

The surprising answer to God's promises

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[0 : 00] Our reading this afternoon comes from Matthew chapter 1 and we'll be reading verses 1 to 17.

Matthew 1. Matthew 1.

Matthew 1.

Matthew 2. Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat the father of voyez Joram. And Joe the father of As Jayah and As I I the father of Jotham. And Jotham the father of a WINHAHAN And a new father of a wi■cYourJe passé.

[1 : 46] And Hezekiah the father of gendner and wov Manasseh the father of Simon. And division of demons and Ab hàng has the father of just OS".

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 Shiltiel, and Shiltiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiad, and Abiad the father of Elakim, and Elakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliad, and Eliad the father of Eliezer, and Eliezer the father of Matin, and Matin the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ.

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 to Babylon to the Christ, 14 generations.

Well, yeah, why are we looking at Matthew's gospel?

Dave Corderwood was going to do the fourth talk in the Ephesians 4 Every Person Mini Ministry series. He basically had written it, and then he's sick, so we decided just to do that another time and bring Matthew's gospel forward.

[3 : 30] But why are we doing Matthew? Well, leading up to Christmas, hopefully it's a bit of motivation for us as we look at the origins of Jesus, motivation for us as we seek to share our faith with our non-Christian friends, and help us with the content of that, maybe even invite them to church if they're up for it.

But as a church, we always like to keep a gospel on the go. So we finished John's gospel earlier this year, so we're going to start Matthew's gospel. Having a gospel on the go is really good because it stops us from turning Christianity into a set of principles.

At the heart of our faith is a person. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ. So, yeah, we're starting Matthew. Before we come to God's word, why don't we pray?

Will you pray with me? Father, we do praise you for sending your son so that we can know you. We can know you truly and fully. Lord, we thank you that he became flesh so that he could identify with us and bridge the gap between us and you.

[4 : 40] We praise you for that, God. Lord, we need you for energy this afternoon, but more than energy. We need you to open up our hearts to hear your word and to receive it with faith.

So please do that for us in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, isn't a list of names such a boring way for the Apostle Matthew to introduce us to Jesus?

Jesus. Now, I know I don't actually think it's boring before I go on, but I know some in the room will be interested in family history.

And so you're just salivating over this family tree. But for most people in the room, I list the names. It's not the most exciting thing in the world.

I know my mum is obsessed with family history. She probably lists 14 generations to the deportation from England for our family. But why not just skip the first 17 verses and start at verse 18?

[5 : 45] If you look at verse 18, oh, wow, that is a much better hook into the story of Jesus. It starts with a scandal. Before Joseph and Mary came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

That's a hook. So why this list? Why does Matthew choose to start with the origins of Jesus? I think he's got a much bigger intention than just showing the legitimacy of Jesus being a descendant of King David.

As you read the names, do you see the rich story behind the names? So take the start of it. Abraham was the father. He was the father.

For most of his life, he didn't have children. Was he the father of Ishmael by Hagar? No. No. God came good on his promise.

He was the father of Isaac by Sarah. There wouldn't even be this list if it wasn't for God's intervention. You see the rich story behind it.

[6 : 56] Bo has recently taken us through the story of Isaac and Jacob and Esau. Jacob, I can't believe that God chose Jacob to receive the covenant promises and blessing.

There's this rich story in this name. Just by listing this name, Matthew is painting a picture of all God's dealings with his people throughout the whole Old Testament.

Matthew is saying the history of the world finds its climax in Jesus. It's a big claim. By opening with his family tree, Matthew is introducing a central theme in his gospel.

Fulfillment. All God's promises are fulfilled in the birth of Christ. This isn't just fulfillment of those explicit predictions of a coming Messiah, the one-liners in the Old Testament.

This is a fulfillment of the whole Old Testament. Matthew sees Jesus fulfilling the characters, the narrative, even the law itself. So take Jesus' sermon on the mount.

[8 : 05] He's on a mountain. Instead of saying, the law said this, but I say unto you, he's fulfilling the law. He's laying down the kingdom values.

We're meant to be thinking of Moses as we read the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew is introducing us with this list with the theme of fulfillment.

He wants to see that theme. He wants us to see that theme throughout the whole gospel story. I really like how one commentator I read put it.

The guy's name was R.T. France. He put it like this. He's inviting us. Matthew is inviting us to join him. Join him in his eager search for underlying patterns of fulfillment.

Which brings us to the main point of these verses. Jesus might defy people's expectations both today and back in his own day, but Jesus is the answer to all God's promises to save his people.

[9 : 07] He is the answer. Which is why we start with Abraham and David. They're the focus. Let's pause for a moment and consider the promises.

Let's consider the start of the story. After Adam and Eve sent humanity on a downward spiral of sin and curse and death, rejecting the life of blessing under God's good rule, what do we see?

We see their next offspring, Cain, killing his brother. And the world just gets worse and worse.

Depravity just spreads through the whole world. That God wipes it out with a flood.

But even that doesn't fix it. Humanity builds a tower to try and control God and control the world apart from listening to God. The first 11 chapters from the fall onwards, that is, of Genesis is just, it's bleak.

But what happens? Genesis 12, the first few verses, God makes this promise, unconditional promise. It's all on God to fulfill it to Abraham.

[10 : 20] So chapter 12, verses 1 to 3, let me read it out to you. I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you, I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. All the families of the earth shall be blessed.

So from this point on, the Bible's looking for this offspring of Abraham who's going to be a blessing to the world. And that promise gets sharpened when we come to King David.

So the promise in King David, chapter 2, 2 Samuel of, I'll start that again. The promise to King David in 2 Samuel, chapter 7.

Again, it's unconditional. It's not based on people. It's all on God, which is such good news because then we can't stuff it up or people can't stuff it up. Here's the promise to King David.

[11 : 21] When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom.

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever. And so from then on, we're looking for the son of David who's going to be the hope of the world to bring that blessing to all the families of the earth.

So do you feel the weight of Matthew declaring in these verses the book of the origins of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham? He's here. He's here.

The hope of the world. It's a big claim. It's going to bring blessing. God's kingdom forever.

If you want God's blessing, if you want to belong to God's eternal kingdom, this man is the key. So let's look at some of the details in this family tree because the good news is in the detail.

[12:38] There's some surprising things in here. How is Jesus the answer? Well, first, Jesus is God's real answer. The family tree shows that Jesus was a real person.

A few times I've looked at our three-and-a-bit-month-old baby Samuel just crying, and I have to carry him around because he can't walk yet. He's starting to roll over.

He's just so dependent on Emma for food. It's just – he's wonderful, but it's rather pathetic as well.

And every now and then I just think, Jesus was once a baby boy.

Isn't that incredible? If you consider those words in verse 16, Mary of whom Jesus was born.

Jesus is God's real answer in history, real person. Jesus is also God's final answer.

[13:44] There's things about this family tree that are a bit unexpected. So instead of following just the birth line like we normally think of the family tree, this one's really focusing on the legal rights, so kind of the head of the clans going down.

But – so Matthew makes a big deal of 14 generations in each of these three time periods. But if you have a look at the details, he skips some generations.

So he skips three kings in between King Joram and Uzziah. So before we judge the family tree based on our own standards of family tree, I think we should ask a different question.

What does Matthew want us to see? Why does he do this? Why does he align it this way? To be honest, people aren't really sure.

Some people think it's to do with the number seven, a big number in the Bible. I'm not really convinced of that. I've heard that the name David, the letters in the name, numbers-wise, add up to 14 maybe.

[15:02] I'm not sure. I think the best answer I've heard is similar. Just that there's 14 generations in the Old Testament from Abraham to David.

So David is the key. And so to kind of underscore the point, I think the next two lots of time periods are put as 14 generations as well, to kind of just put the focus on King David.

So you arrive at David from Abraham. And then it's when the monarchy disappears. So King David's line ends, it seems like, going into exile.

And then it's the son of David who turns up. We're not really sure why the 14. But obviously King David is very central. The fact that Jesus is the Messiah is repeated throughout this.

So verse 1, Jesus the Messiah. So it's also translated Christ. Verse 16, the end point is the fact that Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

[16:04] In this note, you see it again in 17 and 18. Jesus is the Messiah. So unlike Mark's gospel, which we're studying today in SWOT, where the Messiah is kind of kept a secret, in Matthew, Matthew's just going, Jesus is the Messiah, all the way through the gospel.

He's the son of David. He's making it, he's saying it loudly. So Jesus is God's real answer and Jesus is God's final answer.

The promise son of David is fulfilled. This is it. We've arrived. So around the time of Jesus, there was a group of really devout Jews who lived in a community separate from the rest of society.

So kind of what we would picture as a monastery. They were called the Qumran community. And they were really strict about the observance of God's law.

They believed that God's promised Messiah was about to turn up. And they were right. But they thought that he would turn up if his people were finally obedient to the law.

[17:18] If they were fully obedient, then the king would come. The king would be established. But if we look at the detail in these verses, something becomes really obvious quite quickly.

The Messiah did not come because of people's goodness. So in verse 2, we've got Judah and his brothers. This is the history of Israel.

How did they fare as being God's people? How loyal were they to God? Well, we see it in the detail. So the formula. So-and-so was the father of so-and-so.

If there's any bits added on to that, we should pay attention to those. In verse 6, we've got David himself.

David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. The greatest king, the greatest king, saw a married woman, took her, I would say raped her, and then sent orders for her husband to be killed. [18:35] It's shocking, isn't it? And here it is in the genealogy.

And that's not just shocking by our own modern standards. By God's law, they were capital offences. He deserved to die. That's King David.

The son of David did not turn up because of God's people's goodness. And Solomon, who showed so much promise of establishing God's kingdom, who set up the temple, he just totally flopped, didn't he?

And then the next generation, just the kingdom was split so soon afterwards. Into north and south, the people were split.

And this lineage follows David's line. But it's not like David's line were better than the northern kingdoms. In David's line, we've got Manasseh here, King Manasseh.

[19:45] He led the people in such horrible, idle worship, even sacrificing children in the fire. And then David's succession of kings ends in God's judgment, sending them off to exile, away from God's presence, away from God's blessing.

Which leaves us wondering, where is God's promised son of David? Where is he? Has God given up on his promise?

Given the people were just so sinful, generation after generation, you almost could understand if God had given up. No king sat on David's throne from the exile on.

But in that name that's hard to pronounce, Zerubbabel. It's kind of fun to say as well. Zerubbabel. In verse 12, there's hope.

It looks like King David's line is gone. But that's not the case. The prophet Haggai, at the end of the book of Haggai, listen to the hope in these words.

[21:03] Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I'm about to shake the heavens and the earth and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I'm about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations.

On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring.

For I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts. Now, it's not quite saying that he's king, but it is sounding a lot like the king.

Chosen servant. To be ruler. It's like a quasi-monarchy behind the scenes. It's not in literal history, but it's saying that God's promise continues.

He hasn't given up on it. You can't see it, but he hasn't given up on it. God's king did not show up because of his people's goodness.

[22:04] He showed up because of God's faithfulness. It's the only reason. God's faithfulness to his promises. 2,000 years of patient grace reached its climax in Jesus.

God is the only completely faithful one you will ever meet. We totally rely on his faithfulness.

This list reminds us of that. He's faithful to his promises, despite his people mucking it up. And with the sinful mess of God's people's history, you might expect God's Messiah to have nothing to do with sin.

Or sinners, that is. His kingdom was to be a kingdom of righteousness and rule with justice. You might expect him to take that Qumran community and start the kingdom there.

But the details in this genealogy tell us something otherwise. The four women who were mentioned, they've got two things in common. First, each of them have a sexually inappropriate part in the story.

[23:22] So Tamar seduces her father-in-law, Judah, to have a baby, to have an heir. Rahab is a prostitute who helps the spies enter Canaan.

You've got Ruth, who we looked at earlier this year. At best, it's just inappropriate to be at the threshing floor with Boaz at night.

And then you've got Bathsheba, although not at fault herself. She's at the centre of the biggest scandal in Jewish history. Like most people try and hide the skeletons in their family history.

In the Messiah's family history, it's like they're underlined. As we've seen, King David himself is the biggest scandal.

God said to King David in 2 Samuel 12, 13, The Lord has put away your sin.

[24 : 30] You shall not die. How is that possible? The Lord has put away your sin.

You shall not die. It's a lot of grace. How is that possible? How can God continue to bless David? How can the Messiah associate with sinners? I think Matthew is opening up that question for us. And wanting us to follow the story to its end.

To find out how. Someone must die. The surprising thing is it's the Messiah himself.

What's scandalous about God's Messiah is that he won't associate with good people. He associates with sinners. So Emma reminded me just a few days ago of a quote.

[25 : 37] I can't remember who said it. But I'm not sure what I did that or my attitude that prompted her to say this. But we only bring to God our sin which he saves us from.

And when I heard that, I was like, oh, I know you're right. I was just, it annoyed me. I think it annoyed me because it confronted my desire to do something to deserve God's blessing.

The Pharisees had the same problem with Jesus. So later in the story, we're told that Jesus is having dinner at a tax collector's house.

Sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? On hearing this, Jesus said, it is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick.

I've been come to call the righteous but sinners. Sinners are invited to the king's table. Those who think they're good are going to miss out.

[26 : 47] Who do you write off as being too sinful for Jesus to save? I wonder if we see Bible knowledge and being socially respectable as better marks of Christian maturity than confessing our sin.

Messiah associates with sinners. The genealogy hints us towards this and we're going to see more of it in his gospel. The second thing about these four women who are mentioned is that none of them are descendants of Abraham.

They aren't Jews. They aren't heirs of the promise, the covenant blessings. But here they are in the Messiah's family tree. The Jews thought that given their many privileges, which were many, that somehow they had an ownership of God.

But they were always to be a light for the world. God's Messiah has a much bigger idea of who his people are. The four non-Israelite women in the story, in the Old Testament, they're praised for finding their refuge in God.

We see this in the story later on when a Roman centurion shows greater faith than all the Jews that Jesus encounters.

[28 : 24] And Jesus says to him and to those around, I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside. It's not what we expect. The Messiah came for all people, all his people from all nations.

So Emma and I got to visit an Aboriginal church a couple of years ago in Campbelltown. And the pastor there, Michael Duckett, he showed us some of his paintings.

And this, I wanted to share one with you just to, it struck me. It really moved me, really. And I wanted to show you it. Just to show how Christ just is the Messiah of all people.

So let me explain what symbolism is here. So you can see the cross in the centre there, shaped in boomerangs. Then you've got the night sky with the stars, which is meant to remind you of the promise to Abraham of descendants numbering the stars in the sky.

[29 : 41] You've got the three circles which are connected in the sky, which is to represent the Trinity. Then you've got just the chaos on the earth with all the different colours and the strokes on the earth.

That's meant to represent the chaos caused by sin in this fallen world. And you've got that little, down the bottom left of the black U shape.

The U shape is the imprint someone leaves when they're sitting on the ground. So it represents a human being. But it's filled in with black because of our sinfulness. But you've got the white dots around the black U shape to represent we're still all in God's image.

But then, if you can see it, through the middle, through the cross, you've got this river of blood, this red stroke all the way through the painting to represent Jesus' death.

And you've got another U shape, another human being who's in the blood and made white in the blood. And you've got the little dots coming down from the Trinity representing being given the Holy Spirit.

[30 : 48] I love it. It's such deep theology in that painting. Jesus is not the Messiah of just the Jews. He's not just the Messiah of Western culture. He's not going to be put in a box of any culture. He is the Messiah for all cultures, all peoples.

He'll stop at nothing less. He says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.

That's where this gospel is going to end. Jesus gets the victory. Matthew is preparing us to meet the Messiah that breaks the bounds of how we expect God to work.

The Jews had their own ideas of what the Messiah should be like and who deserved to be in the kingdom and what they needed saving from. And when they met Jesus, they wanted nothing to do with him.

[31 : 58] But Matthew is saying God's promises have all been answered in Jesus. And the shocking but good news is bound up in the meaning of his name, which we'll look at more next week.

The angel told Joseph in verse 21, you shall call his name Jesus or he will save his people from their sins. He will only associate with sinners.

We need those same words spoken to us that were spoken to King David. The Lord has put away your sins. You shall not die.

Our Messiah invites us not to rest in our goodness, but in his faithfulness to his promises. Jesus calls us to come to me.

All who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for yourselves.

[33 : 14] Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, we praise you.

That you would, though you're holy, that you would come down and become one of us. And that you would associate with us despite our sin.

Lord, we thank you that you don't leave us in our sin. But Lord, we thank you that you do associate with us. Lord, I pray for each one of us that you would humble us.

That we would admit our need for our saviour. Lord, as we go through Matthew, break open the boxes that we've tried to put Jesus in.

Show us afresh just how beautiful Jesus is as the one who came to save us from our sin. Who came to save the whole world and bring the blessing to all the families of the earth.

[34 : 27] Lord, warm our hearts as a church to want to share this more and more to make your name known. Yeah, we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.