Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Matthew Chapter One, A kingdom is promised – Week 47

Let's meet the family.

Day 322. Judah

… Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah (by Tamar), Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz (by Rahab), Boaz the father of Obed (by Ruth), Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.
David was the father of Solomon (by the wife of Uriah), Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.
After the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

Jacob (Israel) had 12 sons and one daughter from his two wives (the sisters Rachel and Leah) and two concubines; the sons became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Judah was the fourth son. Judah along with his 9 older brothers sold their younger brother, Joseph, into slavery in Egypt. Years later, Judah was tricked by his daughter-in-law Tamar into having intercourse with her. Judah was largely responsible for this trickery: a woman's worth was in many ways tied to family and the children she contributed to that family. Her first two husbands, Er and Onan, Judah's sons, had died – according to the custom of the time, Tamar should have married the third son, Shelah – but Judah refused to consent to this. Tamar then disguised herself as a prostitute who Judah took advantage of … and she became pregnant with Perez and Zerah (for a recount of this story, including some of the emotions and motivations, as well as the remorse, see Genesis 38).

After reading Genesis 38, what type of person would you say Judah was? Write your thoughts on the types of people (including Judah) who God uses for bringing people into His kingdom, His love. Why would God use someone like Judah as opposed to his brother Joseph, who seemed much more faithful and "godly"?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 323: Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse,

We don't know much about any of these people except for Boaz (read the book of Ruth to understand how Ruth seduced Boaz and he became one of the ancestors of King David). For us, the important thing is apparently not who they were, but rather who they led to, whom we shall discuss tomorrow.

As far as we know, this part of Jesus' ancestral tree was unexceptional: ordinary humans doing ordinary things in their time. How does that speak to God walking with us ordinary humans, doing ordinary things on our time? How does that speak how God may work through us, directly or long-term, even without us knowing it? Please meditate on this and then share where your thoughts take you.

Share with your thoughts fellow explorers.

Day 324: David the King

King David is a central figure in the Old Testament – in fact, he is the most frequently mentioned person in it. To get a full dramatic and sweeping picture of his life, read 1st Samuel 16 through 2nd Samuel and into 1st Kings chapter 2. For a more concise "here are the details" version, read 1st Chronicles 10:13 to 1st Chronicles 29 (not nearly as interesting, but shorter).

David and his son Solomon are, in many respects, considered the pinnacle of Israel's history in terms of its power, wealth, influence, and fame. To do them justice, a full study of their lives would take months. For the Gospel of Matthew though, we want to focus on one very small timeframe of David's life:

In 2nd Samuel 7:8-17, also 1st Chronicles 17:10b-14, the prophet Nathan told David that He was the head of a royal house which would last for eternity. This was reiterated by later prophets, such as recorded in Jeremiah 23:5, Isaiah chapters 9, and 11 and 12, Ezekiel 37:24-25 (repeated in Ezekiel 34:23-24), and supposedly by David himself in 2nd Samuel 23:5. It is also mentioned in many of the Psalms.

It is clear from all this that the Messiah would come from David's line: i.e., be a descendant of David. If He was not of David's line, He was not the Messiah.

David was king over the united tribes of Israel and received tribute from neighbouring kingdoms – he was a force in the neighbourhood. It was believed that when the prophecy came true, one of his household would rise to rule again, bringing Israel into prominence amongst all the nations of the earth. This reign would be forever with everlasting peace and justice, with all the nations coming to bow before them. Knowing what you do of Jesus, how was He the fulfillment of such a prophecy? How was He not?

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 325: Solomon

Solomon succeeded his father David to the throne, and saw himself as the one to fulfill the prophecy given to David: When the time comes for you to die, I will raise up your descendant, one of your own sons, to succeed you, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I will make his dynasty permanent (2nd Samuel 7:12-13).

Solomon built a house for the name of God: a grandiose temple. In his prayer of dedication of the temple and his admonishment to the people, (1 Kings 8:22-61), it seems that Solomon did not believe that he would live forever, but that there would always be a descendant of David on the throne – the person was not eternal, but the royal line was. Through the Israelites' obedience and worship of God at the temple, "all nations of the earth will acknowledge (God's) reputation and obey (God) as the people of Israel do."

Solomon saw himself as the fulfilment of prophecy – if he was, he fulfilled it in a small way (though it seemed grandiose to him, no doubt). Many people have claimed to fulfil prophecy, including prophecies about the Messiah. Jesus, however, did not make the direct claim until his crucifixion – rather, He would ask "What do my actions tell you? What do my words tell you?" You will see as we continue with the Gospel that a repeated question to Jesus was "Who *are* you?"

What is prophecy? How can you tell if someone is truly fulfilling prophecy? How can you tell if *you* are fulfilling prophecy, in the sense of walking in the way which God desires and has spoken of? Is prophecy contingent upon actions?

Share your thoughts with your fellow disciples.

Day 326: Rehoboam

The beginning of Solomon's reign started with much promise, and under him Israel was in its golden age in terms of wealth, power, and reputation – however, it did not last. The Lord warned Solomon that there would be consequences for the way he was ruling, but Solomon did not heed God's warning (see 1st Kings 11:11-13). After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam took the throne. The people of Israel petitioned Rehoboam to not lead them as harshly as their father had done – and when Rehoboam promised to be even more harsh, 10 of the 12 tribes rebelled and split away. The golden period of the glorious immortal reign of the house of David over unified Israel was over after one generation (1st Kings 12:1-20).

When things don't work out the way you want them to, what do you do? What do you think God does?

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 327: Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jeconiah and his brothers.

Abijah, Asa, and the rest are some of the kings of Judah who succeeded Rehoboam (2nd Chronicles 13-36). They often fought with their brother Israelites as well as the other neighboring kingdoms, and some were more faithful to God than others – but they were all considered descendants of King David. Under Jeconiah and his brothers, the kingdom of Babylon invaded, took the royal family and many of the political elite captive, and made Judah a vassal state (the northern kingdom of the 10 tribes had been overrun by the Assyrians years earlier, and their people intermixed into what became known as the vassal kingdom of Samaria).

The exile of Judah in Babylon lasted for 70 years – the people of Israel were now without their king through who God was to rule, and they were without the land which they had been promised (going back to Abraham).

Have you ever felt that everything has gone totally wrong? The Israelites had gone from being a powerful, rich, and envied kingdom in their little corner of the world to being a destitute people without a country and without leadership – in many ways, a return to Egypt. All in the face of the prophecy of God. What would you do if felt the promises of God felt like lies, or at least hollow and unfulfilled?

Share your thoughts with your fellow Explorers in Christ.

Day 328: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God.