper meaning – the meaning of who Jesus is and what he is going to be about..

And have you noticed that Matthew's and Luke's family trees don't even match up?

Its another reason for concluding that historical accuracy doesn't seem to be much at stake here....

So with that in mind, what's the deal with the family tree stuff?

It just looks like a boring list.

So we look a bit closer and then we discover that the **boring** list is actually a **surprising** list.

For a start:

THEY AREN'T ALL MEN!

Now that's a bit of a surprise, to say the least.

The family line traditionally continues through men. But there are at least 5 females in Jesus' list.

There is Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and of course Mary – the unmarried mother of Jesus.

The cultural expectation back in Jesus' day was for men to have the leading roles. It was the way society worked. All the books of the Bible (as far as we know) were written by men, and women were regarded as having very much a supporting role – if they even *had* a role...

But these female characters I've just mentioned were not insignificant women – they all played a part in Gods purposes.

THEY AREN'T ALL FROM ONE RACE OR CLAN!

Are we God's people by keeping ourselves separate from other people and keeping away from '*inferior*' people?

Or are we God's people by our attitude towards and our compassion for and our acceptance of those who are different?

The first view was the religious view of the time. The second view is what Jesus believed and taught.

This was at the heart of his dispute with the religious leaders and teachers.

Their view of being pure in God's eyes was to keep a distance from those others who didn't measure up. Its still believed by some religious groups even today. For Jesus, being pure was seen in how we displayed love and compassion to our neighbours including those who ***don't*** measure up!

So the Jewish leaders would want the bloodline of the Messiah to be pure Hebrew throughout.

But it isn't.

Even the women are not all Hebrews.

Rahab was a Canaanite. Ruth was a Moabite.

And by her marriage to Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba had left her own family.

Yet they are all part of the ancestry of Jesus.

The writer of Matthew wants people to realise the gospel good news is for everyone - not just a select few. In Gods eyes there are no boundaries. Another surprise.

### THEY AREN'T ALL GOOD!

There is no doubt that in the family tree there are some familiar faces and some famous people there. Some of the 'big' names in the Old Testament feature in the list.

But what is very telling is that some of these people aren't exactly examples of virtue.

For example:

RAHAB (one of the women in the list) worked as a prostitute.

DAVID was regarded as Israel's most famous King. He did some great things and left a fine legacy, but he also was the man who totally disgraced himself after committing adultery with another man's wife and then when it seemed he might be discovered assuring that the man (Urriah) would die in battle. It was as good as murder.

REHABOAM David's grandson who eventually became king was little more than a tyrant.

Others were weak leaders who trusted in people around them more than in God.

Yet despite their sinfulness God continued to love them.

Another surprise.

### THEY AREN'T ALL FAMOUS!

There are some big names in that family tree. But they aren't *all* big names.

Who on earth was

RAM or

AMMINABAD or NASHON or ELEAZAR?

We don't know a lot of the people on the list.

They are simply names and they leave no legacy behind them whatsoever.

Even total unknowns find their way into Jesus' family tree!

Another surprise.

So - what are all these things telling us?

Lets switch from Jesus' family tree to Jesus' family - in other words, the people that follow him today.

### WE ARE NOT ALL MEN!

Rich or poor, male or female, gay or straight, old or young - no one is regarded as more important or having more worth. All are equal in the eyes of God.

### WE ARE NOT ALL FROM ONE CLAN OR NATION!

The family of God extends around the whole world.

### WE ARE NOT ALL GOOD!

Deep down we all know that its not that we deserve to be included by God in Gods purposes. We all have gifts and abilities. We all have something good to offer.

But we all have our weakness and our failures, and none of us get it right all the time.

**WE ARE NOT ALL FAMOUS!**

We are not all household names or history makers. Our role in the Kingdom might seem small.

But it is needed. We are needed by God.

God uses totally ordinary people like us to do God's work in the world.

The boring list contains a great message – that we can play our part in God's family today.

Despite who we are – we too are loved and called and encouraged by God to look to Jesus to take up his mission and to follow in his steps.

The people of Jesus have always been a rag tag mix.

And that means, unbelievably, that there is even room for folk like you and me!

Mathew 1:1-17

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