

Matthew 1:1–17

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[0 : 00] So that is Matthew chapter 1 verses 1 to 17. Please stand for the reading of God's words. 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.

[1 : 18] And Uzziah the father of Joram, and Joram 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 was the father of Zerubbabel. And Zerubbabel the father of Abiad. And Abiad the father of Eliakim. And Eliakim the father of Azor.

And Azel the father of Zadok. And Zadok the father of Achim. And Achim the father of Eliad. And Eliad the father of Eleazar. And Eleazar the father of Mathan.

And Mathan 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.

[2 : 26] And from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations. And from the deportation to Babylon, to the Christ, fourteen generations.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, I do believe that Hannah deserves an Oscar for the reading of God's word.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I want to also thank Betty Ann Leinert and the Christmas choir. Just wonderful to just bask under the music and the lyrics that bring us to the creche.

I suppose if we ever had the chance to meet Matthew sometime after he published his book on Jesus, we only would have had one question for him.

Simply, hey, what's up with the genealogy? Seriously, how do you determine to tell what you believe to be the greatest story ever told with this lengthy list that moves all the way through the lineage of Jesus?

[3 : 50] And not merely the lineage of Jesus, but the lineage of Jesus through Joseph, of whom we already know Mary had no union. I mean, you can envision him, can't you?

Matthew sitting in his study, thinking of his publishing date down the road with all of his research done and his source documents before him, and he's now only got to figure out how he gets it going.

And he says to himself, I've got it. I'm doing the genealogy. And we say to him, you've almost lost us ever before you had time to gain us as your reader.

It's what I call Matthew's puzzle. What does he know that we don't know? What does he understand that we need to comprehend?

And truth be told, it's not limited to Matthew, is it? It's the whole Bible. I spent a little bit of time at an ad hoc level just walking through the scriptures and found no fewer than 61 lists of names in the Old

Testament alone and 14 more in the New Testament.

[5 : 18] And some of those 75 lists are indeed genealogies. There are other lists that bundle people according to their role or their duty or the fact that they are the inheritors of land.

And in the New Testament, you have lists of disciples or the women who follow Jesus or even men and women who are known for their historic faith to say nothing of those big bulks of the Old Testament narrative which are actually tracing the work of particular kings in sequence.

The Bible is filled with stuff like this. I suppose Matthew would look at us and say, well, let me help you with my puzzle.

Get a hold of my plan and may I reveal to you my purpose. The plan of Matthew.

Those two words, his plan and his purpose by way of answering his Advent puzzle. His plan was simply to introduce the main character of his narrative along three lines, at least as I can understand him.

[6 : 40] He wants to introduce the main character of his narrative with as much generational, mathematical, and scandalous style as a lineage can properly render.

Let me roll that out. Generational symmetry. He reveals his plan at the very end. Verse 17.

In other words, he's now revealing his look on the genealogy. He says, so all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations and from David to the deportation to Babylon, 14 generations and from the deportation of Babylon to the Christ, 14 generations.

His plan is revealed at the end. He sets before the reader, first of all, absolutely pristine, perfectly balanced symmetry regarding the generations of Jesus.

This is not an exhaustive genealogy. You can go back to the Old Testament and find other kings in the line, but he has determined to place this perfectly symmetrical, balanced sets of 14 before the reader.

[8 : 07] And he does so, I think, with what I call mathematical beauty. Let me explain.

The Hebrews would take words and assign to the consonants a numerical value. It was common. So the name David, which appears multiple times in this opening 17 verses, would have a mathematical value of its consonants put together.

Four was the numerical value for D. Six was the numerical value for what we have as a V. And then four again for the D.

So when you took the name David, you actually came up with a mathematical number of 14. And unless you think I'm stretching it, there are three sets of 14 in the genealogy.

[9 : 11] And the 14th person listed in the genealogy is David. And the import of it all is to connect Jesus, not only with this balanced view of the whole Old Testament scriptures, but to almost see David himself and Jesus as the son of David being the pinnacle or the capstone upon which this whole thing runs.

I wonder if Pascal would have liked Matthew. I wonder if Matthew was a mathematician by disposition. Now, I was not going through school.

But there are people who are. I remember once an incoming freshman at the University of Chicago, a member of our church, who came in under the weight, really. It was a weight.

where he had been told, you have an opportunity to perhaps be one of the world's greatest mathematicians. Imagine somebody telling you that when you're 17.

I remember all the beautiful, God-given talents this young man had. And I remember also the idiosyncratic nature of one who was blessed with that immensity.

[10 : 33] I remember walking to my office once and he was standing off to the side of the sidewalk like this. And I approached him and called him by name and I said, Are you okay?

And he said, Oh, hi, Pastor. Isn't math beautiful? I said, Have a great day.

But it's not surprising, although I have no internal intuitive way of understanding, it's not surprising that mathematics and Christianity are often wedded.

There must be something in that discipline, the beauty, the symmetry, the patterns, the fullness, that moves one to consider actually the Christian message.

I can't tell you what that is. You'll have to ask someone who enjoys math to reveal that to you. But Matthew himself is giving you both this generational symmetry with its mathematical beauty and even beyond that, this scandalous insertion that challenges the Judaism of his day regarding what is pure or unpure.

[12:10] You see, the Hebrews of his day would make much of the genealogy to authenticate your pure line of descent.

In fact, Timothy runs into this in the early church where Paul is trying to shore up Timothy's place in the church even though he didn't have a pure line of descent.

His father was of one faith, his mother was of another faith, and Paul is trying to say, you need to stay in the church and put to rest the people that are looking to their perfect bloodline as authenticating their credibility in the church.

And what Paul was telling Timothy is, throw all that stuff aside because the scandal of the line you want, that which I am most thankful for in you, Timothy, is your sincere faith.

He wants faith line, not bloodline. And what Matthew has done in these 17 verses by including four women whose scandalous births preceded Mary's birth of Jesus, not only to prepare the reader that God in all of his wonder is in the real righteous muck of life as he brings his own son into the world.

[13:41] The four women in the genealogy of Jesus were righteously at work claiming, like Tamar, the line of God's word in a world of men that weren't walking it forward as Rahab herself, under the threat of death, would find herself into the line by faith.

And so Ruth, the Moabite woman, is actually listed here. And subtly, the reader, before we even meet Mary, is prepared for the scandal of Christmas.

God is not interested. And this is a great encouragement to any of you. You don't got to be some member of the Daughters of Revolution to have standing.

You don't have to be able to trace your bloodline back to certain high points along the way. It's interesting when we get in family discussions nowadays, at least in my home, when some of my elders in the family will tell us, we just found out who we're related to.

You know, they do these searches online. It's amazing to me they never mention the horse thieves, the jailed.

[15:10] somehow, I don't know how, somehow, I think I must be related to Winston Churchill and kings of old. And I'm like, you've got to be kidding me.

And truth be told, I'm not sure it's all correct. But what this genealogy is saying, Matthew is saying, I'm going to tell you the greatest story ever told.

And I know exactly how I want it to begin. I want to call my own Christmas party together. I want to invite 42 people before I even get to verse 18 where we talk about the birth of Jesus.

And he sends out all of his invitations. And only in this list are they all present. And they've all arrived. And you can see Matthew looking at them and saying, I'm so glad you've come to my party. I'm about to tell the greatest story ever told. And you are the ones, representatively so, who have been connected to the promises of old that create a kingly and royal line to the one about which I am going to write.

[16:17] You are the ones that provide the beauty and the mathematical wonder of it. You are the ones who even amidst the list who are in my home tonight, people would look down upon.

There are some here who even rejected the one to whom Matthew is now going to celebrate. The puzzle is answered in part by the plan.

Matthew wants to do Jesus. And so he says, let me show him. Let me reveal him. Let me connect him.

Let me demonstrate to you that he is the capstone perfect birth that answers the Davidic promise. Let me tell you about Jesus. He is the one that God did all of his early first third of work to bring about. He is the one who embodies the complete middle of all you know of the past.

[17:34] He is the one who finishes off that final third of a whole. He is the one. My plan is before you. I've given you the balanced generational symmetry.

I've presented it to you with mathematical beauty and supremacy. I've laid it before you with all the scandal that will challenge those who would combat his purity.

His plan. What about his purpose? Well, if his plan was revealed in verse 17, his purpose is most clearly seen in verse 1.

Now, just take a look. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. If the plan was to introduce the main character of his narrative with as much literary style and panache as possible, the purpose is to set before his reader as early as possible, even by verse 1, the credibility of his main character.

That's what verse 1 is telling you. The man, the boy, the child, the infant, the Christ, the crucified, the resurrected one. I want to, in the first verse, lay down the credibility of his origins.

[19 : 03] The high calling of his kingship. He is the son of David. He is the son of Abraham.

Abraham. Now, why would that reveal his purpose? If you're not a reader of the scriptures yet, you would need to be wondering what is it about David and Abraham that demonstrate the credibility of what Matthew is going to claim about Jesus?

Let me put it to you in as few words as possible. To be the son of David was a big deal. God appeared to David when David wanted to do something for God.

And he said, now David, I appreciate the fact that you want to get something done for me. You want to build me a nice house that I can live in, which, by the way, I don't really need because I'm the creator of all this stuff anyway, but I know you want to build a nice house for me, David, but let me tell you something.

I'm going to build your house. I'm going to build your kingdom. I'm going to bring from your body, your seed, a descendant who will sit on a throne over my people forever.

[20 : 30] David gets a promise that through him, God's forever king will come. And so what Matthew is saying right out of the gate is, I'm going to write a book, a book about Jesus.

And if you want me to demonstrate the credibility of the main character, you need to know he is the son of David, the rightful heir of kingly promise, the sole heir of a forever kingdom, kingdom, the one who will reclaim, recapture, and make my renown known to the ends of the earth.

It's a beautiful thing so that even at the very end of Matthew's gospel, he comes back to this issue of kingly authority so that you know that the entire book of Matthew is wrapped in the packaging and the bows of kingship.

So he says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, says Jesus. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. That's the way Matthew shuts down his book. He opens his book by saying, Jesus is the king promised to David.

[22 : 06] And he closes his book saying, he's got, in the words of Jesus, I got all authority. Let me get this straight now. I got all authority over all nations.

I got all authority over all nations for all time. I got all authority over all nations for all time that you need to teach people everywhere to follow me.

He's using then a genealogy to demonstrate the credibility of Christmas as the fulfillment of God's plans for all eternity.

Now, if you're a reader of literature, you might know it through Shakespeare, but Henry V, there was a time in history where the Archbishop of Canterbury made an argument on the basis of genealogy that Henry could rightfully invade France to reclaim what was his own.

And he makes an appeal to a great, great grandmother of Henry who was also related by blood to Edward of some number who was the king of France.

[23 : 21] and on the basis of that common link, the Archbishop of Canterbury says, when you go to war against France, you are doing nothing other than reclaiming your rightful territory.

And in the same way, Matthew is saying Jesus has rightful reign over all nations. And when he comes, he comes to establish his reign far as the curse is found.

So that wherever darkness is pervading life, wherever sin has taken hold, wherever death rules in the body, wherever our ungodliness is manifested in ways that bring God's righteous wrath against us, Jesus comes as the light, as the king, as the one who has rightful domain to enter into your life and mine and say, whoa, whoa, I'm son of David.

I'm the forever king. Begin to pay attention to the purpose for which I've come. And likewise, son of Abraham.

Now, if David was God's promised forever king, Abraham was the father of faith who would bring universal blessing to the ends of the earth.

[24 : 53] You might not know Abraham, but if you go all the way back and you read Genesis chapter 12, there's a promise given to Abraham just as later there's one given to David. So these two men collide across the kaleidoscope of history as major figures to Abraham, God said, I'm going to bless you.

I know the whole world is a wreck, but through you, I'm going to bless all the families of the earth. And Abraham receives that promise by faith, not by law keeping.

So Abraham stands as the father of faith. And so from the opening line then in the genealogy, the purposes of Matthew are made plain.

I've got a book about Jesus, God's promised forever king, the one through whom all faithful must descend.

As those great figures on the landscape of Israel's history, Abraham and David, were promised by my very word. if that's the case, then get this, Christmas is not the start of something.

[26 : 07] I know we begin our church calendar year with Christmas. It's the beginning of the new church year. Christmas is not the beginning of something. Christmas is the end of something.

Well, it's really just the end of the beginning of something. Christmas is the climactic moment. Christmas is the conclusion of what God has been doing. Christmas is the interpretation of what God is doing in the world.

He's not the event. He's the interpretation of it. God put a king in the world through Jesus. One through whom anyone that wants to know God must come to him through faith.

What does that mean then for us? His puzzle which might lose us is answered by his plan.

His plan fits perfectly within Matthew's purpose so that all that remains is the implication.

[27 : 21] what are you going to do with Matthew's Jesus? Let me put it this way.

This is the aim I think of Matthew's text and this is the aim of my preaching to you this morning. To call you on this second Sunday of Advent to consider the importance and the eternal consequences of putting your life under the rule of Jesus.

And not only putting your life under the rule of Jesus but how you do that. You have got to find a way to place yourself in his family line.

Galatians. chapter 3 verses 7 to 9 says this know then that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham and the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preach the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying in you shall all the nations be blessed so then those who are of the faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith let me sit down but let me leave you with that according to Matthew you and I are to consider the importance and the eternal consequence of putting our lives under the rule of

Jesus and we've been told how to do it by faith before