

August 6, 2020

The Gospel of Matthew begins with the Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17):

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

An incredible list of believers necessary to fulfill prophecy. These witnesses and the ordinary men and women that have come before us is extraordinarily humbling. So many of the names of the men and women have been forgotten to time.

Today our scripture was from the Book of Joel. Joel is the son of Phatuel, and second in the list of the twelve Minor Prophets. The scene of his labors was the Southern Israelite Kingdom of Judah, and probably its capital Jerusalem, for he repeatedly refers to temple and altar.

A prophet in the Old Testament was called a messenger to proclaim the word of the God of the covenant to the people of the covenant. Prophecy refers to the message or work of a prophet.

The prophetic movement in Israel developed over a period of time, from the eleventh century B.C. with ecstatic prophetic groups, through the tenth century with court prophets such as Nathan, into the ninth century with Elijah and Elisha, reaching its full flower in the eighth, beginning with Amos, and eventually flowing to the fifth with the

incomparable author of Isaiah. The New Testament regards John the Baptist as the last of the Old Testament prophets.

The contents of the Prophecy of Joel may be regarded as a typical presentation in miniature of the chief themes of prophetic discourse: somber warnings of the judgment and joyful tidings of God's work of salvation, designed to keep alive the faith in the coming of the Kingdom of God. Joel does not make a specific charge against the people for which they need to repent. They are not blamed for the catastrophe they have just experienced. Joel does not blame the people for their own suffering, and does not claim that natural catastrophes are divine punishment.

As important as Joel was to God and to us today, nothing is known of his life.

Rather than being known for this personal characteristic or his appearance, Joel is known for his faithfulness to God that inspired the people of his time and filled them with hope. In the end, it doesn't matter who we are but whose we are.

Think of the person who has inspired your spiritual life. When you say your prayers today, offer them up to God in thanksgiving. Three thousand years from now, people probably won't remember our names but some of our simple acts of faith will still be alive in the DNA of the people who were inspired by the things you and I are called to do in God's name.