

Deane Parish Church Home Groups w/b Sunday 29th November 2015

1. Has anyone in your group ever traced their family tree?
2. Who can go back the furthest?

In the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* the hero, Jack Worthing, is forced to confess to Lady Bracknell that he doesn't know who his parents are. He describes how he was found in a hand bag in the cloak room at Victoria station, to which Lady B responds "*To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.*"

3. Why are many of us so curious about our origins?

Read Matthew 1:1-17

(I suggest you get one person... who doesn't mind attempting a few difficult pronunciations... to do this).

Only Matthew and Luke give a 'family tree' for Jesus. John begins his account by reference to Jesus' eternal origins ("*In the beginning was the Word...*") and Mark dives straight into an account of the *events* of Jesus' life. All four include what they do for good reasons however. So, lets think not just about **what** Matthew is telling us in this family tree but **why** he is telling us.

The phrase '*the Father of*' in Greek (the language Matthew wrote in) does not necessarily mean literally 'the parent of', but can, and often does, simply mean 'the ancestor of'. Matthew's family tree is selective. Compare it to Luke's account (Lk 3:23-38) sometime. Matthew's tree gives three groups of fourteen however.

4. Why might this be useful in an age when few could read and still fewer possessed books?

5. With whom does the family tree begin and with whom does it end?

6. *Biologically speaking*, who is the climax of the family tree? (verses 16 & 18)

Jesus, being accepted by Joseph, was the **legal descendant** of Joseph and therefore of Joseph's line.

For the Jews, their descent from 'Father Abraham' was the basis of their claim to the promise that God had made to Abraham: that they would be a great nation and would be specially blessed by God. By the time of Jesus' birth however (at beginning of the 1st century AD), very few Jews could actually trace their family tree back to 1000BC (the time of king David) and even fewer could show that they were actually **descended** from king David and the 'royal line' of Israel. King Herod (king when Jesus was born) had no royal blood and was only half-Jewish!

7. Bearing this in mind, can you think of another significance of the family tree (take a look at **Isaiah 9:6-7**), and why Herod and his sons might feel threatened by this?

8. If the climax of this family tree is Christ the King, God's Son born as a human, what is strange or even scandalous about these steps in the tree:

(i) Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah, verse 3.
(Read **Genesis 38:31-19**)

(ii) Boaz's parentage, verse 5a.
(Read **Joshua 6:25**)

(iii) Obed's parentage, verse 5b
(Read **Ruth 4:10,13**)

(iv) Solomon's parentage, verse 6.
(Read **2 Samuel 11:2-5**)

9. What point (or points) might Matthew be making by drawing our attention to these unconventional steps in Jesus' family tree?

10. Now go around the group and give each member the opportunity to share what has struck them most from this passage/study.