



My Beloved Ones,

The Gospel of the Sunday before Christ's Nativity is a very interesting one, as well as being very complex. In it, the Evangelist Matthew discusses the genealogy, or the family tree of our Lord. This is the reading which begins, "*Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...*" (Matthew 1:2) From there, the list grows and grows—from the foundation of the Covenant, to the deportation into Babylon—before finally ending with God's Messiah: "*...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 Christ.*" (Matthew 1:15-16)

Two thousand years later, many who are not as intimately familiar with the Scriptures might say that the passage is dull, and perhaps even very difficult to read. Obviously, the Evangelist seeks to connect the Old and New Testaments by showing how Christ's human nature is the perfection of the Covenant promised to Abraham and his descendants—but the Evangelist is also making a much quieter point about the nature of families.

Whether we are Hellenes, or simply Orthodox, we, as members of this Metropolis, place a great emphasis on the importance of the family. Parents are expected to raise their children in a way that helps them on their journey toward *theosis*, and children are called to love and honor their parents. However, this does not mean that families are in any way perfect; as long as there is sin on earth, no one who lives is perfect, save God. We may be painfully aware of this fact when holidays approach; for even as we try to exhibit the true Christian spirit of the Nativity season, there will be disagreements, or family members whose ways are so different from our own, that conflict can happen.

The beautiful thing about this Gospel passage, is that St. Matthew knows this as well. Within his genealogy, Matthew includes four women of the Old Testament who were by no means perfect individuals. We are told that "*...Judah [was] the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar...*" (Matthew 1:3) but what Matthew leaves unsaid is that Tamar was Judah's own daughter-in-law. Of course, better known to most is the fact that "*...David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah...*" (Matthew 1:6) after God's anointed King sent Uriah into battle to be killed, to have Bathsheba for himself.

The point Matthew raises, is not to dwell upon the sins of these individuals, but to demonstrate that human weakness is a part of everyone's family—even Christ's. No one can achieve the image frequently shown to us of a "perfect family". Matthew asks us instead to consider that what we need are spirits of patience and humility—as well as a

sincere desire to repent; as David does in many of the Psalms which Tradition attributes to him.

So, as we prepare to gather with family—whether they might argue, boast, or show some other form of sin, let us rest in the fact that God knows our weaknesses. After all, He brought his Son forth from descendants who were less than Godly too. All we can do, is demonstrate Christ's love and patience, and trust that He understands our hearts and intentions, even when we ourselves also fall short of His Word.

+ALEXIOS

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