

God's Character in Christ's Lineage - Matthew 1

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Preacher: Dan Oosthuizen

[0 : 0 0] with you all again. I'm particularly glad you saved the sunshine for me. I've been looking for it for a few days. I bring you greetings from the brothers and sisters in Middleton who are constantly praying for you. If you'd like to open your Bibles and turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1, and we'll start at verse 1 and look at the first 17 verses. Here's my first challenge of the day, actually reading the text. So let's give it a go. Matthew 1, verse 1. A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nashon, Nashon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,

Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzzah, Uzzah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Ezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Ammon, Ammon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. After the exile to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matan, Matan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who was called

Christ. Thus there were from fourteen generations in all, from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile in Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ. Let's pray.

Father, help us to remember this morning that all scripture is breathed out by you, and is useful for teaching, correcting, rebuke, and training up in righteousness, so that the servant of God, your servant, would be fully complete and equipped for every good work. Help us to remember, Father, that there are parts of the Bible where maybe we feel we can skip over them, because we don't know what they have to tell us, or they seem obscure, or they seem dry and historical, but Father, give us ears to hear, give us eyes to see, give us hearts to feel, brains to conceive.

Holy Spirit, be at work this morning among us. May your word be lifted up. Father, use my imperfections, and use my weaknesses, and channel your truth to your people. Whatever must be said, may it be said from you and not from me. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[3 : 3 6] Anyone who knows me well, or even just a little bit, knows that I love reading about history. Some of you do as well. I know some of you, and I know some of you love history as well, and I've done a lot of reading about my own family's history. There's a lot I'm proud of to have in that lineage. There's my mother's uncle, who secretly smuggled weapons for the volunteers during the War of Independence, or his brother who fought and died in France during the Great War.

My dad's grandfather, who was the first guy at the front of the convoy that crossed the river into what now is called Zambia. Seneca wins. One of her ancestors was the great American frontiersman Daniel Boone, a man of great adventure and courage and audacity, who explains, by the way, where my kids get it from. So I look at my family history, and I look at Seneca's, and I see certain characteristics in me and in her, and in our kids. The genes that our kids carry inside them, how they'll turn out, how it shapes them. But in front of us this morning is the ultimate family history. It's not of an explorer, not of a soldier, and not of a preacher in Cork in the 21st century. It's the family history, the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Now, first things first, let's put your mind

at ease. We are not going verse by verse through the genealogy of Matthew.

Even if I hadn't been suffering with a chest cold for the last few weeks, there simply isn't enough breath in my lungs to get through that this morning. So here's the plan. Just as our family history tells us about where we come from and who we are, we're going to have a look and see what the family history of Jesus Christ tells us about the character of God. As the guy said, we're going to learn three characteristics of God. If you want to take notes, we're going to see three things. We're going to see that God is faithful, we're going to see that God is sovereign, and that God is gracious. He's faithful, he's sovereign, and he's gracious. Now, before we dive in, I have to deal with something that's maybe a bit more apologetic in nature, because skeptics will often take this passage of scripture, and they'll compare it to the genealogy that Luke presents in his gospel, and they'll say, oh, well, you see, they're different. They're not the same. Different names, different links in the chain are supposed to be his family history, but if you read them side by side, you'll notice they're very different, and therefore, this proves the Bible can't be trusted. Well, that objection is fairly easy to answer.

If anyone ever puts that thesis to you, you might actually respond to them with a question. How many biological parents do you have? Two. You see, friends, the key distinction between the two accounts, Matthew traces Jesus' lineage back along through Joseph. Luke traces Jesus' lineage back along through Mary, because you have a family history, just like I do, that goes back through your dad, and one that goes back through your mum, and you better hope those two lines aren't exactly the same, otherwise you're in trouble. So you might also think to point out that even though Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, you can see here in Matthew, it only goes back as far as Abraham. Now, the reason there is fairly simple. We know Joseph wasn't Jesus' biological father.

He had one father, the Lord God Almighty himself, creator of heaven and earth, but Mary was Jesus' biological mother, so Luke traces his physical lineage back through his mother, whereas Matthew, on this side of it, traces it back through his father. Now, you might be aware of the fact that at the time, a man's right to ownership or inheritance came through his father exclusively.

[7:15] Now, this is very significant. It doesn't just give us the reason for this genealogy. It gives us the reason for the entire gospel of Matthew. So take a look at verse 1, and again, we're not going verse by verse, so relax. Just verse 1 for now. A record, some of your Bibles say, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew has one purpose in mind. Prompted by the working of the Holy Spirit in penning this family history, Matthew's purpose is to prove that Jesus is the legal heir to the promises made by God to David and the promises made by God to Abraham. Jesus is the one through whom God will fulfill the covenant given to David, and he's the one through whom Abraham would see his promises completed. So that's where we'll pick things up.

Jesus is the son of Abraham. So let's tease that out. Turn with me in your Bibles all the way back to the beginning of history, to the book of Genesis. This is going to be a bit more like a Bible study than a sermon, so we'll hop around a little bit. So go to Genesis chapter 12. Now as you're turning there to Genesis 12, I'll just note that in a number of instances throughout the Bible, God is referred to as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. These are the patriarchs, the fathers of the Jewish faith. They're the ones to whom the Jews looked as being the ones from whom all the blessings of the promises of God would flow. So it's crucially important at this point to understand what is the Bible telling us about how Jesus, as a descendant of these patriarchs, fits into the promises of God. So Genesis 12 verse 1.

The Lord said to Abraham, leave your country, your people, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you. Now that's one heck of a promise, isn't it? Ownership of land, it's hard enough getting a mortgage these days. Descendants carving out a nation for themselves, we're in the time of Brexit, and the promise that Abraham himself would be the conduit through whom God would bless all people of the earth. Not just the Jews, all people. Now you all know this, but I have to hammer this point home.

There's one other thing that I think makes this promise so incredible. Look at verse 4. Abraham was 75 years old when he set out from Haran. 75 years old. He's no spring chicken here, folks. He's advanced in age. He's well beyond the age of producing an heir, and here he is, called by God to

move from his household to a strange place, not having anything to rely upon except his faith in the promises of the Lord. As an aside, by the way, I read it wasn't uncommon in Haran. Haran is up by the border between what's now Turkey and Syria. It wasn't uncommon for those houses to have a basic form central heating. So can you imagine leaving your nice, cozy, warm house at the age of 75 to go literally God knows where? I mean, some of you have a hard enough time dragging yourselves in here on a Sunday morning when there's a mild frost on the ground. I know I do anyway, speaking for myself.

But the bottom line is this. There is no way that these promises to Abraham, land and nation, descendants, there's no way these promises are going to be fulfilled through the will of Abraham. [11:03] He's old. He's got no kids. It's just not going to happen. Stay in Genesis, but skip forward a few pages to chapter 15. So we've had the initial call of Abraham. Now we're going to see the promise that God reiterates to him. Chapter 15 and in verse 2. Abraham actually gets the futility of his situation here. He knows that this looks impossible. Look at verse 2. He says, Oh sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless? The one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus, one of his servants, because he had no kids. You've given me no children, so a servant in my household would be my heir. You haven't provided for me, Lord. How are you going to work out these things? Well, look at God's response in verses 4 and 5. This man, Eliezer, he will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body. He took him outside and said, Look up at the heavens and count the stars, if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be.

Now I looked it up. With the naked eye, you might be able to see 8,000 stars and a completely pitch black sky. According to National Geographic, I looked this up, there are at least 100 billion stars in our galaxy. Now don't read too much into the actual number, talking about Abraham's kids.

This is what God is saying. Abraham, you're right. You don't have a child. You are old. Politically correct moment there in the Old Testament. You lied to Pharaoh about Sarah being your wife to try and save your own skin. You're actually going to go to bed with a slave girl and try and produce your own dynasty. But you will have an heir. You will produce descendants.

And through you, all the world will be blessed. And you know what? You have nothing to do with it. This is my unconditional promise to you. I, the Lord God Almighty, will do this.

You know, Abraham was a dreadfully slow learner. As people whisper amen quietly under their breath. He's held up as some kind of hero. And I suppose in a way he's impressive, right? You know, he sets out nothing but a promise, nothing but a prayer. He pleads with God on behalf of his nephew and his nephew's family. He rescues Lot, all of that kind of thing. He does trust God. For instance, we read that Genesis tells us he believed the Lord and it was credited to his account as righteousness.

[13:38] It's the original justification by faith alone. But he suffered from the same thing that I'm fairly confident cripples so much of the Western modern church. He made an idol out of self-sufficiency. You know what I mean? We have all of these promises made to us as the link, or individual links in the chain, fastening us to God throughout the entire history of his plan to redeem his people. But we always try and come up with clever ways to do church or to do evangelism or to do discipleship because we think we've got a plan to build the church and make the church better.

Speaking as a man specifically, I'll leave the ladies out of this at the moment. Just speaking as a man, we rely on our own strength a lot to get ourselves through tough times. We put up walls and we don't let people bear our burden in prayer the way we should. We say the phrase that I think says more about the psychology of people in this country than any other phrase. I'm grand, thanks. We try and do things by the strengths of our own efforts and that was Abraham. This is not a new problem, even to the point of doing really brainless, faithless, and downright stupid things. But even through all that, Abraham has a son called Isaac. Isaac has a son called Jacob. And all the way down through history to the lineage of Jesus Christ, about whom the apostle Paul says this. Don't turn to it, just listen. Galatians chapter 3. Consider Abraham. He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then that those who believe are children of Abraham. God redeemed us so that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles, that's you and me, through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. So who receives the promised blessing? You and me. How did that happen? Because the first thing we learn about God's character, God is faithful to the promises he makes. Despite these instances in Abraham's life, of the faithlessness that he showed, God still kept true to his promise. Look at the stars, Abraham, and count them, if you could. Your offspring are going to be numbered as many as the

ones that you can see, and even more beyond that. Light, by the way, is given off by stars. The very first act of creation in Genesis 1, therefore, when God said, let there be light, was the very source of all physical life.

Even that physical act of creation pointed forward to the light of the world who would come in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, through whom we simply don't just gain physical life, but eternal, everlasting, spiritual life. You know, David wasn't perfect either. I'll go into that a bit more later. But God still made him this promise. I'll just read it to you, 2 Samuel 7.

The Lord will establish a house for you. By the way, this is David speaking to God, saying, you know, I'll build your temple, Lord. I'll make your temple the greatest of all of the temples in the world. [16:57] And God says, oh, no, you won't. The Lord says, I will establish a house for you. When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. But now it gets interesting. He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. David had no idea that God did not mean Solomon, who would build the literal temple.

David had no idea that he meant the Messiah, the anointed one, the one who would come and save his people from their sins, Jesus Christ himself. Numbers 23, 19, if you want to write that citation down, this is a good one to know. Numbers 23, 19, God is not a man that he should lie. God is not a man that he should lie. So when he wills it, it's done. When he makes a promise, he keeps it. Here's the point. His promise to you of everlasting life does not depend on the circumstances in which you find yourself this morning. They do not depend on whether you're struggling with your health, whether you're struggling with bereavement, or childlessness, or unemployment, or anything like that. The things that happen to you cannot possibly, friends, cancel out the promises that God makes to you. It's like saying you can take a garden hose and point it at the sky and somehow extinguish the sun.

It's just not going to happen. Jesus said he wouldn't lose one of those whom the father had given him, and that nothing would pluck them from his hand. For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, that whomever believes in him would not perish, but would live forever. God is faithful to the promises he makes to his people. So that's the first thing that we learn. God is faithful. Let's look at the second one. He's sovereign. Now, we know what that word means, right? You know, he's sovereign over the universe in the sense that he not only knows everything that will come to pass, but in fact, he purposes everything that comes to pass directly or indirectly. I'll give you a few verses if you want to write them down. Job 42.2. Job 42.2. I know that you can do all things and that no plan of yours can be thwarted. Daniel 4.35. The Lord does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand. He's not just sovereign in heaven.

He's sovereign here on earth as well. God sits on the throne of all creation, and here's my last one, Ephesians 1.11. He works all things according to the counsel of his will. All things according to the counsel of his will. And you know, a lot of people have a major problem with the idea of God's sovereignty, and I don't mean unbelievers. There are a huge number of Christians that seem to go to great lengths to try and somehow argue that God's sovereignty is limited by what you or I do, is limited by human endeavors. Charles Spurgeon, the famous prince of preachers, he said this. This is amazing. This is, you know, 130 odd years ago. Spurgeon said, men will allow God to be everywhere except on his throne. They will allow him to be in his workshop, to fashion worlds and make stars.

[20:42] They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars of the earth or light the lamps of heaven or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean. But when God ascends his throne, his creatures gnash their teeth. I think that's because, as human beings, we don't like it when we're not in control.

Amen? I mean, I know I don't. Let me give you a personal illustration. Our son Jack is autistic, and he goes to a preschool for kids on the spectrum, and he flourishes and he thrives there.

And that'll see him through two years of preschool and junior infants and senior infants. But if we want him to have access to the same kind of care and support from first class to sixth class, we need an official diagnosis from the HSE. Now, any of you who's ever dealt with the HSE for something like this, or just trying to see a specialist, you'll know that it's an exercise and patience, isn't it? We've been waiting now for about 18 months. So we've made some headway recently, but

it's a painfully slow process. We are not in control of this situation. We're dependent on the actions of people reviewing our applications and dealing with this case and acting on our behalf.

That's incredibly frustrating, and it just annoys me because I have no control over that. Somebody else is in control of this situation, and we don't like that. And that's how a lot of people react to God's sovereignty. They don't like the fact that God is in control over the course and trajectory of human history. Well, let's take a look at what it means in Matthew 1 again, okay?

His sovereignty means this. If you look at Matthew 1 from verses 6 to 11, we get a list of kings. Now, David and Solomon sat on the throne of Israel when it was one united country, and the rest of them from Rehoboam to Jeconiah down in verse 11, they were kings of Judah in the south after the country split in two. It's all increasingly sounded like modern EU politics, isn't it? Now, what you have to remember about Israel's history is that for its entire history, it sat always in the midst of great and powerful empires. Pretty much everywhere all around it, north, south, east, and west, there were these other kingdoms vastly more powerful than Israel was. It's like Ireland sitting in the midst of the British Empire, the French Empire, the Dutch Empire, the US, China, Russia, all of that kind of thing. The history of the Near East is one of geopolitical rivalry, political machination, and military conquest. Not much has changed in the Near East, has it? Now, we don't have time to go through everything. Here's the abridged version, okay? God brings his people out of Egypt, and like he promised to Abraham, he does set them up as a people in a land of their own with a nation of their own. After David and

[23 : 39] Solomon, internal rivalries spring up, and the kingdom splits in two. Some kings are good, some kings are bad. But for over two centuries, there's the same problem in the land. No matter who is the king, the people do not honor God as they should. That sounds familiar too, doesn't it? Turn with me back into the Old Testament again. Go to the book of Isaiah, chapter 8. That, by the way, was the quickest history of the kingdom of Israel you're ever going to get in your lifetime. Isaiah, chapter 8.

You know, actions have consequences. You teach that to your kids, don't you? You know, you try and get them to learn that if you do something bad, Jack, then the results are going to be bad. If you disobey me, then I have to discipline you, because I'm your father and I love you. That's my job, to discipline you lovingly. God sent Isaiah to give exactly the same message. Look at Isaiah 8, verse 6.

Isaiah 8, verse 6. Because this people, Israel, has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shilohah, meaning they don't give me glory for the things I've given them, and they rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah. In other words, they look to foreign gods. The Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the river, the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow Assyria, all of its channels, run over all of its banks, and sweep onto Judah, swirling over it, passing through it, and reaching up to its neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Emmanuel. But now watch this in verse 9. Raise the war cry, you nations. He's talking to Assyria now. Raise the war cry and be shattered. Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle and be shattered. And he repeats it. Prepare for battle and be shattered. Devise your strategy. Go ahead and make your plans. But it will be thwarted. Propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

Now, do you see the significance of that last bit? The major political player at this time is Assyria. And God is sending them, the Assyrian empire, to overrun and crush his disobedient people. But it is not the plan of Assyria that comes to pass. The Assyrians think it is. In fact, if you go to London, you go to the British Museum, you can see all these stoneworks that are taken from the palace of King Sennacherib. And they boast of the victory over Israel and talk about how puny their God Yahweh is.

[26 : 22] Here's what happened. 722 BC, northern kingdom destroyed, off into exile. Land is plundered and the southern kingdom is occupied. They're now a slave state. Their leader, Ahaz, he's a wretched man.

He worships idols, he dishonors God, and he willingly becomes a puppet king. But his son, Hezekiah, who we see in Jesus' lineage, he's a righteous man. You see, he sets about purifying the land, destroying the pagan idols that his father loved. He refuses to pay tribute to King Sennacherib and rebels against the Assyrian empire. I mean, man, talk about waving a red flag in front of a bull. It was inevitable what was going to happen. I'll read this for you. It's from 2 Kings 19. Turn there if you want, or I'll just read it. 2 Kings 19 tells us what happens. In 701 BC, the Assyrians show up.

Hezekiah tries to pay him off. Here's the silver, here's the gold, just go away, leave us alone. But it's not enough. Sennacherib's pride is hurt at this stage.

He's enraged, and he means business, and he's going to wipe the Jews off the face of the earth. How many times, by the way, have dictators throughout history said they were going to do that? But look who's still here. Here stands at the gate of Jerusalem, an army that pledges to completely eradicate God's people who are standing now on the brink of genocide. So Hezekiah does the only thing I think he knows how to do. He goes to the temple, and he prays. And God sends word to him through Isaiah.

He says this, if you're there in 2 Kings 19, it's verse 29. This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah. This year, you will eat what grows by itself. The second year, you will eat what springs from that. In the third year, you will sow, and you will reap, and you will plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. And once more, a remnant of the house of Judah will take root, and bear fruit. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant. Out of Mount Zion will come a band of survivors, and the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this. Therefore, this is what the Lord says concerning the king of Assyria. He will not enter this city, or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield, or build a siege ramp against it. By the way, he came, he will return. He will not enter this city, declares the Lord.

[28 : 42] I will defend this city and save it, for my sake, and for the sake of David, my servant. And then this is stunning, verse 35. That night, the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 men of the Assyrian army. I have a book in my library. It's called What If? It's a military history book. It's a book in which these scholars talk about alternate history. What would have happened if this had happened? And it gives our perspective on the outcome of certain battles in history. And the very first chapter in the book is about the destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem. It's not a Christian book. It's a secular academic book. But here's some of what the author has to say. This battle is the greatest might have been of all military history. A secular historian saying that. He also says, Jerusalem's preservation from attack by the Assyrians shaped the history of the world more profoundly than any other military action. It's the most profoundly important battle in military history. And then he goes on and says this in conclusion, never before or since has so much depended on so few believing so wholly in their one true God. And in such, I love this, and in such bold defiance of common sense. There was no way this was going to end well for

Jerusalem, surrounded by an army, cut off completely from any aid from the outside. Their allies, the Egyptians have abandoned them. So such bold defiance of common sense. And this historian, he doesn't even know the half of it, does he? God promised that from the seed of Abraham would come the one to bless the whole earth. God promised that from the seed of David would come the one who would sit on the throne.

Now if the line of Abraham and David ends here in Jerusalem, 700 years before Christ is born, there's no more royal line. There's no more nation. There's no more seed. There's no church. There's no us.

But Jerusalem stands. Hezekiah survives and the royal line keeps going. A hundred years later, God told King Jeconiah, Jeconiah, your kids will never sit on the throne. So that looked like the end of the line. And then the new conquerors on the block come in. The Babylonians of Nebuchadnezzar, you all know his name from the book of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar installs another king, but then steamrolls into Jerusalem in 586 BC, destroys the temple, destroys the city, captures Zedekiah, and murders his sons. And for all intents and purposes, that's the end of the royal line of Israel. But is the most important word in the history of God's plan for redemption. But Zedekiah had a brother. He had a son. He had another son. And after the exile in Babylon, that son, Zerubbabel, the rightful heir to the throne of David, was allowed to go home and bring his people with him. And by the way, the exile, since we're talking about sovereignty, lasted exactly as long as God said it would last. Jeremiah 25 11, you will be in exile for 70 years. God is not merely in control of history. God purposes history and his word bears forth that truth. So once again, God preserved the chain that would bring forth the Messiah, the one who would bless the earth. Friends, God is not just faithful in the promises he makes. He controls the movements of armies and empires and kings to such an extent that his purposes will always come to pass. The genealogy of Jesus Christ isn't just a dry list of dead kings and prophets and priests. It's a testimony to the all-powerful sovereign purposes of the one who raises up kings and lays them low. He does as he pleases in the heavens and on the earth, and he does it so that his plans are accomplished. You know, empires come and empires go. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon,

[33 : 12] Persia, Greece, Rome, they've all had their day in the sun. The dark ages, the slave trade, World War I, World War II, the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, terrorism, Putin, Trump, Brexit, North Korea, all of these things seem like they overshadow the course of human history, and they cloud out the possibility of any divine involvement. And in 1966, you might be familiar with this, Time magazine in 1966, ran an edition, and famously on the front page asked the question, is God dead? Now that came from a group of theologians, if you can call them that, and philosophers, who presented their view that God was no longer acting in human history. God is dead. He's not in control. One of the leaders of that movement was a guy called Thomas Altheiser. He died last December, and he's now more fully aware than you were I, that God is very much alive. God is not dead. God is very much alive. So Christian, when you watch the news, when you read the paper, don't fall for the devil's lies. God is not asleep at the wheel. History marches inevitably and irreversibly towards the new heaven and the new earth, when Christ will ultimately reign on his throne forever. But look at what we've seen so far.

Murder, enslavement, idolatry, bloodshed upon bloodshed, truly terrible events on massive scales that serves to keep and preserve the ancestral line that would give legitimacy to the heir of the throne of David and the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. God used all these things in spite of their wickedness. And that leads me to the final point, the last thing the genealogy of Jesus tells us about the character of God. He is not just faithful. He is not just sovereign. He is also gracious.

Take a quick survey of the people who appear in this history. Abraham, Jacob and Judah, they were all liars. Tamar seduced her father-in-law. She's in the line of Jesus. Rahab was a prostitute. She's in the line of Jesus. Ruth was an idol worshiper. She's in the line of Jesus. David got another man's wife pregnant and then had him killed to cover it up. The list of Israel's kings, friends, that reads like the cast of characters from Game of Thrones or something. And Mary, Mary, as we know, was pregnant outside of marriage. Now, you know, it's impossible for anyone who's physically born to have a family history that doesn't have sinners in it, isn't it? It's very, it's completely impossible. It's obviously true for all of us. The same actually went for Jesus. The family history that establishes his right to rule on the throne of David to inherit the promise of Abraham could never have been perfect.

Now, we know he was perfect. He was the lamb without blemish. He was the one who knew no sin. He was the one who was the perfect sacrifice. But because he had to be born, he had to have a family history.

And that family history is just filled with sinners. Some of the things here are dreadful. Murder, theft, incest, idolatry, prostitution. God used immoral acts and unclean, idolatrous people to preserve the bloodline. Think about this. He used unclean, idolatrous people to preserve the bloodline that would establish the coming of the Messiah to fulfill God's promises. You see, these things, they all pointed forward. They foreshadowed his physical conception. Conceived in a woman, not married to a man. Scandalous. Not befitting the promised Messiah. And here's the point.

[37 : 22] The people God used in the family history of Christ, they're exactly the kind of people that Jesus came to save. Jesus said, it is not the healthy who need a doctor. The sick need a doctor.

I have not come to call the righteous. I have come to call sinners. Who did he eat with? Who did the Pharisees give him grief for eating with? Prostitutes. Pagans. Who did he call to follow him? Liars. Thieves. Thieves. Scoundrels. Criminals. Who did he say on the cross would be with him in paradise? A criminal justly executed for his crimes. Do you honestly think there is anything you have ever done that places you outside the possibility of God's mercy? Let me ask you this. Have you ever killed someone?

God took a psychopathically zealous racist murderer named Paul and he turned him into the greatest missionary in the history of the church? Have you ever slept with someone to whom you weren't married?

God looked at a lustful covetous hypocrite called David and said, your seed will give rise to the one who will save my people from their sins. Friend, while there is still breath in your lungs, Jesus is standing there, arms wide open, waiting to receive you if you call out to him. And if you call, he answers. If you seek forgiveness, you are forgiven. If you repent and believe, you are held in his hand and the door to mercy and grace is never locked. There's a thousand different things I could have done with that text. There are things I haven't talked about that I could be talking about for the next two weeks. But I wanted to spend time telling you, just like how I gave you an indication of

what my family history says about me, what Christ's family history says about God himself. A.W. Pink was a faithful American preacher in the 20th century and he said this, an unknown God can neither be trusted, served, nor worshipped. An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, nor worshipped.

[40 : 03] This is what he meant. We need to know who God is if we're going to trust him as he should be trusted, as the faithful one. We need to know who God is if we're going to serve him as he should be served, the one who is all-powerful, all-sovereign in control of every situation in which you find yourself this morning. We need to know who God is if we're going to worship him as he should be worshipped, the God of grace and mercy, who before he even said, let there be light, had in mind with you an intimate relationship such that if you call on the name of Jesus Christ, you will not die, but will live forever. So when you witness to other people, remember these three things. The gospel is good news because God keeps his promises. The gospel is good news because God has purposed his plan for redeeming lost people and nothing will keep that from happening. The gospel is good news because it's open to all people who would come and call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because God is a God of grace who does not turn anyone away who seeks him and calls on his name.

Now, as you know, I like to let scripture have the last word. So turn with me to the book of Jeremiah. Anything I've had to say to you this morning, God himself says it's so much better than I ever could. Jeremiah, speaking at a time when the people were about to go into exile, when things looked bleak and dark with no hope. Jeremiah chapter 9 verse 23.

Jeremiah 9 23. This is what the Lord says. Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches but let him who boasts boast about this that he understands and knows me that I am the Lord who exercises kindness justice and righteousness on earth for in these I delight thus declares the Lord.

Glory be to God. Amen. Let's pray. Father, what has been said we pray that it would be your word that would be raised up.

[42 : 47] If I've said anything, Father, that offends you or does not give you glory I pray you would blot it from our minds and be forgotten. Father, may your Holy Spirit be in work in us implanting and imprinting your truth on our hearts and minds.

Thank you, Father, that you're a God who keeps his promises not just to your servant Abraham not just to your servant David but to us as well here in Carragalline in the 21st century.

Thank you, Father, that you don't reject those who call out to you and that the promises you make to those who do are true that you will not lose one of us because you hold us in your hand.

Father, we give you praise and glory you who created the heavens and the earth who has purposed before the foundations of the earth your plan for redeeming your people you who control armies and empires and kings and presidents and prime ministers.

Help us to look to you, Lord, when the world seems harsh and cruel when it seems uncertain and we can worry about the future we can worry about the future our children will be facing into.

[44 : 09] Help us to latch on to your promise that you are the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills. You do as you please in heaven and on earth.

you cause all things to work for good for those who love you who are called according to your purpose. We give you glory and praise, Father and we give you great thanksgiving for your magnificent grace.

Father, there's nothing we can do that will merit our standing in your eyes. There's nothing we can say no sacrifice we can make no words we can impart no ritual we can perform that can accomplish what's already been accomplished by the blood of your son on the cross.

Father, thank you for the grace you show to your people. Be gracious to us as we seek to serve you and love you and we don't always know how to do that, Lord. But give us hearts like your servant David to be longing after you.

We are coming in and we are going out. Be our Alpha our Omega be our everything, Lord. Bless our time of fellowship together for the rest of today.

[45 : 23] Rejuvenate us and strengthen us for the week ahead so that as we go to work and school and college and everywhere we go we might be strong, faithful witnesses for you to bring them the good news of your son Jesus Christ and be empowered by your Holy Spirit.

And not our will, Lord but your perfect, holy and spotless will be done. In Jesus' name, Amen.