



Minutes With Messiah

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Jesus' Genealogy

If there is anything in the Bible that is read less than the Minor Prophets or the Song of Songs, it has to be the genealogies. The names, at least to the Western mind, are hard to read. For most of the people listed, this is their only mention in Scripture. Reading the book of Numbers or the genealogies of Jesus has been compared to reading the phone book. If, as the Sages say, there is no unnecessary word in scripture, what can we learn from these lists of names?

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews understood the value of Jesus' genealogy. In proving the superiority of Jesus as our high priest, he (assuming the writer to be male) points out that Jesus could not be a priest *in Israel* because of his genealogy. "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." (Heb 7:14)

Jesus, as Messiah, holds the triune positions of prophet, priest, and king. (Christ/Messiah means anointed, and these are the offices which are ordained by anointing.) The writer of Hebrews, in the passage noted above, showed what Jesus' lineage means concerning his priesthood. The prophets had no apparent genealogical requirement, although Amos 7:14-15 (I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son) seems to indicate some linear component. We can, therefore, learn nothing from Jesus' genealogy concerning this aspect of his Messiahship. So, can we learn anything about his kingship from his lineage?

Actually, the lesson about his kingship is the same as the lesson in Hebrews about his priesthood. Specifically, the genealogies of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke establish beyond any doubt that Jesus could not be a king on David's throne on earth. Granted, he was of the royal lineage from David, and many mistakenly think that establishes that he will return to reign on David's earthly throne for a period of time (usually considered to be a millennium). However, it is just that royal lineage that disproves the millennial theory. Matthew shows Jesus was descended from Jeconiah (Coniah) through Shealtiel and Zerubbabel.

(Matt 1:11-12) Luke shows his line through Coniah's son Shealtiel and Zerubbabel. (Lk 3:27) Jeremiah prophesied, with an oath from God (Jer 22: 24) who can not lie (see "Replacement Theory" in the June 2000 issue of this bulletin) that Coniah's line would be cut off from the throne. "Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? Is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? Wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: **for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.**" (Jer 22:28-30) Because of his lineage from Jeconiah, then, Jesus could not be king of Israel (or Jeremiah could not be a prophet of God).

Then how is Jesus the King of Kings (Rev 19:16)? In the same way he can be our High Priest! "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36)

Jesus is now, and will continue to be, reigning in heaven over a spiritual kingdom, the church. Paul says in Eph 6:12 that our battle is against spiritual powers. So our king must be a spiritual king.

I'm not sure of all the reasons God put the genealogies of Jesus in the Bible. It is amazing, though, how a couple of names in them, names which are often overlooked, can show how wrong many people can be. Perhaps God, who knows all, put them there just to show that his son is now and forever reigning in heaven.

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Not Heretofore

Early in the book of Joshua, the people are preparing to cross into the promised land. Joshua's officers give a warning to the people that in crossing the Jordan they must follow the *Aron*, the ark of the covenant. "And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then you shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: do not come near to it, that you may know the way by which you must go: for you have not passed this way heretofore." (Josh 1:2-4)

On the surface, the final statement in this passage was clearly true. Only two among all those who were about to cross the river had actually set foot in the land to which they were going. With the exceptions of Caleb and Joshua, none of the people had passed this way heretofore. They needed a guide, and that guide was God, whose *shekinah*, visible glory, accompanied the ark, and in fact directed its bearers in the way they were to go, and even whether they were to go or stay.

In a deeper sense, we are all united with the nation of Israel at that time, because we constantly

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face territory we have not passed heretofore. Whether it be deciding on a college to attend, whether or whom to marry, one's field of employment, or sometimes even a place to live, we are faced with decisions involving new territory. Even if the entire process, such as job hunting, is

not new, the prospective employers are uncharted territory. In *Fiddler on the Roof* Tevye recounts to his longtime wife, Golde, how nervous he was on their wedding day, because he had never seen her before. In many ways and in many areas we are like Tevye. How do we deal with these unfamiliar situations of life? Joshua's generals knew the answer: follow the ark.

We no longer have the physical *Aron* to follow. However, it is not unjust to equate that ark to the entire word of God. The ark contained the tablets on which were the ten commandments. These commandments were not the whole law, but they represented that law. In that sense, the ark was the law. This should not be difficult to understand. If I say "I ate an orange," I am not saying I ate the rind and the pulp; I don't generally eat the rind. But I use the entire orange to represent the inside part that I did eat. Likewise, I don't need to explain how it tasted or its color or texture, because you have probably seen and tasted an orange yourself. The orange I ate is representative of all oranges, is the same in essence as all other oranges. So it is if I use the ark to represent the word of God, which it contained.

God's Word is Our Guide

What is the longest chapter in the Bible? It is Psalm 119. What does Psalm 119 say? In five words: "God's word is my guide." Of course the psalmist used many more than five words; he was, after all, a psalmist. But perhaps no other chapter expresses better what Joshua's generals were saying in the original passage quoted above. If I am about to blindly enter a new path, the psalm says "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps 119:105) If I face affliction, such as my own death or that of a loved one, "Remember the word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for your word has quickened me. (Ps 119:49-50) Are you about to enter a romantic relationship? "I will keep your statutes: O forsake me not utterly. How shall a young man cleanse his

way? By taking heed to it according to your word. (Ps 119:8-9)

What about business relationships? The word of God applies there, too. If you are about to enter a contract, such as a long-term purchase, remember Ps 119:106: “I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments.” I have known people who were in a bad job situation. They were having problems with a particularly difficult boss, and the situation may even have developed long after they first took the job. Even facing this uncharted territory, God’s word will guide. “Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep your precepts.” (Ps 119:134)

The Danger of Not Following

Why were the people to leave a space of a little over half a mile between them and the ark? Why not close up that gap so they wouldn’t lose sight of the ark? The passage says the gap is necessary “that you may know the way by which you must go.” Apparently the danger was that if some closed the gap, the rest of the camp would lose sight of the *Aron* and wander aimlessly. In a pitched battle, it is essential for the flanks not to lose contact with the middle; otherwise the enemy can get between and split the army. If the flanks of the Israelite camp lost sight of the ark, they could easily lose contact with the camp as a whole, endangering themselves and the entire nation. By allowing the ark to keep well ahead of the people, all could see it and follow.

We also need to guard lest we lose sight of God’s word. We need to maintain the half mile so that we, and others, keep the guide before us.

What happens when we close the gap? Sometimes we get so close to our pet portions of God’s word that we lose sight of the whole. In doing so, we can block other people’s ability to see God’s word. In doing so, we perhaps even lose our own perspective. Picture one of the people, we’ll call him Abidan, getting so close to the ark that he concentrates on following the right, rear ring for the carrying poles. He is following the ark very closely. Abidan is following that ring so closely that his feet get entangled with those of the right, rear bearer of the pole. He trips and falls, not because he was not following the word of God, but

that he was following one detail to the exclusion of the whole. Maybe poor Abidan falls to the side, and just gets up, brushes himself off, and continues to follow (at a greater distance, it is to be hoped). But what if he falls the other way, bringing him up hard against the ark? Like Uzzah (2 Sam 6:6-7), Abidan would be destroyed. There is a danger in closing the gap, in not keeping God’s word well in the lead as we move through life.

On the other hand, what happens when we increase the gap? Perhaps this is where most of us go wrong. We follow God’s law in general, but we fall so far behind we lose contact with it. We no longer know where it is leading us. If our man

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Abidan, after his fall, moved to the back of the nation so he wouldn’t trip again, he endangers himself equally. He sprained something in his fall (probably just his ego), so he sits down to rest. He can’t see the ark, but he sees the back of the group. As he sits out of sight of God’s word, he falls asleep. Soon even the rear guard is out of sight, and Abidan is lost. In his wanderings to catch up, he falls in behind another group of people. He doesn’t know they also lost sight of the ark, but they sound like they know where they are going. Abidan thinks he is obedient, but is easily led astray, all because he increased the gap—he lost sight of the ark.

God says to follow His word. Stay where you can see it. Don’t obscure someone else’s view. But don’t lose sight of it and lead others astray. Remember, in the pathway of life you need a guide because “you have not passed this way heretofore.”

Tomorrow, Tomorrow

My oldest son lives a day ahead of most of us. By that I mean that every day it's "tomorrow I go to Linda's house" (even though he's only been there once), or "tomorrow I work with Mark, and play with his computer" (which computer, if it exists, probably needs someone to play with it, since it's a cinch Mark doesn't). At least twice a day I have to sing the opening phrase of my son's favorite non-church song, "Tomorrow" from the play Annie. He needs to know that the sun will, indeed, come out tomorrow. But then, my son is retarded, or, to be politically correct, mentally challenged.

Unfortunately, we have a number of Christians who could be called spiritually retarded, because they also live a day ahead. They ignore Jesus admonition that "sufficient to the day is the evil thereof." (Matt 6:34)

The real problem with the attitude that says the sun **will** come out tomorrow, though, is that it leads to a faulty attitude about life in general. To be more specific, it leads to a faulty attitude about the end of life as we know it. The Christian attitude should be that I don't know whether the sun will come out tomorrow, so I had better live today as if it is my last.

Peter reminds us of the danger of living as if tomorrow will always come.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Pe 3:3-7)

The "tomorrow attitude" is that of the scoffers and the willfully ignorant.

Peter goes on to say that the world will end unexpectedly, the end coming "as a thief in the night." His conclusion is that, since the sun may not come out tomorrow, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God? . . . Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Pe 3:11-12, 14)

I don't want to be called retarded, or a scoffer, or willfully ignorant. I need to start living as if there will be no tomorrow. I know I should change my attitude. Maybe I'll start changing—tomorrow.

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