



The Ancestry of Christ-Part 2
Jesus, Son of Abraham: Grateful for an Inclusive God
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Well, my wife and I rarely flip through the TV channels—you know, go channel surfing—rarely do that. But Friday night, we were waiting up for my 10-year-old daughter to get home from a birthday party. I realize how strange that sounds: either we're getting so old that we're going to bed at a ridiculously early hour, or it's a crazy culture we live in that my 10-year-old daughter's out late at a party on Friday night. I think it was a little bit of both. But that's not the point.

We were sitting there flipping through the channels. And of course, on our TV, we had this graphical layout of all the channels and I was just overwhelmed. We haven't done this in years—just kind of going through the channels sequentially. And I stopped. I looked at Carly and said, "Would you look at this. There are thousands of channels we've never even heard of. And millions of shows I have no idea why anyone would watch—just the crazy things they're about. This is amazing."

And she turned to me and she said, "You remember when we were kids, and we had like eight channels?" And then she really blew my mind, and she said, "And you remember when we were up late enough the channels would go off the air? And a little test pattern would come up—you know, the Indian Head at the time." Wow. Yeah, remember that?

When I was thinking—if you stayed up late enough, maybe were sick with the flu or something—or, you know, you stayed in front of that TV long enough, then the stations would come back on, and the flag, the American flag, would be waving in the wind and the Star-Spangled Banner would start the day—remember that? Start the programming day with the Star-Spangled Banner. I thought, yeah, things have changed. Now we have TV going. And I thought, this is just crazy: millions of shows, thousands of channels.

And I thought, you know, that's just the way Americans like it. Right—choice—that's the way they like it. I mean, go even to the supermarket lately. In the olden days, when they called the market a supermarket it was because the square footage of the store reached around 20 or 25,000 square feet; then it was a supermarket. Today, you can't find a supermarket being built that's not 100,000 square feet. And the super, super deluxe markets that they're building are up to 170,000 square feet.

Now, in the old days, when you wanted to buy chips for your barbecue, you had like three or four choices. Today, you can spend an hour in the chip aisle. It's crazy. And don't even try to buy toothpaste. I don't even know there were that many brands. And I was in there actually the other



day looking for water—half an aisle full of water—and when we were kids, it would be strange to think you’re going to buy water at the supermarket anyway. But to have endless choices of water—“I want the clear kind.” I mean, I don’t know; I just want water. Strange choices.

We love our choices—almost endless, limitless choices. That’s the way we moderns like it. And then come the Christians. And those Christians, you know, they keep talking about they’ve got the only way. And they keep quoting Jesus: “I’m the way, I’m the truth, I’m the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me.” You want to tune in with God, you want to connect with God, you want the God satellite—there’s one channel about one person. That’s it. You want to go shopping for truth—one product, and it comes through one book. That’s it. That’s all you got.

And it’s no surprise then that we are labeled continually, chronically, in our society as being exclusive and narrow-minded and bigoted and—just our little corner—we’ve got the truth and that’s it. And we understand why people say that. I get that. But as we turn to our second installment in our study of the genealogy of Christ in Luke chapter three, we may learn something about God as we study this second leg of the genealogy that helps us understand the God that is continually called narrow and bigoted and exclusive. We might find that God is not quite the God people think he is.

Now the first leg, as you turn to Luke chapter three, you remember, was tracing the lineage from Jesus to David, because he is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant—that there would be a king with fingernails and eyelashes, a literal king on a literal throne in a literal city on a literal planet, ruling the nation. And Christ is the King of kings, and he’ll do that. And he’s coming back to set up his kingdom, and we pray for it daily, I trust—that his kingdom would come.

The second leg, though, reminds us as we trace the lineage—if you look at the bottom of verse 31—there is the son of David. But then we go in verse 32: he’s the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nashon, Amminadab, Admin, Arni, Hezron, Perez, Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and the son of Abraham, who was the son of Tara, the city of New York, Abraham.

Now, you want to talk about promises that God made—the things he was going to do in bringing the Messiah into the planet—you certainly got to think of the Davidic Covenant. But you also need to think of the Abrahamic Covenant, because God made a promise to Abraham. And that promise that he made that will culminate in the birth of Jesus Christ—why Luke wants to make it clear that he is a son of Abraham—is very helpful in understanding God’s heart.



Now, maybe we should turn back there and catch a little bit of this as we get introduced to the names named quarteira and Abraham. Let's go back to Genesis. And really, we get the names at the end of Genesis 11, but let's move forward to Genesis 15. We get this Abrahamic Covenant, it's called—this promise that he's going to bring an ultimate offspring of Abraham, and he's going to do something and he's a plan in mind.

Now, we should remind ourselves a little bit about Abraham. When we meet him, he's a bit of a contradiction at the end of chapter 11, because he's been named by his father Tara. He's been named Abram, not Abraham, but Abram. And Abram was his given name. In an agrarian society, as you might imagine, in the ancient Near East, you better have a lot of kids. It was not only your workforce, in part; it was your Social Security. It was important to have large families, and everybody had them, and it was a good thing, and it was something you prized and something you reveled in. And so Tara calls his son Abram, and Abram means "great father." Now, in that we want to have a kid who becomes a great father to our grandkids, we want, you know, these great fathers. And so he's called "great father."

The interesting thing is at the end of chapter 11, we learn that he's married—married to a gal named Sarai, who was later named Sarah—and that's the Hebrew word for princess. And we're told that the princess wasn't feeling much like a princess because she had the bitter experience of being infertile. She bore no children. And we meet them there in chapter 12. They're pushing, you know, their latter years. He's 75 years old. And he's aging quickly, and they have no kids. And they're long past any hopes of, you know, decorating a baby's room. I mean, they've missed it. The great father is no great father at all. They have no kids.

Chapter 12, he makes a promise that he's going to have a child. As a matter of fact, that child is going to begin a line that will culminate, as we learn later in the Bible, in the birth of Jesus Christ. That was very strategic. And in that birth, there would be a kind of an expansion of God's plan through Abraham, who was, as you know, the first Jewish person, as we put it. Right? He is the father of the Jewish people. That there would be something that God would do that would expand his concern and his blessing and his forgiveness and all that he does to reconcile sinful men with a holy God—there would be something huge about that plan.

Take a look at it there in Genesis 15. I had you turn there. Drop down, if you would, to verse number two. Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless?" Now remember, the promise came in chapter 12, and by chapter 15 he's still without any kids. "The heir of my house [is] Eliezer of Damascus," a servant. "I've got no children of my own." And Abram said, "Behold, you've given me no offspring; a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and God's going to respond, "This man, this child, [is] not going to be your heir; your very own son will be your heir." And he brought him outside and he said, "Look toward heaven and number the stars," right? There's an impossible assignment. "If



you're able to..." Of course, you will not be able to number them. And he said, "So shall your offspring be."

Now, contextually, Abram without children, thinking, I'm never going to have a child of my own—God says you're going to have children. And those children are going to be as numerous as the stars in the sky. They're going to be so many you can't—they're innumerable. You can't even count them.

Now, what we learn—and we learn this early on in the Old Testament—is that you might be something related physically to Abraham, but Abraham is a model, not just a genetic dispensary. He's a model of faith in God—the kind of faith that God credits to people as righteousness. And the Bible makes a big point of this: that there are a lot of people that are descended from Abraham that aren't really descendants of Abraham, in the sense that they don't trust God the way that Abraham did.

We already learned this when we studied the ministry of John the Baptist, did we not? You hear people saying, "Hey, we're Abraham's kids; we're okay with God. We don't need to repent or anything like that. I'm sure our relationship with God is fine." Because you have no relationship with God? You talk about the connection to Abraham—God can raise up stones and create children of Abraham, that's not the point. To really be in league with Abraham is to have a trust in Abraham—or trust, rather, in God—the way Abraham had in God.

And that trust, I suppose the pinnacle of that trust, was it not in chapter 22? You know your Old Testament well—you know that was a pivotal chapter. When God, after he gave this child to Abraham—called him "laughter" because it was such a joke that he would have a kid in his old age. He's now 100 years old; he has little Isaac—that's what the word Isaac means, "laughter," in Hebrew. And he's told by God in chapter 22, "Take your son, your only son, the son whom you love," and do what with him? Sacrifice him. Go kill your son.

Now, you've been reading through the DBR with us. You see these repeated concerns of God that the Canaanites kept throwing their children in the fire and sacrificing their children. He was totally against that. What are you doing? Here's a God telling Abraham to sacrifice his own child. And if you study the passage carefully, he goes up to Mount Moriah, which later becomes that threshing floor that David buys, that later his son Solomon built the temple on. And in that symbolic moment, as he takes his son up there—I say symbolic because God didn't allow him to sacrifice his son—he took him right up through the emotion of killing his own son in obedience to God. And you remember what happened: as the dagger was lifted in the air, the angel of the Lord came and said, "No, don't—spare your son."



Let's turn to the end of that and look at how it finishes—chapter 22. God reiterates the promise of the people that will come from Abraham in league and associated with Abraham: they would be many. Look at verse 15: [the] angel of [the] Lord called out to Abraham a second time. By the way, his name is no longer Abram at this point—he was renamed in chapter 22. I'm sorry, in chapter 17. It was a bit of a play on words: he was called "great father" by his father, Tara, but God renames him "father of a great number." Used to be "a father of a lot of people," now he's called Abraham.

Verse 15: And the angel of the Lord came to Abraham a second time from heaven, verse 16, and he said, "By myself I have sworn"—this is not some kind of, you know, quid pro quo—"This is a unilateral decision; I've sworn," declares the Lord. "Because you've done this and you've not withheld your son, your only son"—right, didn't carry it through, but certainly willing to sacrifice his own son as a type and a picture of how God the Father would sacrifice his own Son for our sins—"surely I will bless you, surely I will"—look at this now—"multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven." And if that wasn't a good enough illustration, "as the sand that is on the seashore."

Next time you're there, and the weather warms up, and you've got the sand there running through your fingers or through your toes, start to look at those grains and to think of each one of those as a person. And then pick up your eyes and look down the beach and think of the people God has in view here. That wasn't going to happen just with the nation of Israel—that was smaller than most nations. The end game was after that, the type of that sacrifice was carried out outside the city gates of Jerusalem, when Christ would die and draw all men to himself—every person on the planet? No, not all without exception—but all without distinction from every corner of the globe, to where when you look at the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation—what does it say? By the time we get to the end, the people celebrating their salvation in white robes, waving palm branches in celebration of the forgiveness that is granted in Christ—the Bible says it's an innumerable throng, a number that can't be counted, in John's vision as he sees that heavenly scene unfold.

God is, through the birth of the son of Abraham, going to bless the entire world through the work of the son of Abraham—not the picture of Isaac being sacrificed, but the reality of Christ being sacrificed—to bring people to himself. He says, "So shall your offspring be. You're going to have all kinds of descendants." Remember that old song we sang as kids—speaking of our childhood—"Father Abraham had many sons, many sons..." Only the church kids can smile at me at this point, right? "Many sons had Father Abraham; I am one of them, and so are you."

Clearly we're not Jewish. We don't bear that genetic connection to Abraham. But we are, by faith, the children of Abraham. That's what Galatians 3 is all about. Now, does God have a future for Israel? I preached on that a lot. Of course God has a future for Israel and a plan for Israel. We, I believe, are grafted into this as children of Abraham by faith, because we trust in God the way that Abraham did. And God credits that to us as righteousness. Not about being good—although God



wants us to be good—it's about the faith that we have in God that, through the payment of Christ's sacrifice, forgives our sins and makes us right.

How many people is God trying to save? Oh, as many as possible. He's reaching out into all corners of the world, and he's bringing in an innumerable throng. I just want to rethink number one on our outlines: the numerically big plan of God. Rethink God's numerically big plan. It's a big plan. What do I mean by that? Not just big in terms of what it's doing—it's big in what it accomplishes numerically. God is reaching out to millions of people through the generations.

How many people will be in heaven? Well, the Bible says fewer are those who find it. Now, I understand that. By comparison, there are most people that have ever lived that will reject the message of God—the message of repentance, contrition, and trust in God for salvation—specifically, since the coming of Christ, faith in Christ. They'll reject that. I get that. But the Bible says his success rate is not paltry. The people that will be there celebrating with us, if you're a Christian, is innumerable beyond measure. Now, it's not from God's perspective, but when you look through the throng in heaven, it'll look like the sand on the seashore. And I know the illustration doesn't work for us in Orange County at night—particularly with fog and lights—but get up to the mountains sometime and look at the stars. There's the picture. But this is going to be huge. You're going to look at a sea of people and say, "Look at God."

Is he exclusive, or is he inclusive? "Oh, but Mike, you just said he's not saving everybody." Well, I understand that. We need to catch the difference, though. Is he exclusive? You've been taught, haven't you, that he's exclusive? And I have—from passages like John 14, where it says he's the way, the truth, [and the] life, and no one comes to the Father except through him. But the distinction might be made this way: the plan of salvation—that is, how you get saved—it is exclusive. There's only one way to do it. Right? You have to repent of your sins; you have to trust God for your forgiveness, specifically through the mechanism of Christ in his death. You have to do that.

Just like if I said that you're on a Carnival ship that's sinking. Let's just imagine that. And it's going down. And I said, "Here we are in the waters in the middle where there's thousands of miles from land. All you can do to be saved—all you can do—is get in a lifeboat." That's the only mechanism we've got. And you can sit there and say, "Well, I want a helicopter." Well, we don't have any of those available. "Well, I want a watercraft; I want a jet ski." We don't have any of those. The boat has supplied you with a lifeboat. Now, that's an exclusive mechanism to get off this boat. Right? That's it.

The plan of salvation is exclusive. But God's salvation plan is massively inclusive. The call goes out to everybody. The siren goes off as the Carnival ship—sorry, Carnival—starts to list. They've just set themselves up for these illustrations, though. As it starts to list and it's starting to go down



and the alarms are sounding—everyone is called to the lifeboats. What Paul says, as he stood before the Athenian scholars, right—the university professors—he said God is calling all people everywhere to repent. The message is going out. It's sounding out.

And by the way, if you're one of those—maybe you're a skeptic this morning—saying, "Well, you know what, I don't want to become a Christian because there's some Aborigines somewhere in the back country of Australia that hasn't heard the message. There's somebody in a jungle somewhere that hasn't heard the message." You know, I would, number one, challenge that. Because, in part, you probably haven't studied the amazing story of missiology. And not only that, in anthropology, we've got people like S. H. M. H. **[as in transcript]** and even John Richardson's more of a popular book—you know, *Eternity in Their Hearts*—of pockets of people coming to the conclusion that there is one God who has sent his Son, and they must trust in him to be saved. I mean, that message has gone out sometimes in some really bizarre and unique ways. God is getting his message across, in part because he's written his law on people's hearts. And if they're responsive to that, God gives them more light, and they respond to that light.

I mean, I don't think—I think it's a kind of a, you know, a barroom excuse. But in reality, you want to do your homework, you're going to find the message has gone out around the world. Have we reached every single, you know, pocket of people? No, I'm not saying that. But I'm saying it's hard to find a pocket of the world where this message hasn't arrived. It hasn't come through where there's got some connection in that people group where the message is coming. Is there more work to do? Yes, of course. We need to translate the Bible into more languages. I get all of that. But this has been—for instance, the Bible—the most important and central book. It was the first one to roll off the printing presses. It was the most copied one by scribes and literate people. It's been the best-selling book of all time, bar none. The Bible and the message of God—you want to talk about the channel? It's been broadcast. It's out there. Is there more work to do in missions? Yes. That's why we're involved in it, and you should be too. But the point is, the message goes out everywhere. God is an inclusive God calling all people everywhere to repent.

You know, it's like scuba diving—let's—I don't know, you can illustrate a million ways. But there's only one way to survive underwater: you need to have some artificial breathing apparatus to get it done. But here's the deal: the instructions and the tanks are readily available, and the message goes out: "Here they are. You want to survive underwater? This is how you do it." You want to be saved from the sinking ship—there's a way to do it. And God has put that message out around the world. Many people, as Romans 5 says, will be made righteous by the obedience of that one man.

And the throng in heaven—I was quoting from Revelation chapter seven, verse number nine: "I looked," John says, "and behold, a great multitude that no one could number." They were there, clothed in white robes, palm branches in their hands, crying out, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Just wait till you get there. It's not going to be a small little group. God is not keeping this message in a corner. This isn't some modern form of Gnosticism.



The message from the very beginning was supposed to go out—even from the New Testament times—from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

I didn't quote the whole of Revelation chapter seven. I skipped a section and a phrase, and I'll give it to you in a second. But you're in—are you still in Genesis 15? Look back with me to Genesis chapter 12. Genesis chapter 12 was where this promise was first made. And as we look at God's big plan, it's not just numerically big; it's something that's going to transgress and cross into all kinds of different groups of people. Let's look at how it's put here. The first time it's given to Abraham—tells him in verse one to leave your country, your kindred, your father's house; go to the land I'll show you. "I'll make you..." And by the way, just for completeness' sake—in your maps in the back—you'll understand he's there at the bottom of the Mesopotamian area—Mesopotamia just means "the land between the rivers," Tigris [and] Euphrates. It goes down to what was called Ur of the Chaldeans. It's right at the top of the Persian Gulf. It's in southern Iraq today. That's where Abram lived. He was called to go over to Canaan, which—they would never travel across the desert—they would go up and around, and Haran is up there in southern Turkey, and that's one of the stops along the way it talks about in chapter 11. They make their way into Canaan. That's the trip that Abram was making—later to be called Abraham. But the Bible says here that God told him, you're going to be great; you're going to go where I tell you to go; and you're going to dwell in this place called Canaan, or later Israel.

"I'm going to bless you. First, I'm going to make you"—verse 2—"a great nation. I will bless you, I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." You're not going to be great just because I'm going to keep this to myself—or keep this to yourself. I don't have a little clique here. I'm not just playing favorites. "I'm going to make you a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse." And "in you"—now, here's the part I want you to catch; underline it—"all the families of the earth will be blessed." All the families of the earth will be blessed.

Now, families, by the way—we see as a much more, you know, tight circle, this nuclear family we talk about. In those days, I mean, it was extended family. So in every web of family—and here's the line from Revelation seven now—every tongue, every tribe, and every nation. Every little people group, every little clan, every little tribe is going to be infiltrated with the blessing that comes through the son of Abraham. That's the promise of God. It is not only to be numerically big—let's get this down now, number two in your outline—let's appreciate how ethnically diverse it's going to be. Appreciate God's ethnically diverse plan.

Here's another way it's put in Revelation chapter five: "By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe, every language, every people, and every nation." Every people group, every language group, every tribe, every nation. "And you've made them to be a kingdom [and] priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth." Who? Everybody from what group? Every group. You can say God is exclusive in the method of salvation—only one way to get out of the sinking boat, I



get that. But you cannot call him a bigot. You certainly can't call him narrow—not only just for the sheer mass of people that he's going to save, but when you look at that group, he's not playing favorites.

“Oh, but it seems that way. In the Old Testament it's all about the nation of Israel. God seems to have a special place for them.” He did. But the Bible is very clear: just like in Jesus's evangelism, he focused on a few for the sake of the many. He always gave concentration to a small number so that he could bless a lot of people. And we see it at the very beginning of the nation of Israel—this is where Israel starts. The nation starts with Abraham. And the promise was, I'm going to make you a blessing. And let me just be clear—verse 3—“All the families of the earth shall be blessed in you.”

[It's] ethnically diverse. Even, by the way, if you read the Old Testament and you're thinking through the ethnic superiority of Israel—that's really not the way it's presented. “Well, they're the only ones that have a relationship with God.” Interesting. If you say that, let me just start you on a little homework assignment for those of you that are into that—trying to figure out some of these themes in the Bible. Let me start you with one that's close by: chapter 14. Genesis chapter 14. All I want you to do—read through the Old Testament and just think about God's focus on Israel and see if it's really as exclusive as you think it is. Even when God is beginning his nation.

Look what happens in chapter 14. He's returning—drop down, verse 18. Verse 17 says he's coming back from the defeat of the kings and he's, you know, delivered his nephew and all of that—Lot. Verse 18: And Melchizedek—this is Genesis 14:18—the king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. Right? No comment on that, but that's an interesting combination from a New Testament perspective, right—these elements that came to be known as the body and blood of Christ and to represent the broken body and the spilt blood of Christ. Now he—that is, Melchizedek—was a priest of—now if you've been to Sunday school and studied the names of God, here's one—El Elyon, translated here “God Most High.” Now, that's a very Jewish-sounding way to talk about the supreme, infinite, transcendent being in the universe. And it's coming here as a comment on somebody who's not Jewish. It's not related to Abraham; has nothing to do with Abraham.

Now, of course, logically, everything before Abraham, you'd have to say, “Well, you know, clearly God's working outside this focus on Israel.” But now that he's chosen to focus on Israel—focus on a few for the sake of the many—there's all these little windows looking out, if you will, at people that should make you scratch your head. What do you mean he's a priest of El Elyon, the Most High God? And then—well, he's got to bow here to Abraham, doesn't he? That's not what happens. Abraham bows to him. Verse 19: he blessed him and he said, “Blessed be Abram, by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth... and be blessed by El Elyon, God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And Abram—look at this—gave him a tenth of everything.



Here's Abram, here, giving to Melchizedek, this mysterious priest of the Most High. And that means he is functioning in that society as helping people to understand the real God of the universe, who apparently is offering real, acceptable sacrifices to God. You think, "Wow, this is amazing. God's at work, blessing people, connecting people to himself." Nothing to do with Israel; nothing to do with Abraham.

Run the clock forward a little in your mind. Remember Moses? Here is Moses in there with the Jewish people, raised in Pharaoh's court. He tries to deliver, you know, in his own way, the people from the tyranny of the Egyptian slaveholders, and he gets run out of town because in his zeal he kills someone and they're not ready to follow Moses. So he goes—where? Do you remember? He goes to the desert of Midian. To the desert of Midian. And that's way down there in the Sinai Peninsula. It's, you know, certainly not Israel. And he's not [among] Israelites there. The Israelites are now all captive in Egypt. He ends up meeting a guy named Jethro—do you remember Jethro? He is presented as a priest of God, offering sacrifices to God—nothing to do with Israel. And here we are, in this period of about the 14th century BC, 15th century BC, and you've got God setting up his priests all over the place—who are helping people understand God, helping people connect with God.

I know the Old Testament is focusing on Israel. But even as we look out the windows—and sometimes we don't have to look out the windows; we need to look in the cockpit—because some of the books in the Jewish canon are all about God's concern for outsiders. You've read the book of Jonah, haven't you? What's that all about? Trying to help the northern tribes of Israel, right? No. Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites—these people that are really the fighting force of the ancient world, these oppressors—and God goes to the big metropolitan area, and he shows Jonah, "I've got a concern for these people."

Now, guess what? Jonah wasn't appreciating the ethnic diversity of God's concern. You notice that? What does he want? Zap them. Kill them all. And yet, God says, "I care about those people."

Which, by the way, it should go without saying—but perhaps your background wasn't mine. I had no hint of any kind of racism—as the culture calls it—in my background, in my family. Never heard it, never saw it. Never. Which is surprising to me whenever I saw it. Maybe that wasn't your blessed upbringing, and you need to hear from your pastor in the 21st century in Orange County—though I can't believe that you would. But there is no place for that kind of prejudicial, kind of racial thinking in your mind. You do understand—and I like the way others put it—there's only one race. You understand? As Paul stood there to the Athenians, he says God created people from one person—all the people of mankind. Only one race, right? Unless you're a Darwinist and you believe in what Darwin was talking about and the superiority of the races based on how far they've come along and evolved. We reject all that, obviously. And we believe that if you're a human being, you're created in the image of God. And I don't care what color your skin is. I don't care what your



cultural background is. God has a very broad ethnic concern. And he has no problem seeing those crisscross.

Oh, I understand God's concern about Israel sometimes marrying into situations where there was idolatry and hearts being turned away to the abominable practices of the Canaanites—I get all that. But you do know one of his heroes, Moses—we just talked about him—who did he marry? He married Jethro's daughter—Zipporah, the priest of Midian. Not a Jewish priest, right? We didn't even set up the Levitical priesthood yet. He's not even one of us. You married his daughter. And then we speculate, because she goes off the radar right after a scene or two with Zipporah—Zipporah's gone. And then in Numbers 12, he's getting in trouble with his brother and his sister—over what? He marries a Cushite woman. You know that word "Cushite," Cush—that is in eastern Africa, Eastern Africa. That's so far down in ancient Egypt; it's way down by, you know, Somalia. It's in a place where, no doubt, commentators say, she certainly didn't look like the Israelites. And what does God do? You remember the story in Numbers—strongly defends his leader in marrying this foreign woman.

Speaking of foreigners, look at our printed—unless you want to turn there, you got your finger there in Luke 3—look at our genealogy. Just moving backwards: "son of David," bottom of verse 31, and "the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of"—who's the next guy? Boaz. Boaz. Hmm, where have I heard that name? Oh, I can turn to a book in the Bible about Boaz. And what book would I go to? Ruth. The good Jewess, right? Good Jewish girl, wasn't she? Do you know anything about the book of Ruth? Was she from Israel? No. She married into Israel. Where was she from? Edom—right? Or Moab—I'm sorry, not far from Edom. But you were right; I was wrong. Modern-day what? Jordan. Right? She's from Amman, right? I mean, it wasn't there yet, but think about this. Here is—I mean, if you even compare this to some of the frustration of the ethnic, you know, superiority in the minds of people—here was someone in the lineage of Jesus Christ from Jordan.

Do you have any vestige of any kind of racial, prejudicial thinking in your heart? I mean, I hope I wouldn't have to resonate and camp on this as your pastor, but man, there's no place for that in Christianity. Why? Because God's plan is ethnically diverse—from every people group, every tribe, every nation, every language—God is pulling people together. And that means we love the nations. We love the ethnically diverse. We have no issues there at all. And if you do, you need to repent of it before God today. No place for that. I'm certainly not—as some are trying to swing the pendulum back the other way—to talk about, you know, church is really not church unless we have every nation represented. You know, that's silly. We've got plenty of that going on when we get to heaven. Everyone is welcome here at Compass Bible Church—it doesn't matter what your ethnic background is. But the goal is not "We can't feel good about ourselves until we look like heaven." And I hear that all the time from people. That's certainly not the goal. What kind of silliness is that? I'm going to share with everybody I can about the gospel at my workplace, in my circles—wherever I go—and same for you. But we have no concern about those ethnic divisions that the world seems to have so many problems with.



God wants us to reach people in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth—our Jerusalem, South Orange County; our Judea, Southern California; our “sumaira,” some area—the country that we live in—and the ends of the earth as well. So let’s not have any of that going on in our minds.

I didn’t even get into Jesus’s ministry. How often did he say—we read this parallel passage from the Matthew 8 text where he has the Roman centurion that shows great faith in Christ. And here’s what he says: he marveled and said to some of those who followed, “Truly I tell you, no one in Israel—in no one in Israel—have I found such faith.” Remember that, when he heals his daughter? And then he says this: “I tell you, many will come from the east and from the west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” There are some people, because of their ethnic walls in their mind, they can only picture Abraham high-fiving other Jewish people in the kingdom. And the Bible says from the east and the west they’re going to come. Why? Because heaven is a place where people are living together from every tongue, tribe, and nation. God is not ethnocentric. He’s cross-cultural; he’s multi-ethnic. God is an inclusive God. He’s not an exclusive God. Appreciate God’s ethnically diverse plan.

Now, while we celebrate God’s big plan and his ethnically diverse plan, there’s something else going on here that we need to understand. God is a merciful God as well. If you just think about what God’s doing even in the list that we have—let’s start at the bottom: Nahal, Arterah. We don’t know much about him. But we do know a little bit about verse 34—Abraham. A lot about Abraham. We know a lot about Isaac. We know a lot about Jacob. Let’s just start with those three guys.

Now, if you’re going to write a book—a holy book about holy people that are going to be the leaders of your nation that become the leaders, you know, of your religion—you’re not going to paint them in the picture that we have painted in the Bible. One of the reasons we know we can see the divine print of God on the Scriptures—because if I’m going to write a book, or if it’s going to be about some guy I admire and he’s going to be that, I’m not going to write things like this: in the bottom of chapter 12, he’s just been made a promise that through him all this blessing is going to come to every family on the planet. He can’t even get out of the 12th chapter of Genesis without showing his cowardice and his deception to try and get out of a jam when he travels to Egypt. He’s a sinner. And he only does it once, because I’m thinking some people—you know, you can fool me once... you know the whole line. I mean, I think, okay, you make a mistake; learn from [your] mistake; don’t do it again. Does Abraham ever do this again? You know your Sunday school stories: he does it twice. He’s a coward and one without faith. Oh, he has faith—he has faith in God—but that faith is imperfect. And in his life, he shows his imperfections.

And then his son Isaac comes along, and what do we learn about Isaac? He’s got the cowardice in his life, just like his dad had. He does the same thing in his life—deceiving people. You want to talk about deception—who’s the next guy on the list there? Jacob. Wow. Deceiver. I mean, he’s not only



a cowardly deceiver—those guys did it when they were in a jam—he’s a conniving deceiver. Jacob is—remember the story about Esau and Jacob and stealing the birthright? I mean, dressing up like his brother. Not only that, he’s a mama’s boy. There’s plenty of reasons not to like Jacob. And I’m thinking to myself, he’s in the lineage of Christ.

I don’t know how you pick teams—no, I do know how you pick teams. Go back to kickball in elementary school. How did that work? You ever get a chance to pick the teams? I know how I pick. How do you pick teams, ever? How do you pick your March Madness teams? You pick the worst—you pick bad—just to kind of spice it up? Pick some good ones and some bad ones? No, you don’t do that. Hey, employers, how do you pick your employees? “Well, I just want diversity here—pick some real losers, you know, some winners. Just want a variety of people in here.”

Go up the list a little further. Actually, we’ll work backwards from David. Luke 3: the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nashon—Nashon, underline that one: Nashon. Do you know that guy? Huh? I don’t know him. You said you did. You’re lying. Okay. Don’t know anything about Nashon. Only one thing I know about Nashon is that Matthew tells me who his wife was. His wife. In Matthew chapter one, in the lineage that he lays out, he gives us his wife’s name. His wife’s name—you do know his wife—Rahab.

Now, when you’re picking teams to have your religious leader be born, you probably want to avoid the Canaanite prostitute. That’s what I’m thinking. Now I’m going to choose from my, you know, ancestry.com tree—just want to block that—block that out. God, in his grace—if you know the timelines here, we’ve gone from David—middle monarchy—we move back to Boaz and Ruth, that’s in the time of the Judges. Then we move back to the time of the Conquest, in the book of Joshua. We’ve got this guy named Nashon—his wife is Rahab. We meet Rahab in the beginning of Joshua as the one who put the spies up and sent them out the other way secretly. She’s hailed even in Hebrews chapter 11, in that great list of heroes of the faith, as one that trusted God and did something courageous out of faith in God. She’s a prostitute, you understand, from Jericho. It’s not one you’d probably pick for your team.

And God is doing something here that’s more than the masses, more than ethnically diverse. He’s now pulling in people—I put it this way, number three—who are—he’s mercifully broad. His plan is mercifully broad. We need to celebrate God’s mercifully broad plan. In his mercy, he doesn’t just choose the best and the brightest, the smartest, the sharpest. He chooses some real losers in our book. I wouldn’t pick her. I don’t want her in my ancestry.com file. And yet God says, “No, no, I want that.”

And the Bible says a lot about how God chooses his team. I need to turn you to one passage on this—how about First Corinthians chapter one? A familiar text, but maybe I can broaden it a bit in



your thinking as I show you the quote that Paul quotes here. When we pick teams, we pick them very differently than God—because we are relying on the people we pick to either make our company go, make our kickball team win—whatever it is that we’re picking, we want our team to win. And the NCAA—we want to pick the best, because we’re relying on them. The Bible is very clear: everyone on the team is not reliant on their skill, their righteousness. They’re reliant on the mechanism of salvation, which is Christ.

Back to the boat illustration: the Carnival ship is sinking—everybody get in a lifeboat. We all get in the lifeboat. It doesn’t really matter what you’re like, because the boat is buoyant—the ship is not. You get in the lifeboat, you’re saved. Now, do you need the best and the brightest in the lifeboat to bob your way to the shore? No, you don’t need that. Anyone will do. As a matter of fact, if we’re really going to celebrate the mechanism of salvation, we’re going to put the spotlight on the lifeboat, not on the people in it. The call goes out to every deck; the call goes out to everybody on the ship. The call starts bringing people from every level of strata in terms of—not only, you know, are they in the first-class cabin; are they, you know, in the interior smallest cabin? But also, what do they look like? How do they act? How good are they? See if anyone would respond to the call to get saved—just get in the boat and let’s all celebrate the fact that there is a lifeboat.

That’s how Paul says we should think. Look how he puts it here, verse 28—after a long list of things that should humble us in terms of how gracious God is in his inclusiveness—he says he’s chosen “the low and the despised in the world, even the things that are not,” First Corinthians 1:28, “to bring to nothing the things that are, so that”—here’s the purpose, worth underlining—“no human being might boast in the presence of God.” Because when you get to the shore, and you’re saved, and you’ve got your towel wrapped around you and you walk into the presence of God on the other side, no one stands up and says, “Look at me. Look how I got here.” Because no one swam there. No one, you know, walked on the water there. Everyone got there through the lifeboat—“no human being might boast.”

Because it’s because of him that you’re in Christ. The only way that you got in the lifeboat—the only way you get to safety, the only way you get forgiveness—is the work of Christ, “who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,” so that, as it is written—now, your study Bible should have the reference to this in the margin—but he quotes now from Jeremiah chapter nine. Jeremiah 9:23 and 24 is the whole verse, the whole sentence: “So that it is written, Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.” Now let me quote you the whole thing from Jeremiah 9: “Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom.” If you’re really smart—great, fantastic—don’t boast in it. “If you’re a mighty man, don’t let the mighty man boast in his might. Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts boast in this: that he understands and knows me”—right, that he’s got a place in the lifeboat. He recognizes salvation is in God—“and that I am the Lord who practices”—now three things—“love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.” Love, justice, and righteousness.



Some people don't recognize the value of their salvation and humbly credit the lifeboat—Christ—with their salvation because they don't understand the gravity of the problem. Right? All they can do is imagine—and they don't do it very well—the coming wrath of God. When you understand the justice of God and the righteousness of God, you start to then celebrate the love of God—the merciful, gracious love of God to include you.

Now, you can say, “Well, I’m not all that bad.” I get that. We have a variety of people here with a variety of backgrounds. But God often does some interesting things when he’s picking his team. I make you do this in the discussion questions if you do them—and I wish that you would on the back sometime this week. I make you contrast the background of Timothy and the background of Paul. Now, they were the dynamic duo, right—these two were going. Now, their leader, clearly, was Paul, and the understudy was Timothy. You want to learn about Timothy? You can—[if] you turn some time—or I take you there in the discussion questions—to 2 Timothy 1, where you can read about him growing up on the knee of his mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, learning the Word of God, coming to faith in Christ at a very early age. And he’s trusting in Christ and there he goes—good, moral kid.

Well, in 1 Timothy 1, Paul explains his own background. And though he was religious, he was hostile. He was angry. He was jealous. He was envious. And he was out there—if you read the book of Acts—persecuting Christians. He had blood on his hands. He was holding the cloaks as they stoned Stephen, the first martyr in the book of Acts, to death. [He] says, “I was given mercy. God showed me mercy so that he might give me an example, a template, an illustration to show God’s unlimited patience for those who believe.”

I don't care where you're at on the spectrum of how relatively good you think you are—we all need to humbly celebrate what Christ has done for us, because no one gets there without the lifeboat. You could be a strapping picture of health sitting in the lifeboat next to some old lady—right—who couldn't swim, you know, 10 yards. You might be a morally good person sitting next to somebody that you consider a reprobate. Fantastic. We're all getting saved the same way. The world doesn't understand that.

I'll never forget this talk show host going off on Christians because they believe that you could be a criminal in jail and on your last day put your trust in Christ and you get to go to heaven like everybody else. I want to call in and say, “Now you get it. That's it. It's called grace.” And just like the kid Timothy, who may have been serving Christ from a very early age, he gets to heaven the same way the criminal in a jail cell gets to heaven. Same way. God takes his résumé, puts it through the shredder, brings Christ's résumé and applies it to Timothy and Paul, to you and the guy in jail, to the person that serves Christ from the time he's eight years old to the person who serves Christ for eight minutes at the end of his life. Same thing. It's called grace.



Jesus told a story about that. He said, you can't be envious about someone who's generous. Remember that story? It's about the day laborers. Some people get hired early in the morning; they work all day long; they get paid a very generous wage. And then there are people that work for five minutes—you know, rather, the story—just a couple hours at the end of the workday. And the guys at the front of the line, they got mad: "We worked in the heat of the day, and you're paying us the same as them." Or let's put it in terms that he wanted us to understand: there are some people that get to go to heaven because they had some deathbed conversion, and I've been serving you for years—my whole life. He says, "Who are you? What's wrong with you? Are you envious because I'm generous with my own money? Can I do whatever I want with my own money?"

I know for some, they'll hear a sermon like this and they'll say, "Well, you're trying to teach me that God is inclusive. But you know what? You haven't really solved the problem. God didn't save everyone. At the end of time, there will be people that will be lost—that's what you're telling me. And you're still going to raise your hand and say, 'I don't get it. Why didn't God save everybody?'" You do understand you're asking the wrong question there—really the wrong question.

You know, if—let's picture you as a bad parker. You can't park. You never put money in the meter. There's—you know—you park illegally, park over the driveway, you park over there. And all of you, because you're such bad parkers—and me included—we all get our cars impounded. They all go to the impound lot. So there they are—rows and rows of cars—impounded, barbed wire. And to get it out, you know, it's \$10 trillion to get your car out. Dude, I'm done. Can't get my car out.

So you recognize, because you've come to grips with the fact that you are a sinner and you've got your—because you have, you know, fallen short of the public parking laws of the government—and now your car is impounded. But there's this guy named Jim, and he always parks legally. He's also really, really rich, and he feels pity for you people that park so illegally. And he drives by the impound lot, and one day he decides, with his big gigantic pile of money, to go in there and start taking cars and redeeming them. And here's the thing about this redeemer: he's super inclusive. I mean, he's taking people that have had just a few things that got them into the impound lot, and then some with a long laundry list of infractions. So he's redeeming all kinds of sinners. Not only that, he's getting out nice cars, right? The Mercedes gets out, the BMW—and some beaters, some real junkers. He's redeeming all kinds of cars.

Now, if you look at what he's done and you see that he has redeemed an innumerable number of these cars from the impound lot, if you come on the scene and say, "What's wrong with that Jim guy? Why doesn't he get every single car out of the impound lot?" I think you're asking the wrong question. The real question is, why would he get any of those cars out of the impound lot? Stop asking why God doesn't save everybody and start asking the right question: why would God save anybody? That's the real question.



You are a sinner and I'm a sinner. And one of the bad parts of the illustration I gave about the sinking Carnival ship is when you see that you feel like a victim. "I'm a victim—this—the ship's going down; it's Carnival's fault. That's why we're in the—we're in queue to sue them like everybody else. Their fault." But that's not the reality for us. We're sinking because we're sinners. We've compounded our problem of the Adamic sin that's been attributed to our account, and all we've done is compound the problem our whole lives. "The wages of sin is death." See, we've caused the problem. Jim—let's call him Jesus—has no compulsion to save any of us. Why should he? And yet in his grace he reaches out, and he takes people—here's the great thing—from every people, every tribe, every nation. Some people with horrific backgrounds, and some goody-two-shoes that grew up in Sunday school. And masses of them. And they'll celebrate with him one day, the Bible says, white robes, palm branches, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God—glory to him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

We ought to be very thankful that the God who is often impugned as narrow and bigoted and intolerant and all those other things is a God that is inclusive, magnanimous, gracious, and merciful.

Let's pray. God, help us as we think through the connection of Jesus to Abraham to remember the great promise to Abraham—an imperfect man, a sinner—who was promised that through his lineage would come someone who would bless every family of the world. And God, we sit here today—very few of us are Jewish in this room—[and] have no genetic connection to Abraham. Most of us Gentiles. We sit here celebrating the forgiveness, the redemption, the freedom that we have from the penalty of our own sins because of the work of Christ reaching out, not just in Jerusalem, not just in Judea or Samaria, but reaching all the way over here to Southern California, some 2000 years later, to bring to us the message of grace and forgiveness. Let us revel in that let us celebrate that. Let us never again think, wrongly, or even listen to the chorus of voices against God in this world that constantly want to impugn his character. As this exclusive God Oh, that method of salvation. I get that the plan of salvation very exclusive, only one way. But God how gracious and broad and inclusive is your salvation plan. Let us celebrate that in a fresh way this week as we think of your grace in Jesus name. Amen.