

WANTED: GLEANERS

GLEANEALOGY 1



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

Wanted: Gleaners
Gleanealogy Part 1
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Wanted: Gleaners *Gleanealogy 1: Introduction*

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. We must feed, Jesus said, on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. All the counsel of God, and every portion of Scripture, leads us to know Jesus better and love Him more.

Including the many genealogies of the Old and New Testament.

The genealogies of Scripture are like the gleanings after a harvest. Theologians, teachers, and Bible students eagerly and repeatedly reap the fruit of the books, doctrines, themes, topics, and other offerings from the field of God's Word. But the genealogies get short shrift. We speed through them, or even skip them altogether when we come to them in our reading. We leave them for someone else to glean.

But there is meat on those shocks and stalks, and in this series, *Gleanealogy*, we are the gleaners, determined to bring that meat to table.

We are happy to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

Please visit our website, www.ailbe.org, to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to discover the many resources available to help you in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of God's Kingdom.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources, helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you, and may the Lord bless your worship and study in this *Scriptorium* series.

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1 **Wanted: Gleaners**

Pray Psalm 126.4, 5.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.
Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.

Sing slowly and contemplatively Psalm 126.4, 5.

(Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns)

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

Read Luke 24.25-32.

Prepare.

1. How many parts of Scripture did Jesus use to testify about Himself?
2. How did these disciples respond to Jesus opening *all* the Scriptures to them?

Read aloud.

The Gleaners

A haze of chaff and dust hangs in the air
above the well-worked field. The harvest sun
is giving way to dusk. The work begun
so early in the day, and with such care
and diligence, is finished now. The yield
is gathered in the barn. All that remains
are isolated shocks and sheaves. Their grains
will feed the poor, now gathered in the field.

The field of sacred writ – its books and themes,
its doctrines, teachings, promises, and more –
is daily scoured and reaped, so that it seems
no further truth remains to take in store.
Yet, stacked throughout that field, the pedigrees
of saints remain. The gleaners harvest these.

Meditate.

Welcome to *Gleanealogy*, the most surprising Bible study you will *ever* undertake.

As we begin, I can promise you three things. First, we will arrive at the conclusion of this study more convinced than ever that *all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. Second, we'll gain some insights into the way Scripture is constructed that will convince us more than ever that there is only one Author for this amazing book. Finally, we'll see once again how, by searching *all* the Scriptures carefully, we can come to know Jesus with greater surprise, warmth, and edification for our souls.

I assume that, as Jesus taught those disciples on the Emmaus Road from “all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” He did not skip the many genealogies of the Old Testament.

Unlike, perhaps, most of us. Don’t we, as we’re reading through the Bible, typically skip or merely skim those lengthy lists of numbing names? We harvest as much as we can of the ripe fruit of God’s Word, but we leave the corners unreaped, and what we regard as unprofitable shocks and sheaves standing in their place, unread and unstudied.

Well, Susie and I aim to redress this situation, and we’re calling gleaners to join us as we pick through the grains of truth and glory awaiting us in the many genealogies that occur with regularity throughout the Bible.

So if you are poor in spirit and hungry for insights to God’s Word you’ve never had before, we invite you to come with us into the field of God’s Word as we glean the nourishment He has left for us in the genealogies of Scripture.

Reflect.

1. What has been your practice of reading when you come to the genealogies of the Bible? What have you learned from these lists of names at this point in your walk with the Lord?
2. What purpose do the genealogies of the Bible fulfill? Should we really expect these to point us to Jesus? Explain.
3. Do you have a friend who might like to go through these studies with you? Forward a copy of today’s lesson. Then, follow-up with a phone call or text. See if your friend would be willing to download the weekly studies in this series, work through each one of them, and meet with you to share and pray.

*All that we read in holy Scripture for our instruction and salvation demands an attentive ear. You have just heard how the eyes of those two disciples whom the Lord joined on their way were kept from recognizing him. He found them in despair of the redemption that was in Christ, supposing him now to have suffered and died as a man, not imagining him to live forever as the Son of God. So he opened to them the Scriptures and showed them that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and for all things to be fulfilled that were written concerning him in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms—in short, the whole of the Old Testament. Everything in those Scriptures speaks of Christ, but only to him who has ears. Augustine (354-430), *Homily 2.1 on 1 John**

Lord, give me a gleaner’s heart, so that as I come to Your Word I will...

Pray Psalm 126.

How would you expect reaping the gleanings of God’s Word to warm your heart and revive your faith in the Lord? Weep for your sins, and repent; and ask the Lord to do specific works of renewed fruitfulness in your life today.

Sing Psalm 126.

Psalm 126 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav'nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

2 Left Behind

Pray Psalm 117.1, 2.

Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!
Laud Him, all you peoples!
For His merciful kindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD *endures* forever.
Praise the LORD!

Sing slowly and contemplatively Psalm 117.1, 2.

(Lauda Anima: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

Praise the Lord! All nations, praise Him! Magnify Him, peoples all!
He is great, His steadfast love keeps all who on His favor call!
Evermore His faithfulness will bless His people, great and small!

Read 2 Timothy 3.14-17; Matthew 4.1-4.

Prepare.

1. For what are the Scriptures profitable?
2. How much of Scripture is profitable for these things?

Read aloud.

The Leavings

The gleaners are the poor and hungry. They don't ask for much, and they will work for what they need. The fields are reaped and gathered, but the leavings, scattered here and there, repay the gleaners' labor with surprising wealth. For grains of every sort remain to be discovered in those uncut corners, free to all who see in them a source of health.

Just so, the many genealogies of Scripture, left unreaped by most, remain for those who, poor in spirit, hungry for the Bread of life, and resolute to gain the benefit all Scripture holds in store for them, will reap such bounty as they please.

Meditate.

Some believers of the opinion that the Old Testament has little in the way of spiritual nourishment to strengthen their souls. The Law is not for them. The prophets are too difficult, the histories too tragic, and the wisdom, well, a little too pointed for their palate. They cling to the New Testament for their devotional lives, only venturing into the Old when led their by a pastor or teacher.

You will agree that's hardly a "balanced diet" of the Word of God. By neglecting the Old Testament – simply leaving it behind as of little value – many believers are denying the practice of Jesus and the

apostles, and of saints and faithful believers throughout the ages. Since *all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and *all* Scripture is profitable, we ought not leave *any* of it behind in our desire to grow in and serve the Lord.

That includes the genealogies of the Old and New Testaments.

The genealogies of Scripture occur throughout the Bible, beginning in Genesis and the rest of the Law, in the time of the kings, after the exile, and in the opening of the New Testament. They take up but a little space, comparatively speaking, and so seem like they can be easily left behind as a subject of careful reading and serious study. Psalm 117 doesn't take up much space either; but we wouldn't just skip it, or consider that it holds no profit for us.

It should trouble us, if our spiritual regimen routinely leaves behind any portion of God's holy Word. We do not live by bread alone, but by *every Word* that proceeds from the mouth of our God (Matt. 4.4), because every Word from God nourishes us on the Bread of life, Who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

True gleaners will recognize that a certain impoverishment blights our souls to the extent that we omit *any* of God's Word from our diet. And they will be hungry to learn as much as they can about these Scriptural leavings, scattered throughout God's Word, which are waiting for the poor and hungry to gather and consume.

Reflect.

1. Why should we not leave any portion of God's Word unread and unstudied?
2. What do you think it will require of you to gain the profit and spiritual food the genealogies hold in store?
3. What's one goal you will set for yourself as we take on the challenge of harvesting the genealogies of God's Word?

To search the sacred Scripture is very good and most profitable for the soul. For, "like a tree which is planted near the running waters," so does the soul watered by sacred Scripture also grow hearty and bear fruit in due season. John of Damascus (650-750), The Orthodox Faith 4.17

Lord, make me hungry for all Your Word, beginning today, so that I...

Pray Psalm 19.7-14.

Starting with God's Law (the books of Moses), thank the Lord for all His Word. Thank Him specifically for each section of the Word, and for particular books or teachings that have been important to you. Recommit yourself to learning *all* of God's Word, including the genealogies.

Sing Psalm 19.7-14.

Psalm 19.7-14 (*St. Christopher: Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure.

The simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.

God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;

He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.

His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.

O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet.
Be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!
Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.
O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight
be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

3 Unlikely Food

Pray Psalm 78.1-4.

Give ear, O my people, to my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;

I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,

And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

Sing aloud and contemplatively Psalm 78.1-4.

(Foundation: How Firm a Foundation)

Give ear, O my people, attend to my word,
dark sayings and parables sent from the Lord,
things we have before by our fathers been told,
which we would not dare from our children withhold.

Read Numbers 11.4-9.

Prepare.

1. How did the people respond to the gift of manna? Why?
2. What was God's purpose in giving the manna to His people?

Read aloud.

It's All Here

"It's all here, all you'll need," he told the first-time gleaner. "Bread and cakes to satisfy your hunger day by day." His novice eye, however, looked upon this as the worst, least-promising of harvests he had seen. "Come on, don't be discouraged. You will find here in these uncut edges every kind of sustenance." So they began to glean.

These lists of names may not appear to hold much grace or truth to feed your hungry soul. But it's all here, as we are truly told by Him Who, on that long Emmaus stroll, picked through the shocks and sheaves and corners of the whole of Scripture to reveal His love.

Meditate.

The manna would feed and nourish Israel during their many years of wandering in the desert. Upon first seeing it, of course, they could not imagine how such paltry stuff would sustain them. But God had packed the mysterious food with nutrients which, coupled with faith and obedience, would keep a generation alive until just before the conquest of Canaan began (cf. Josh. 5.12).

The genealogies of Scripture can seem a little wanting of spiritual nourishment as well. But God has given them to us, and He has infused them with spiritual strength for all who feed on them in faith.

Genealogies work to connect people, times, and events. We can think of them as the ligaments at crucial joints of Scripture. When times are changing or moving to some new phase or stage of the redemptive plan of God, trust that a genealogy will show up to make the transition work. They may not look very savory – more like dry, flaky manna – but there’s meat to be found there.

Thus, genealogies are tools of transition. They cue or prompt us concerning people or events from the past, and they establish a foundation for events about to unfold. They remind us of God’s work in previous generations, and encourage us to expect Him to be similarly faithful in the stage of redemption about to unfold.

Thus genealogies hold for readers many truths to review and savor as we move forward in the story of God’s covenantal grace and faithfulness. Without these connectors, we might not appreciate the way events at one stage of Scripture are not disconnected from, but rather developments of, events that have gone before. The more carefully we read and meditate on these, the more we will see how God’s work of redemption proceeds through history, pushing ever forward to the great genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3, and to Him Whose pedigree those genealogies present.

There’s meat on those joints of Scripture – even if it only appears to be plain, tasteless manna. But if we will work hard and give thanks to God, He’ll nourish and sustain us by this special food from His heavenly kitchen.

Reflect.

1. What does it mean to believe that all of Scripture – including the genealogies – is profitable for us?
2. What is the difference between reading Scripture and meditating on Scripture? Why do we need both to gain the benefit of God’s Word?
3. How is reading Scripture like gleaning a field after the harvest? Are you ready to begin gleaning the genealogies of God’s Word? What will this require of you?

Do we not see that the Israelites got to their own hurt what their guilty lusting craved? For while manna was raining down on them from heaven, they desired to have meat to eat. They disdained what they had, and they shamelessly sought what they had not, as if it were not better for them to have asked not that their unbecoming desires be gratified with food that was wanting, but that their own dislike be removed, and that they be made to receive rightly the food that was provided. Augustine (354-430), Tractate on the Gospel of John 73.2

Lord, help me to be grateful for all Your Word, and to feed on and savor it daily, so that I may...

Pray Psalm 78.17-37.

As you pray, meditate on how God responds when we disdain His gifts. Pray that God will open

your mind to the great gift of His Word, and to all the gifts and blessings He provides you throughout the day. Give Him thanks as He does.

Sing Psalm 78.17-37.

Psalm 78.17-37 (*Foundation: How Firm a Foundation*)

Cast back to the desert they sinned ever more,
and tested the Lord by their greed o'er and o'er.
And though He provided them manna and meat,
His anger flared up, and His wrath was complete.

When troubled, they turned to the Lord's loving face,
He met them and showed them His marvelous grace.
They spoke of their love for Him, yet in their heart
of His holy cov'nant they wanted no part.

4 So Much to Do!

Pray Psalm 132.7-9.

Let us go into His tabernacle;
Let us worship at His footstool.
Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your saints shout for joy.

Sing contemplatively Psalm 132.8-10.

(Finlandia: Be Still My Soul)

Arise, O Lord, come to Your resting place;
Your holy Presence meet with us in might.
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace,
and we will shout to Your divine delight!
For David's sake, turn not away Your face,
but look upon us in Your holy light.

Read Ezra 2.59-63.

Prepare.

1. What happened to those whose names did not appear in the priestly genealogy?
2. What does this suggest about the importance of those genealogies to the people of that day?

Read aloud.

So Much to Do!

Such relatively little space, and yet
so much to do! While they can seem to drone
on pointlessly, each list of names its own
appointed task performs. Some help us get
to the next stage of God's redemptive plan.
Some offer a convenient overview
of generations, speeding deftly through
familiar names and others stranger than
we've ever heard. Still others conjure times
and places of significance, or bring
to mind a generation's faith, or sing
to us in ancient Hebrew forms and rhymes.

And each long list, when it is diced and spliced,
points forward to the coming of the Christ.

Meditate.

Those ancient genealogies carried some clout. If your name – or your family's name – didn't show up where you claimed it should, you might just find yourself working the land rather than presiding over the offerings of God's people.

The genealogies of Scripture accomplish a variety of functions besides helping to legitimate claims to office or property. We've already seen that they connect significant sections of the Bible, not just to each other, but to everything that has gone before. The genealogies are one of the Spirit's ways of keeping the story of redemption on track from Genesis to Revelation.

The genealogies also serve to establish a framework for thinking about God's work among His people, and His purpose for the world. They keep alive the memory of great people, precious promises, and important events; and they remind us that there are other nations in the world besides Israel (God, as we shall see, never loses sight of them). They bear witness to the nature of God's dealings with His people, or of the hopes and longings of His people for how He might regard them. And they even delight us with a bit of rhyme, both structural and phonetic.

We'll be looking more closely at these and other functions of the genealogies in part 2 of this series, *Gleanealogy*. As we see from the example in Ezra 2, the people of that day didn't take these texts lightly. They preserved and cherished them, and consulted them for guidance in knowing how to serve the Lord. This is what we want to do as well.

They might not be the most interesting passages of Scripture, but, like the manna of the desert, they are filled with holy spiritual nourishment that can keep us rooted in God and His Word, and living out His plan for the world.

In our next installment we'll talk a bit more about how the genealogies of the Bible related to God's covenant, which overarches all of Scripture, connecting eternity past with eternity future, like the majestic [New River Gorge Bridge](#) in West Virginia. Then we'll examine the literary form of the genealogies, to discover what we can about why they're written the way they are. Finally in part 1, we'll run through a master list of all the genealogies, summarizing what each one contains, and how they all point forward to the great tallying-up of the redeemed in the book of Revelation.

Then, in parts 2 and 3, we'll look more closely at each genealogy, to discover what we can for the nourishment of our souls. Finally, part 4 will draw out the lessons from our study, and suggest ways of reading the genealogies more profitably.

Reflect.

1. Many people today are interested in tracing their genealogy. What does this say about people? What does this suggest about our being made in the image of God?
2. Why were the Jews in Ezra's day taking such precautions about who could serve as a priest? What role did the genealogies play in this?
3. Is your interest in the genealogies of Scripture growing? Explain.

Those who undervalue their relation to the Lord in times of reproach, persecution, or distress, will have no benefit from it when it becomes honorable or profitable. Those who have no evidence that they are, by the new birth, spiritual priests unto God, through Jesus Christ, have no right to the comforts and privileges of Christians. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Ezra 2.36-63

Thank You, Lord, for grafting me into the line of Your children. Help me to keep my forebears in the faith in mind, and to live like one of Your heirs as I...

Pray Psalm 132.13-18.

Thank the Lord for His faithfulness in bringing you into His family and securing your eternal rest in Jesus.

Sing Psalm 132.13-18.

Psalm 132.13-18 (*Finlandia: Be Still, My Soul*)

God dwells among us, and He will forever,
to meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.

He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior,
and made us His eternal resting-place.

His foes are banished from His presence ever,
but we shall reign with Him before His face.

5 Genealogies and Covenant

Pray Psalm 105.1, 2, 8.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD!
Call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples!
Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
Talk of all His wondrous works!
He remembers His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations...

Sing slowly and contemplatively Psalm 105.1, 2, 8-11.

(Warrington: Give to Our God Immortal Praise)

Give thanks unto the Lord Most High; call on His Name, before Him cry!
Make known His deeds in every land; sing praise for all the works of His hand.

He will His covenant faithfully guard – His oath, the promise of His Word.
That which He to our fathers swore, He will perform forevermore!

Read Psalm 105.42-45.

Prepare.

1. What was God's holy promise to Abraham (Gen. 12.1-3)?
2. To whom did God give gladness, joy, and the lands of the Gentiles? Why?

Read aloud.

Supporting the Span

A thousand feet above the flow it links,
in simple elegance, two points of land
that otherwise would never meet. The spanned
gorge is a wonder. Everybody thinks
its single arch the most majestic site
in all the Mountain State. And this is true.
But those plain, thin supports are lovely, too,
and strong. They keep the bridge in place, upright.

God's covenant, which arches in one span
His flowing Word, and links eternity
and time, is in its course supported by
short covenantal spans. And these rely,
for beauty, strength, and continuity,
on lists of names, which tell God's love for man.

Meditate.

God's covenant provides the unifying framework and themes for all of Scripture. In His covenant – an arrangement designed, implemented, administered, and fulfilled entirely by grace – God glorifies

Himself by creating and redeeming a people of His own choosing, to know, love, enjoy, and serve Him. He draws them to Himself by exceeding great and precious promises, all of which find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1.4; 2 Cor. 1.20). To advance this covenant from the garden of Eden to the new heavens and new earth, God unfolds it in stages, during which His one covenant of promise (Eph. 2.12) is furthered among His people according to stipulations and criteria germane to their unique circumstances.

God's covenant is like the [New River Gorge Bridge](#) in West Virginia. It provides the highway whereby the will of the eternal God spans the gorge of history to bring His people to dwell eternally with Him in joy and glory. The upright beams which support that span can be likened to the various stages of covenant unfolding in Scripture – with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, and finally in the New Covenant. Genealogies punctuate each of these covenant-making epochs, to remind us of God's promise and the progress of His plan, and to keep us focused on what living in God's covenant requires.

The genealogies of Scripture provide solid structural continuity throughout the Old Testament and into the New, reaching all the way – as we shall see in our next installment – to the judgment seat of Christ and the new heavens and new earth. Therefore, as we come across these genealogies, we should be reminded of the fact that God's covenant is made with real people, administered in real time, and unfolding according to real, precious, and very great promises, each of which – like the genealogies themselves – intends to direct us to Jesus, with praise and gladness.

Reflect.

1. How do the various covenants of Scripture relate to the one covenant of promise (Eph. 2.12)?
2. Because God's covenant is with His people, it makes sense that genealogies would serve to remind us of this from time to time. What should it say to us that God is so careful to keep lists of the names of people with whom He has entered into covenant?
3. On an index card, write a prayer you can use each time you come to a genealogy in the Bible, to acknowledge God's faithfulness and remember His promises. Tuck that card in your Bible.

God, while he reigned alike over all nations, extended his peculiar favor to the offspring of Abraham alone. How comes it to pass that God, in delivering his people, displayed the might of his arm by so many miracles, if it was not that he might faithfully perform the promise which he had made to his servants in time past? John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 105.8

Great is Your faithfulness, O God! Thank You for...

Pray Psalm 105.26-45.

Thank God for His covenant faithfulness with Moses and Joshua, and especially with Jesus. Praise Him for including you in His covenant, and renew your commitment to “observe His statutes and keep His laws.”

Sing Psalm 105.26-45.

Psalm 105.26-45 (*Warrington: Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

He brought His people from Egypt alive, and made their joy and song revive.
He made the nations' land their own, and all the wealth that they had known.

To them He granted the promised land, the portion of His gracious hand.

Though they were few, and wandered far, He kept them close within His heart.

So let us all in our Savior confide, and in His holy Law abide.

Let us observe His glorious Word, and praise our sovereign, faithful Lord!

6 Genealogy as Literature

Pray Psalm 99.1-3.

The LORD reigns;
Let the peoples tremble!
He dwells *between* the cherubim;
Let the earth be moved!
The LORD *is* great in Zion,
And He *is* high above all the peoples.
Let them praise Your great and awesome name—
He is holy.

Sing slowly and contemplatively Psalm 99.1-4, 9
(Sine Nomine: For All the Saints)

The Lord is King! Let all the peoples quake! He rules above the angels; let earth shake!
Amid His people Jesus Christ is great: Exalt the Savior! Exalt the Savior!

Let all men praise Your great and awesome Name, O holy Lord, of strength and justice fame.
Your righteousness and justice we proclaim: Exalt the Savior! Exalt the Savior!

Read Ezra 7.1-10.

Read aloud.

How It Works

Within a frame of fourteen lines – of eight and six or twelve and two – consisting each of five iambs (duh-DUH), we try to reach a bit of clarity, or lend some weight to a perception or a worldview. End rhymes, strict and plain to see, add music to the rhythm of the beat, and lead us through the lines and stanzas, like a knowing friend, unto a place that seems as if it should require a pause, however slight. We let our thoughts arrive together, then we set our mind for what remains, and hope it's good.

A genealogy can like a sonnet
work, if we will but meditate upon it.

Prepare.

1. What strikes you as interesting about Ezra's genealogy?
2. Why does his genealogy stop with Aaron? Why not go on to Levi? Or Abraham?

Meditate.

As a preview to what we'll be doing in parts 2 and 3 of our study in *Gleanealogy*, let's take a look at Ezra's pedigree, focusing in particular on the *literary* form of this list.

Ezra's genealogy is an example of an *ascending* genealogy – tracing from the individual in focus backward in his line, or “up to” his ancestors. Most genealogies are *descending* genealogies, beginning with head of the clan and tracing his descendants. Ezra's genealogy is brief, almost like a calling card, which he might have presented to introduce himself to the authorities in Jerusalem, who would have compared it with their lists (cf. Ez. 2.59-63).

We note that Ezra's genealogy identifies him as a *bona fide* participant in the captivity – he had known the suffering and separation of those years (cf. 1 Chron. 6.14). His credentials ascend all the way to the sainted Phinehas, who delivered Israel from the Midianite treachery (Ps. 106.28-31), and from him, through Eleazar, to Aaron.

We note that the list ascends in *four verses* of *three names* each, until landing on the final verse, which has four names. Four is the number of earth and man in Scripture, while three is the number of God. Ezra's credentials “add up” to perfection ($4 + 3 = 7$) before returning to the number for man (four names, in v. 5), and *implying* God in the reference to “the chief priest”. Ezra (“helper”) will help God's people connect with Him and His Law – just like Jesus does.

His genealogy did not go further – up to Levi, for example, or on to Abraham. Ezra had come to Jerusalem to teach the Law, and his genealogy was crafted to support that call. It showed the authorities in Jerusalem that Ezra had the mantle of Aaron, the first high priest and interpreter of God's Law. Moses received the Law from God and wrote it down, but Aaron proclaimed and taught it.

The literary form of Ezra's genealogy was meant to impress. It is important to note that we are told about his spiritual credentials even before we know about the letter from Artaxerxes, authorizing his work (vv. 11-26).

The genealogies of Scripture are literature. They were composed at certain times, in particular forms, using a variety of literary devices, to accomplish a particular purpose. Sometimes they are identified as *toledoth*, a form of genealogy commonly in use among ancient peoples. The *toledoth* of Scripture contextualize the people they list among all the nations of the day.

Some genealogies ascend, and some descend. One – as we shall see – does both, invoking the image of going up and down on a ladder.

Reading the genealogies aloud in Hebrew, one gets a sense of the *rhythm* of them. Ezra's moves along like a series of trochees or iambs, interspersed with grace notes: Ezra (DUH-duh), son of (DUH-duh), Seraiah (duh-DUH-duh), and so forth. Even some rhyme appears in the Hebrew (cf. Seriah, Azariah), which would have been an aid to memorizing the list.

Finally, Ezra's list – like many others we will see – does two additional things. First, it *nods to the Gentiles* by mentioning Phineas. I'll be saying more about this in subsequent installments. Second, the names in this list employ many *morphemes* that point us to God: *yah*, *y'shua*, and *el* in this case. The names were given by faithful parents, to indicate their hopes, aspirations, and longings for their children. We'll be looking more closely at some of these in parts 2 and 3 of our study.

A genealogy is not a sonnet; however, genealogies use a variety of forms and devices, like poetry, to make them memorable and compelling, and to help us savor the grains of truth we may glean from them.

Reflect.

1. What's the difference between reading and meditating on Scripture? Why do we need both, especially where the genealogies are concerned?
2. Based on what we saw in Ezra 2.59-63, why would it have been important that Ezra have been able to produce his genealogy? Would the authorities in Jerusalem have been able to corroborate his "calling card"? Explain.
3. Do you suppose that Ezra's pedigree had any effect on him during his time in captivity? Explain.

For the fact that Ezra goes up from Babylon, and some of the children of Israel and descendants of the priests and the Levites go up with him. This signifies the merciful provision of our Redeemer by which, appearing in the flesh, he entered into the "confusion" of this world though he himself was free from the confusion of sins so that, when he returned, he might free us from all "confusion" and lead us with him into the restfulness of celestial "peace." The Venerable Bede (672-735), On Ezra and Nehemiah 2.9

Feed me, Lord, on the sweetness and power of Your Word, so that I may...

Pray Psalm 99.4-9.

Seek the Lord's strength to live for justice, equity, and righteousness today. Call upon Him to bless your church and her leaders. Exalt the Lord and worship Him with gladness.

Sing Psalm 99.4-9.

Psalm 99.4-9 (*Sine Nomine: For All the Saints*)

You have established strength and equity; before Your throne, O Lord, we bend the knee.
To You, O Savior, praise and honor be: Exalt the Savior! Exalt the Savior!

Your servants called, You answered their requests; in Your forgiveness they were greatly blessed.
Their wand'ring ways You judged in righteousness: Exalt the Savior! Exalt the Savior!

Exalt the Lord! Exalt the Savior's Name! Before His holy hill His grace proclaim!
The holiness of Jesus is His fame: Exalt the Savior! Exalt the Savior!

7 Ready for Threshing

Pray Psalm 125.4.

Do good, O LORD, to *those who are* good,
And to *those who are* upright in their hearts.

Sing joyfully and expectantly Psalm 125.4, 5, 1.

(St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers)

Lord, do good and care for those upright in heart.

All who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase, on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Read Revelation 21.23-27.

Prepare.

1. What kind of Book is mentioned here? What does it contain?
2. Is there some connection between the genealogies of Scripture and this Book?

Read aloud.

The Threshing

Bring all the gleanings to the threshing floor,
and lay them out behind the Threshold in
a row. At first, the harvest may seem thin –
more chaff than grain, not worth the effort or
exertion that the task requires. But take
your flail in hand, and give each stalk its due.
Then winnow all, and when that work is through,
collect your hard-earned harvest with the rake.

The flail of patient study brings the wheat
to light and turns the chaff to manna, so
that as you winnow, meditating in
the Spirit's gentle breeze, you will begin
to see a wonder: nothing much will blow
away. All gathers at the Threshold's feet.

Meditate.

Taken together, the genealogies of Scripture may be regarded as a kind of excerpt from another,
much larger Book – the Book of Life.

A Book exists which contains all the names of those God has included in His covenant and plan of
redemption. One day that Book will be opened, and all those found recorded in it will rejoice to hear

announced that their citizenship in the City of God is confirmed, their adoption into the family of God is complete, and a place awaits them at the table of the marriage supper of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 20.12, etc.).

The genealogies of Scripture, therefore, should excite us to think, hope, and live as those whose names appear in that greater, all-encompassing genealogy.

We're ready to begin threshing the gleanings of God's Word. Our gleanealogical work will take the course outlined below, through parts 2 and 3 in our study.

First, we will consider the *genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1*. As I hope to demonstrate, this genealogy is the Rosetta Stone for understanding all the genealogies of Scripture.

Next, we turn to the *toledoth* passages of Genesis, which establish the context, mission, and people who are the beneficiaries of God's covenant and redemption.

The *census records* of Numbers 1-4 and 26 are not, in the strictest sense, genealogies, but they serve an important purpose in the unfolding of God's covenant, and we will thresh them as we do the genealogies of the Word.

The same can be said of the *allotment records* of Joshua 13-22. They're not genealogies, but they function as such by bringing the story of redemption forward to a new stage and setting, injecting a forward-looking aspect to the story of redemption.

The genealogy in *Ruth 4.13-22* serves as another important bridge, reaching all the way back to the *toledoth* of Genesis, creating hope in a time of disappointment and despair, and depositing the unfolding of God's covenant into the time of David.

Undoubtedly, the genealogies listed in *1 Chronicles 1-9* are the most tedious. We shall have to thresh them mightily to discover the wheat they hold in store for us.

Then, we'll see how the genealogies of *Ezra and Nehemiah* complement those in 1 Chronicles to re-establish the footing and focus of God's covenantal span, and to create in readers a sense of anticipation for the coming King.

We will meet that King in His all-encompassing genealogy in *Luke 3*, and see how that genealogy brings the whole story of redemption together in one stalk.

Finally, we'll meditate on *the Lamb's Book of Life* in faith and hope that our names, written there, are always before the King and Savior of God's people, the Threshold, Who holds the harvest for Himself and His glory.

We're going to flail these genealogical stalks and shocks with the tools of sound Biblical study and exegesis; and we'll winnow our findings in the illuminating winds of God's Spirit, feeding as we go on the rich manna and bread God has prepared for us in the gleanings of His Scripture field.

Reflect.

1. What do you hope to gain from this study of the genealogies of Scripture?

2. Did you write your prayer, which you can use as we begin to thresh these gleanings? Review and upgrade it, if need be.

3. Should we expect *all* the genealogies of Scripture to be incorporated into the Lamb's Book of Life? Which ones are likely to be omitted? Then why should we care about them?

He is here describing the church of the future when, unlike at the present time, the evil will not be mixed in along with the good and allowed to live with them. For the good alone will reign with Christ with whom and in whom they will live happily forever, namely, in that heavenly Jerusalem that is the mother of all. Indeed, it says that they are written in the book of the Lamb [to whom] he said, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Primasius (fl. 550-560), commentary on the Apocalypse 21.27

Lord, help me to live as one whose name is written in the great genealogy of Jesus, the Lamb's Book of Life, so that today I...

Pray Psalm 125.1-5.

Thank God for all His glorious City, and all those who inhabit it, and for the King Who rules over it. Then go forth as an ambassador of that City today.

Sing Psalm 125.1-5.

Psalm 125.1-5 (*St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers*)

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Like the hills surrounding safe Jerusalem,

Christ surrounds His Church and holds her in His mighty Hand!

Refrain, v. 1

All who trust in Jesus, strong as Zion stand!

Naught shall ever move them from their promised land!

Wickedness shall rest not on this holy land.

Sinfulness shall never come forth from their hand.

Trusting in the Savior, firm in His caress,

ever shall His favor on this holy city rest.

Refrain

Lord, do good and care for those upright in heart.

All who turn to evil shall from You depart.

Sinful men may increase, on their way to hell!

Save Your people, let your peace abound in Israel!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. How are the genealogies of Scripture like the gleanings after a harvest? Who glean these, and how do they teach us to think about approaching the study of Scripture's genealogies?

2. What functions do the genealogies of Scripture perform? Why are they important to the story of God's covenant and redemption?

3. What are some of the features and facets of genealogies that we'll want to pay attention to during this study? What are your goals for this study?

4. How do the genealogies fulfill the teaching of John 5.39?

5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from part 1 of our study in *Gleanealogy*? How are you putting that lesson to work in your own life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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