

Matthew 1:1–17

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[0 : 0 0] That's Matthew 1, 1-17. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nashon, and Nashon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah, and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abayud, and Abayud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Aqam, and Aqam the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eliezer the father of Matan, and Matan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, fourteen generations.

[2 : 3 8] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning.

I'd like to add my own greeting to you as this holiday season approaches, and together asking the Lord that we would, in our own hearts, see the light of Christ emerging as we prepare to meet him in the manger on Christmas morn.

I'm sure if we could call Matthew up here for a brief interview before the sermon, there's probably a question that any one of us might want to ask, having just heard the reading, you'd probably rise from your seat, make your way to a floor mic, and simply say, Matthew, great to have you with us today.

We're thrilled for you. Congratulations on the publication of your book. From what we understand, it's the only book you were published, and so we're thrilled for you.

In fact, our church family is going to begin reading your book now for some months, and so we'll get acclimated to it. But before we get underway, Matthew, just a single question.

[4 : 0 6] What's up with the genealogy? Of all the ways to capture the readers, what made you think that some lengthy list of names was going to be the hook that, like, pulled us to you?

You'd find your seat, and Matthew would make his way to the lectern, and in his aged and confused state, probably say, well, I understand, given that you're reading my book some 2,000 years after I wrote it, that there might be some explanation as to why I thought the genealogy was the wow way to begin.

I suppose in some sense it emerges from the fact that I wanted to write a book about Jesus. I believe Jesus to be a king.

Spoiler alert, when you finish my book in chapter 28, I'm going to have argued that he's a universal king, that he's got all authority over all of heaven, over all of earth, for all time, over everyone and everywhere.

So that's where the book's going, and I realize that if you're going to write about a king, a ruler, I mean, imagine your day, a book about Charles, or a biography that might come out on Elizabeth.

[5 : 35] Somewhere early on, there's going to be a chart, there's going to be a graph, there's going to be a family tree. You want to write about a king, you better demonstrate the direct line that provides them the right to rule.

That's what he did. This book opens with a genealogy as though you are looking at a family tree that emerges out of the dry, dead stump of Adam's race.

And flowering forth from this stump comes one by way of a promise that emerges into these three symmetrical, beautifully illustrated parts of the tree that lead you from where we were to who he is.

I suppose if he's right and what he's going to argue, that it wouldn't be a bad way to begin. I think I'm going to try to argue today that you and I would do well to let Jesus run our lives.

That's what I'm trying to argue. From here? Yeah, from here. You and I would do well to let Jesus run our lives.

[7 : 08] Why? Because he's a king. He's the king. That Christmas is about kingship.

Now, let's just take a look then at the genealogy under perhaps the preacher's lens as Matthew leaves the stage. We'll see if he has anything to say by the end of the sermon.

You notice, though, don't you, that the genealogy is clearly defined for us by intention as you look at verse 1 and verse 17, don't you?

I mean, pull it up. Put your eyes on it. This is the way he starts. I'm writing a book. And the book is a record of the genealogy, the origins, the beginnings of Jesus, who Matthew says is the Christ.

That's not Jesus' last name. That wasn't Joseph's last name. If you've never read the scriptures before, Matthew's quite aware that he's introducing a new belief, a new testament, as it were.

[8 : 14] The old belief is that God would save his people, that God was king. The new testament opens with the sense that in Jesus, you have the king.

The Christ was simply the Hebraic way of signifying a king. I'm going to write a book about Jesus, King Jesus. By the way, son of David, son of Abraham.

He connects the new testament, the new belief to the old word so as to let you and I know that whatever he thinks about our state or whatever he thinks about who Jesus is, he's not coming out of thin air.

It's new, but it's rooted in the old. And so he takes these two figures, verse one. In verse 17, he shows you the symmetry of his illustrative opening, doesn't he?

So all the generations from Abraham to David, notice he's referring all the way back to verse one, were 14. And from David to the deportation, 14. And from the deportation of Babylon to the Christ, 14.

[9 : 25] Interestingly, then he wants you to view his record of the origins of Jesus with symmetry in regard to Israel's Old Testament history.

Now there's been some discussion on, are there really 14 along the way? And I would just say that there are, this is a selective use. It's so that you would see on the page the beauty of all of that.

You've seen your own family tree, haven't you? This is the ancestor.com of Jesus. At least that's the way my son puts it. And you don't mention all the people in the line. You mention enough to let you see the beauty of the family.

And that's what he does here. And so we're reading a book about Jesus and his origins, which are rooted in the old world promises that actually tether his coming to promises related to Abraham before him and to David.

So let's take a look. Let me signpost it. That first unit, verses two through six, relate to Abraham. He starts there.

[10 : 37] I would put it this way. He starts with the fact that Jesus is a king who, according to the promises, has come to rescue. Let me get it clear. That first movement of his record, of his origin, here's one who's come to rescue.

How do I get rescue from Abraham? Well, if you're not familiar with the scriptures, Abraham doesn't emerge until the 12th chapter of Genesis. Before that, you had five genealogies on Adam's race.

And the problem is everybody keeps dying. Death, death, death. Adam brings ruin. But with Abraham comes a promise of rescue. So that in chapter 12 of Genesis, the Bible articulates that to one man, Abraham is going to come one in his line who would rescue, in the language of the text, all the families of the earth.

Think about that in the Bible story then. For 11 chapters, through one man, ruin comes to us all. But now, through one man, Abraham, rescue will one day be available to all.

It's a rescue story. That's what the Bible is. And so for these verses, he begins to talk about those which came forth from Abraham.

[11 : 59] But notice, he does it all the way until he gets to Jesse, the father of David. And then he moves from rescuer, Abraham, to the one who rules, David. There he is at the end of verse 6.

David, the king. If I was to put that first movement of the origin under the word of Abraham, it would simply be that the nation's hopes rested on a coming one who would rescue.

The hope of the nations rests on one who will rescue all the families of the earth.

And what he wants to say is, I want to write a book about Jesus. And just so you get it clear, he's connected to that promise of rescue. But he moves on.

It's not merely a king who would come to our rescue, verses 2 to 6, but it's a king who will rule us well. That's the movement of verses 7 through 11.

[13 : 07] You can see how it opens. And David was the father of Solomon. And now you have a listing of names who ascended to the throne of Israel.

Matthew moves you from the idea of rescue to the promise of rule. Where does this come from? Why is he putting such attention on son of David?

Well, simply this. It's related to another promise. I don't normally ask you to turn back in your Bibles lest you lose track of what it is we're trying to do from Matthew 1.

But it might be worth seeing this promise with your own eyes because it's so significant to his argument. 2 Samuel chapter 7, earlier in the Bible, David is now ruling Israel, and he wants to build God a house.

He wants to build God a place of rest. And so he sets out to do this construction project and build God a house for his name.

[14 : 12] And God, through Nathan, a prophet, shows up and says to him, David, I'm not concerned that you would build me the house. I'm going to promise you that I'm going to build your house, your kingdom.

I'm going to do something for you, through you, from you. Now, with that in place, look at 2 Samuel 7 and verses 12 and 13, because here's the promise.

This is the word that comes to David. In verse 12, God says to him through the prophet, when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, in other words, David, when you die, I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

Notice verse 13, key verse in all of the Bible, really, at least according to Matthew's argument and what he was able to get published. He shall build a house for my name, here it is, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

That's quite a promise. Through Abraham, you get a promise that the ruinous race of Adam that ends in death will be reversed through one who rescues all the families of the earth.

[15 : 30] But to David, more narrowly, through your line, I will raise up a ruler and notice he's an eternal ruler.

He never... seeds the throne. A forever king. How can you be a forever king?

How can you be a king forever? The queen of England made a good run at it. But she's now gone from the scene.

How do you get a forever king? Well, you'll have to come back and keep watching as we walk through Matthew, but somehow by the time Matthew published, he was convinced that Jesus was the forever king.

Spoiler alert, he thinks he's the forever king based on what he will argue is a real resurrection. That Jesus was unlike David in that David lived and died, but Jesus died and rose again.

[16 : 38] So his argument is going to be, in my time of life, God sent the fulfillment of two massive promises in one person.

The promise that went out to Abraham of familial rescue across the board. The promise that went out to David of a ruler who would be forever established in ways that could run your life well is all there.

So do you see how the middle part, back to Matthew's genealogy, must be building on the first part? We're reading a book about Jesus who Matthew claims is a king.

He's connected to God's previous Old Testament belief of promise. He's connected to God's previous promise to David that he's laid out a rescuer and a ruler.

But notice this strange movement then the third part, verse 11, until you get to the time of the deportation to Babylon.

[17 : 55] What is going on here? Evidently, according to Matthew, he wants us to be introduced to his work by knowing that Jesus has not only come to our rescue, Jesus is not only a king who will rule us well, but Jesus is one who will redeem you from your own recklessness along the way.

How do I get there? This third movement in the genealogy, verses 12 to 16, this final branch that emerges from this tree talks about a time of deportation.

I don't assume that you would have any understanding of what is this in reference to, but when one begins to read the Old Testament, one finds that while David was a king, the people really were reckless nonetheless.

That even David himself ruled well, but not well enough. That the people began to do whatever they wanted under God's king.

That at times, the king himself did whatever he wanted. And therefore, he wasn't the one that you ought to follow.

[19 : 14] And so, there's this deportation. This is what God did. He actually took his own people, moved them out of their land by hostile outsiders' invasion, and sent them into exile.

And it says here, notice verse 12, at the time of Babylon. Babylon had emerged by this time on the world scene as the world's great leader. You might be familiar with Nebuchadnezzar.

You might just go into the Oriental Institute and see various artifacts related to both the Assyrian Empire, which hauled off 10 tribes of Israel, and the Babylonian Empire, which hauled off the other couple of tribes of Israel, until all these great promises that had come down to God's people through Abraham and David, almost looked like they were dwindling away, almost looked like the light of promise to Abraham and David was going to flicker out and never be fulfilled.

Israel fades from the scene. There are no consequences in the world order. There's a few people rumbling around in Babylon, hoping to hang on and still believe that God might get something done.

You ever feel like that? God makes a promise, delivers on his promise, but we go wayward anyway.

[20 : 48] So as the list is unfolding, it almost is heightening the sense of urgency or desperation by the time you get to that third leg. Is it really possible that anything is now going to get done?

God had ruled, he had rescued Israel, he had ruled her, but their recklessness becomes a stumbling block. Let me just put it to you in the words of the hymn that we sang earlier today, the carol, where people begin to have voice to this, O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom, captive Israel.

That mourns in lonely exile here. Now what he's saying then is I'm writing a book about Jesus who's a king.

He's a rescuing king. He's a wonderful ruling king. But beyond that, he redeems your life from the it king.

He can take the lonely exile of in your own heart knowing you have not lived up to that which you know about God to be true.

[22 : 01] And he says, well, I'm coming to get you too. And he releases you from the grip of the evil one. He can rescue us all.

He can rule us all. He can redeem us from a rush headlong into a reckless way of life. My own life experience mirrors this.

If I was to show you my family tree on my mother's side, they were really kind of a healthy branch. They were filled with a bunch of missionaries, went all over the world.

You know, my dad's line, he likes to claim that half of his ancient relatives were Wesleyan circuit riders, but the other half were horse thieves.

So I don't know how those two mingled with one another. One guy trying to ride out and get something done with the other guy taking the legs out from under him. But at any rate, my family line is a mixed line, but it's a glorious line.

[22 : 57] It's a wonderful line. I was privileged and nevertheless, growing up in that family bloodline. I was reckless. I walked away. I needed to be delivered, rescued from myself, just as Israel did here.

What do I want to say by way of bringing this to conclusion for your heart and mine today? If we were to call Matthew back up and ask him, you got the floor now?

Anything you want to say? I think he would say, I've got one question for you now. You want to know what's up with my genealogy? I've just got one for you. What's up with yours? Where are you from?

Where are you going? Who is ruling you well? I think he would want to say that. I think he would want to say, tell me about your family line.

Tell me who you belong to. Tell me what you're living for. Tell me who you listen to. Tell me who you follow.

[24 : 21] Tell me what is it that would keep you from following Jesus? He's the fulfillment of all God's gracious kindly promises.

I will put it to you this way. This morning, Jesus stands ready to replant you into his household, into his family line.

Think of it. Your family line might be a mess, but you can put yourself in his line? Are you kidding me?

What is keeping you from that? He has come to rescue us from sin. He's come with a gracious rule and a yoke that is easy.

He's come to redeem all the waywardness along the way. He's come to restore all the years that the locusts have eaten.

[25 : 37] How do you find your way into his line? Repent of your sins. Believe that his death is sufficient for your forgiveness and by faith begin following him.

And if that happens, roots can come up out of dry ground. And there might be someone sitting in this auditorium some 30, 40, 50, 80 years from now that comes from your line because you decided to place yourself under his rule.

I want nothing less than to persuade you that Jesus is worth your following.

Not on my emotion, not on my preacherly passion, on the fact that he's the fulfillment of God's promises.

And you can rest on that. Our Heavenly Father, we commence really at Christmas time to look at these narratives about Jesus' birth, but we commence to go on from there in the new year and look at how Matthew's published work will make his argument clear.

[27 : 12] But for this morning, thank you for providing an opening that would legitimize a real exploration, that he has a right to rule because he's in the line of all your promises.

We give ourselves to it in Jesus' name. Amen.