

# “Going To Impact Generations”

Matthew 1:12-18

Keeping the next generation’s focus on God means currently focusing on God.

Faithful Past Generations

Faithful Present Generations

Faithful Future Generations

Faithful Past Generations

Matthew 1:12-16, NKJV

*And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

This portion of Jesus’ genealogy begins with the exile in Babylon and concludes with Joseph who was betrothed to be married to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and exiled the people of God in 586 B.C. where they would spend 70 years before returning to the land God had given them (Jeremiah 29:4-10). This is spanning nearly six hundred years in fourteen generations. The genealogy here is representation of significant periods in the history of God’s people rather than an extensive list of all the people in the line of Christ.

The people listed in the genealogy of Jesus are just one of the children born to these men. Those listed are in the direct line of Jesus. God had worked in each of their lives to bring the Messiah He had been proclaiming since mankind’s fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. Each one of these men were significant in their faithfulness and obedience to Christ whether we know of much about their lives or not. This is obvious since each generation had to pass their faith onto the next generation in a manner that caused their children to seek after the Lord in obedience.

Jeconiah is also known as Jehoiachin which means “Yahweh will uphold”. He was king in Jerusalem when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem the second time. In this invasion King Nebuchadnezzar stripped the temple of all its treasures and led captive all the educated and elite of the city (2 Kings 24:8-16). Daniel, Azariah, Mishael, and Hananiah would have already been taken to Babylon at this time having gone in the first invasion of Judah (Daniel 1:1-7).

Jeconiah was eighteen when he was placed on the throne and sinned against God. Those in the line of Christ were not perfect throughout their life time, but turned to the Lord to complete their days in submission to Him. Jehoiachin was eventually released from prison and allowed to live with his family again. It was then that he would have probably shared the ways God had changed his life to his sons (2 Kings 25:27-30). This was the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 30:1-6:

*“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind*

*among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, <sup>2</sup> and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>3</sup> that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup> If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. <sup>5</sup> Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. <sup>6</sup> And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (NKJV).*

Receiving compassion and favor among the captors only came once the people turned their hearts back to God. Jeconiah’s improved treatment in captivity was an indication of a heart change that had taken place while imprisoned in Babylon. The sons born to him would have seen and benefited from their father’s transformation.

Jeconiah’s sons Shealtiel, whose name means “I have asked God”, is referred to in Ezra as the father of Zerubbabel, but little is known about him. Zerubbabel, whose name means “Descended of Babylon”, established the civil government along with Ezra the priest when the exiles returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 3:8; Nehemiah 12:1). Here is a man who demonstrated submission to the Lord as a leader in among God’s people. This behavior was certainly taught to him by his grandfather and father as well as others who had influence over his life.

Zerubbabel had a son who he named Abiud, whose name means “Possessor of renown”. This man is mentioned only here in the genealogy of Jesus. There is little known about Abiud other than what is recorded in this genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew.

Abiud named his son Eliakim, whose name means “God establishes” or “God raises up”. There is little known of Eliakim’s life and what he did other than he had a son who he named Azor.

Azor, whose name means “Helpful”, is also someone who is found in the genealogy of Jesus of which nothing is really known about. Azor became the father of Zadok, whose name means “Just”. Zadok would later have a son named Achim, whose name means “The Lord will establish”, followed by Eliud, whose name means “My God is praise”, followed by Eleazar, whose name means “My God is helper”, followed by Matthan, whose name means “Gift”, who would eventually have a son named Jacob, whose name means “Heel-catcher or Supplanter”. All these men lived in obscurity in regards to the world, but were part of something greater than themselves by having them brought into the world the one who would be charged with caring and providing for the Messiah and His mother.

Attention is given to Joseph, whose name means “May God add”, as the husband of Mary usually only at this time of year. These men in the line of Jesus are rarely thought about or even mentioned. Only those who seek to read the Bible through in one year ever venture into the first seventeen verses of Matthew’s gospel account. This lack of attention to this part of God’s Word leaves many believers lacking the encouragement that can only be found in passages of this nature.

There is an idea that impacting the next generations is only done whenever an individual does something that is recorded or is spoken of by many others in the records of

human history. These men prove that the greatest assignment that a person can fulfill in their walk with God is to simply obey what God has commanded those who follow Him to do. The greatest task a person can perform in the service of God is actually found in Deuteronomy 6:5-9.

*<sup>5</sup> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

*<sup>6</sup>“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NKJV)*

The greatest thing a person can do is share what God is doing in their life currently, what they have experienced Him do in the past, and confidently proclaim the promises of God that are still being anticipated to be fulfilled in His perfect timing. The faithfulness of past generations is seen and known only by the faithfulness that is displayed in the present generations.

#### Faithful Present Generations

Matthew 1:17, NKJV

*So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.*

Three specific mile markers or significant events in the history of God's people are represented this genealogy. Abraham to David is the history of God's people from the call of Abram to the established kingdom under King David. David to the captivity in Babylon is the gradual decline of God's people to worship and serve God as He had called them to do after coming into the land God had given them as an inheritance. The final period is the time leading up to the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, and Messiah.

Time is often told in this manner. The Age of Reason or the Age of Enlightenment is considered to have begun in the mid 1600's and ended in the late 1700's. The Industrial Revolution started in the late 1700's and ended in the early 1900's followed by the World Wars and the cold war ending in the late 1900's which has given way to the Information Age we are currently in as we approach the close of the second decade of the 2000's. Each of these periods of time connected with people and events that have impacted that specific generation in great ways making it what it was.

People look back to significant times and people who impacted the society as a whole to give identity and clarity in what is happening in the world around them. The greatest thing that is taking place which goes unrecognized by many people is the plan of God steadily working its way to completion. Spiritually speaking for the disciples of Christ, time is broken down in what God is doing rather than what mankind has accomplished.

The birth of Christ to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus into heaven is what follows the fourteen generations leading up to the birth of Christ. This lasted a short three

decades, but what took place on earth in those thirty years has turned the course of history forever. Apostle Paul proclaims that a whole new era has begun. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans,

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— <sup>13</sup> (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. <sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. <sup>16</sup> And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. <sup>17</sup> For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)*

*<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. (Romans 5:12-18, NKJV)*

Each person in their life has different periods that are marked off by significant events that have occurred during their lifetime. Time is told by death of parents, spouses, and siblings, employment, ages of children, or periods where a person has lived in different areas. These reference points are important to the person because they plot times of great change in their life. Every person who has ever lived experiences these dramatic experiences, but the followers of Christ can rejoice over the fact that they have moved from death to life.

The child of God has two major periods in their life which those without a personal relationship with Christ cannot claim. There is a B.C. (Before Christ) period and A.D. (After Death) period where the child of God is justified through the washing of Christ's blood for the forgiveness of their sins. They are new creations in Christ and cease living for themselves and begin to live for God. They know that "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV). They can proclaim like Apostle Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, NKJV).

Pentecost was the beginning of the Church Ages which will continue until Lord calls His Church home to be with Him, at what I believe, is the rapture of the Church. This will usher in the time of the Great Tribulation prior to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. The Church Age or the Age of Grace is in effect until the Church is taken out of this world.

The life of God's people can be divided up into periods of maturity that are experienced as well. Growth of the fruit of the Spirit in life is recognized as times of tragedy are faced with peace and joy rather than disillusionment and anger. Kindness, gentleness, and faithfulness are seen where once greed, self-centeredness, and betrayal were only

known. Knowledge of God's Word and a willingness to share Christ with others is seen as an outpouring of love that is undeniable where before there was only concern for one's comfort. Self-control and goodness are evident where indulgence and destruction once were expressed unchecked.

A great way to provide a testimony to the things God has done in life is to give the reason for the change that has occurred by saying things such as, "I would have handled that situation differently if I had not learned of Christ's..." and, "Since I have come to know Christ's...that does not bother me anymore". The present generations need to know the power of the Holy Spirit to change minds, hearts, and attitudes.

The present day has people grasping for anything that can help them have change in their lives to give them hope, meaning, and purpose. Dying to self by accepting Christ's sacrifice on behalf of sin is how a person moves from being dead in their sins to living eternally with God the Father immediately. Eternity with God does not start upon physical death; it starts the moment we experience life through faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins to stand justified before God the Father. This is the truth and hope and peace that needs proclaimed by those who have life in Christ if future generations have any chance of faithfully ministering to future generations.

#### Faithful Future Generations

Matthew 1:18, NKJV

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.*

"...before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" was something of a significant time in Joseph's life. The attitudes and lessons of great, great, great grandfathers that had been passed down to Joseph's father who was possibly still alive at this time weighed heavily upon how Joseph handled this news.

All the teachings about God, reading of the Torah in his classes growing up, and examples he heard of family that came before him were instrumental in Joseph's ability to love Mary in spite of the apparent betrayal she had committed against him. Joseph could never have handled this situation with thoughtfulness and prayer if he had heard among his family nothing of the miraculous deeds God did in the past for His people and his specific family. He could have never decided to "...put her away secretly" so that she would not be publicly humiliated and possibly stoned to death, killing the child as well as Mary.

Imagine if Joseph heard his relatives speaking harshly of judgment deserved by those who committed such offenses. It was clear that Joseph had been taught to forgive others, and had seen how to forgive in extreme circumstances by those around him. Joseph would have learned mercy and grace in his Torah studies growing up in passages like Leviticus 19:9-18,

*<sup>9</sup> When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God.*

*<sup>11</sup> You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. <sup>12</sup> And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.*

*<sup>13</sup> You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. <sup>14</sup> You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the Lord.*

*<sup>15</sup> You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor. <sup>16</sup> You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.*

*<sup>17</sup> You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. (NKJV)*

Joseph learned about loving his neighbor from studying God's Word and by witnessing how to do it by his family that practiced it over the generations. Children today are no different than children thousands of years ago because human nature remains the same. God also has remained the same and can bring change in to people's nature by giving them new life in Him rather than being slaves to sin and death that once reigned in the world before Christ's death and resurrection. Now new life in Christ is possible.

Joseph was chosen to have the responsibility of raising the Son of God. This could be for two specific reasons rather than the obvious one everyone thinks of: 1) Joseph was in the line of David, and 2) there was probably successive members of Joseph's family in the past that had hearts after God's own heart. There were many others who could have been part of the line of Jesus that were not one of the direct descendants due to reasons we may never know. One thing is true though. Joseph's love, care, compassion, forgiveness and strength came from God through the submission of family members of Joseph who saw their greatest achievement in life is to make sure those who came afterward would know the Lord in the same way they and their fathers before them did.

Impacting the world for Christ begins with faithfulness to God with every decision that is made. Greatness among mankind does not always equate with greatness in the kingdom of God. There will be many in heaven that lived their lives in obscurity here on earth that will have been used of God to bring about His plan throughout the history of mankind.

Little is truly known about the man Joseph who was betrothed to marry Mary. What is known gives evidence of the faithfulness of past generations that recognized the importance in their present generations so the future generations would be able to know the Creator, His Son the Messiah, and receive eternal life through faith in Him.

God's people must make a conscious effort to impact the present generations by learning about God from the lessons learned by those fellow believers who came before them. Then, taking all that God has taught and is currently teaching, present it to all those in the circle of influence the Lord has provided for each of His children. The Apostle Peter was inspired to put it best when he wrote,

*“<sup>14</sup>...be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;<sup>15</sup> and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, <sup>16</sup> as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

*<sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;<sup>18</sup> but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:14-18, NKJV)*

Let us not be known as the generation who shrunk back from the hatred and malice of this world against God to protect ourselves, but are known for the character of Christ and the mature fruit of the Spirit that is produced in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.