

(1) Meet the ancestors

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[0 : 00] If you'd like to turn to Matthew chapter 1, verses 1 to 17. I will attempt to get all the names right.

Okay, so starting with verse 1. 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.

Ram the father of Aminadab, which I can't say. And the same chap the father of Nashon. And Nashon the father of Salmon. Sammon 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.

[1 : 13] And Solomon the father of Rehoboam. And Rehoboam the father of Abijah. Abijah the father of Asaph. And Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat the father of Joram.

And Joram the father of Uzziah. And Uzziah the father of Jotham. And Jotham the father of Ahaz. Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah the father of Manasseh. Manasseh the father of Amos.

Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah the father of Jeconia and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon.

Jeconia was the father of Shealtiel. And Shealtiel the father of Zerubabel. And Zerubabel the father of Abiud. And Abiud the father of Eliakim.

And Eliakim the father of Azor. Ezor the father of Zadok. And Zadok the father of Achim. And Achim the father of Eluid. Eluid the father of Eliza. Eliza the father of Mathan.

[2 : 17] And Mathan the father of Jacob. Jacob the father of Joseph. The husband of Mary. And whom Jesus Christ was born. Who is called 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.

14 generations. Well we don't usually have prize giving on Sunday morning. But if we did. I think I should have brought myself a Mars bar.

In order to give James. But I haven't. So I'm sorry about that. Let's pray shall we. Thank you. Thank you. Heavenly Father.

We praise you very much. That the birth of Jesus. And his coming into the world. Was a real event. And we pray now. That as we look at this opening. Of Matthew chapter 1.

[3 : 19] We pray that we would hear you. Speaking loud and clear. As we see the significance. Of the birth. Of that baby. 2,000 years ago. And we ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well we're starting a new sermon series today. Looking at these first four chapters. Of Mark's Gospel.

Over the next five weeks. The aim of the series. Is to take a fresh look. At the events. Of that first Christmas story. I guess all of us have sort of favorite parts.

Of the Christmas story. But it's easy in that. To miss the big picture. Of what is going on at Christmas. And that is our aim. Over these next five weeks. As we look at Matthew. Chapters 1 to 4. Because I guess it's true to say. Isn't it? That a single event. Rarely tells us. The whole story. Of what is going on. Take the arrest of Harry Redknapp.

[4 : 18] The manager of Portsmouth Football Club. On Wednesday morning. Now people are arrested. All the time. So simply by the one event. You wouldn't know would you. Of the tale of corruption.

And intrigue. That the police have been. Investigating. Or take the fact. That the previous week. The government revealed. That it had lost. A couple of digital computer disks.

Not particularly noteworthy. In itself. You may think. Until that is. The government also admitted.

That on the disk. Were the names. And bank account details. And national insurance details.

Of seven million families. Many of us included. I guess. Because one event. Rarely tells. The whole story. Which is exactly why.

Matthew begins his gospel. With Jesus' family tree. Or genealogy. As he calls it. Because of course. If he simply started. With the birth of Jesus.

[5 : 13] In a stable. It would just be one event. So instead. He wants us to grasp. The significance. Of that one event. To see the coming of Jesus.

In the context. Of the whole of human history. Now notice. That Matthew. Arranges his. Arrange. Has arranged. Jesus' genealogy.

In three sections. Each one. With fourteen generations. Have a look at verse seventeen. So all the generations. From Abraham to David. Were fourteen generations.

From David to the deportation. To Babylon. Fourteen generations. And from the deportation. To Babylon. To the Christ. Fourteen generations. And notice.

That each of those. Three sections. Ends. With a person. With an individual. Abraham. David. And the Christ. And notice too.

[6 : 08] That it's those three individuals. With whom. Matthew kicks off. In verse one. He mentions them. Right at the beginning. The book of the genealogy. Of Jesus Christ. The son of David.

The son. Of Abraham. Because those three names. As far as Matthew is concerned. Hold the key. To understanding precisely.

Who Jesus is. And to seeing his significance. As he comes. Into the world. Now you'll see. There's an outline. On the back of today's. Service sheet.

You might like to turn to it. Do take notes. Many people find that helpful. So they can look at it again. Later on. First of all. We see that Jesus. Is the son of Abraham.

Who will bless. The nations. Now many of us. Saw back in our study groups. Back in September. Remember. That Abraham. Abraham was the nomadic Arab.

[7 : 04] Whom God singled out. Two thousand years. Before the birth. Of Jesus. He had nothing to commend us. Before God. Just like the rest of us. But was spoken to by God.

And was given. A wonderful promise. That I put there. On the outline. Let's just look at it together. This is the promise. God gave him. Go from your country. And your kindred.

And your father's house. To the land. That I will show you. And I will make you. I will make of you. A great nation. And I'll bless you. And make your name great.

So that you'll be a blessing. I'll bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you. I'll curse. And in you. All the families of the earth.

Shall be blessed. Now you may remember. That up to that point. In the Bible. Things in human history. Had gone from bad. To worse.

[7 : 59] The beautiful world. That God had created. And made. Had been turned sour. By human rebellion. Mankind had attempted. To dethrone God.

And to put himself. Where God alone should be. And the result was disaster. As Adam and Eve. Were expelled. From the garden of Eden. Under the judgments.

Of God. And after that. The downward cycle. Of rebellion. Only got worse. And we found ourselves. Asking the question. How on earth. Is God going to restore.

This world. In rebellion. To himself. How can the nations. Receive. The blessing. Of living. In relationship. With God again.

Rather than under. His judgment. Or the answer. Through this promise. All covenant. To Abraham. Abraham. In you. All the families.

[8 : 54] Of the earth. Shall be blessed. And notice. That point. Is reinforced. In the way. Which Matthew. Arranges. The genealogy. Notice.

That verse 2. Establishes. The pattern. Abraham. Is the father of Isaac. And Isaac. The father of Jacob. And Jacob. The father of Judah. And his brothers. But then notice.

How in verse 3. The pattern. Is broken. And Judah. The father of Perez. And Zerah. By Tamar. Now in the first century.

Any self-respecting Jew. Would have choked on their cornflakes. At that point. Because Tamar. Is not the kind of person. You'd expect to find. In the family tree. Of Jesus. You can read all about her. In Genesis chapter 38. Later on. She was the daughter-in-law. Of Judah. She was abused terribly. On one occasion. He mistook her. For a prostitute.

[9 : 51] And by her. He fathered. The twin boys. Zerah. And Perez. Mentioned. In verse 3. Well in verse 4. The pattern. Is resumed again.

But is interrupted. In verse 5. Salmon. The father of Boaz. By. Rahab. Rahab. Why. She wasn't a Jew at all. She was a Canaanite. And she was a prostitute. We read about her. Some of us. In Joshua chapter 2. Last year. She was the lowest of the low.

As far as any self-respecting Jew. Was concerned. And then there's verse 5. There's also Ruth. She wasn't a Jew either. She was from Moab.

And yet she became the great grandmother. Father. Of King David. Well I wonder if you can begin to see what Matthew is getting at. The promise was that through Abraham.

[10 : 50] Blessing would come to all the nations. To people like Rahab. To people like Ruth. That God's blessing would come to anyone.

Yes. Even the despised. Like Rahab. Or the despised. Like Tamar. It's why in Matthew chapter 2. Which we'll look at in a couple of weeks time.

Matthew records the baby Jesus. Being visited by Magi. By wise men. Who themselves weren't Jews. They were from the nations. It's why in Matthew chapter 8.

Matthew records Jesus. Commending a non-Jewish Roman centurion. For his faith. Jesus says to him. Truly I tell you. With no one in Israel.

Have I found such faith. Such faith. It's why at the end of his gospel. Matthew records the great commission. Of Jesus.

[11 : 49] I put it there on the outline. As the risen Jesus. Says to his disciples. Go therefore. And make disciples. Of all nations.

The despised. Like Tamar. The godless. Like Rahab. The foreigner. Like Ruth. Jesus is the son of Abraham.

Who will bless the nations. Now over the last couple of weeks. I've come across a number of people. Wondering. Who it is. They should be inviting along. To carol services.

As we heard earlier. We've got one next week. Another one. The week after. And I'm glad that some more invitations have arrived. But I think it's fairly clear. Isn't it? Anyone.

God's blessing is for anyone. The nations. Let's not write off someone. Just because like Ruth. They are brought up in a different culture. Let's not write off someone.

[12 : 48] Just because like Rahab. Their life looks as if they're a million miles away. From ever being interested. In Jesus. And of course it means that Jesus has come for us too.

Whoever we are. Whatever our background. If you're not a Christian here today. We're delighted you're here. And I hope we can see that this promise means that there is nothing in your past or your present.

That means that Jesus is not interested in you. No matter how much you've messed up your life. Jesus has come for you too. Which of course is why.

Christians have so much to celebrate. At Christmas. So then first of all. Jesus is the son of Abraham. Who will bless the nations. Secondly.

Secondly. Jesus is the son of David. Who will rule forever. Because as we read on in the Old Testament. We also discover. That God's plan to bless the nations.

[13 : 46] Involves a king. A king who will rule his people. Forever. As with Abraham. God chooses it seems the most unlikely candidate.

He chooses a shepherd boy. David. And God makes a promise. Or a covenant. With him. As well. I put it there on the outline. To Samuel chapter 7.

Verses 12 and 13. Let's just have a look at it together. When your days are fulfilled. And you lie down with your fathers. I'll raise up. Your offspring after you.

Who shall come from your body. And I'll establish his kingdom. He shall build a house. For my name. And I'll establish the throne of his kingdom. Forever.

Here you see is the promise. That a descendant of David. Will rule forever. And therefore at one level. This next paragraph in the genealogy.

[14:44] Verses 6 to 11. Is a search for that one descendant. But actually we search in vain. And again it's the way in which the pattern is broken.

That gets us thinking. So have a look at verse 6. Beginning of the paragraph. And David was the father of Solomon. By the wife of Uriah. Now more choking on cornflakes at this point. Uriah. With whose wife Bathsheba. King David. Fell in love. Uriah. And the murderer. Uriah. Whom David had killed.

So that he could take Bathsheba. To be his wife. In Uriah we see King David. The adulterer. The murderer. And the deceiver.

Which really sets the tone. For the rest of the paragraph. Because as we look on at that list of kings. In verses 7 to 11. Why they look increasingly less likely. Less like the promised king.

[15:46] Who will rule forever. So if you just skim down the Solomon. She presided over Israel. At the height of its power as a nation. He himself was fabulously wealthy.

Wise. Yet hopelessly weak. With divided loyalties. Marrying. Unbelieving. Women. And as for the other kings there.

They go from bad to worse. Yes there were some better kings. Like Hezekiah. And Josiah. But on their death. The sort of downward spiral each time. Simply continued. Manasseh.

Mentioned there in verse 10. Would have made a Saddam Hussein. Look the model of tolerance. And moderation. I rather like the story of the American family.

That I came across recently. Who were keen to trace their family tree. So they hired a genealogist. To do some research for them. Who unfortunately discovered the truth.

[16:44] About great uncle Zach. Great uncle Zach had been a convicted murderer. Held on death row. And electrocuted. In the electric chair.

Well it is a fairly respectable family. So they asked the genealogist. If he could simply kind of airbrush out. That particular detail. In the family history. When he wrote up his report.

Well this is what he wrote. On the paragraph. On great uncle Zach. Uncle Zach. Worked for the Department of Justice. For a number of years.

After which. He was given a chair. In applied electronics. At a well-known government institution. He became quite attached to it. Held there by very strong ties.

Until eventually. He died. His death came as quite a shock. Well there is no attempt is there.

[17:44] In Matthew chapter 1. To conceal. The more unsavoury characters. In the family tree of Jesus. These kings. Go from bad to worse.

As God's people. End up in exile. Verse 11. Deported. Kicked out of the land of Israel. That God had taken them to. And so we're bound to ask the question.

Where is this son of David. Who will rule forever. And Matthew wants us to know. That in Jesus. This king. Has arrived.

Jesus is. The Christ. Literally the anointed one. That's what the word Christ. Means. A king.

Descended from David. Who will rule forever. Who will rule rightly.

Who will rule justly. So unlike most of those kings. In verses 7 to 11. And again we see that very clearly. At the end of Matthew's gospel.

[18:40] Matthew 28. Once again I put it there on the outline. As Jesus says. Having risen from the dead. As he says to his disciples. All authority in heaven. And on earth.

Has been given to me. Behold. I am with you always. To the ends. Of the age. Now it seems to me. That's a very challenging thing. Isn't it? Because. It's so easy to slip. I think. Into a sort of form of Christianity. Which is really all about me. Which thinks of Jesus. As my savior.

My friend. There to sort out my problems. As if what matters in this world. Is my agenda. And what I happen to want to do. With my life. But of course.

That is not genuine Christianity. At all. Jesus didn't come. To sort out our problems. And to fulfill.

Our own agendas. As we happen. To see them. I think it was President Kennedy.

[19:37] Wasn't it? Who woke up a whole generation. Of Americans. In the 1960s. With the sound bite. Ask not what your country. Can do for you. But what you can do.

For your country. And I guess. As we approach a new year. In a few weeks time. Many of us. Will have our own agendas. Our own ambitions.

Our own plans. But of course. The challenge is. Are we pursuing our own agenda. In life. Or are we pursuing. Jesus agenda.

Are we expecting him. To kind of fit in. With what we want to do. Or are we seeking. To serve him. Are we seeking to. Are we expecting him. To mould what he is doing. Around our lives. When of course. We should be moulding. What we want to do. Around him. Yes. If Jesus is the son of David.

[20 : 34] Who rules forever. Then what matters. Is his agenda. In life. And lining up. Our own lives. With what he is doing. So Jesus is the son of Abraham.

Who will bless the nations. Jesus is the son of David. Who will rule forever. Thirdly. Jesus is the Christ. Who will rescue. From judgment.

Now the exile. Or deportation. As Matthew calls it. In verse 12. Came at the lowest point. In Old Testament history. As God's people were expelled. From the land of promise.

That he had taken them to. By the year 586 BC. They had been invaded. By the Babylonian Empire. Most of the royalty. Had been put to death. The majority of the population.

Had been taken off. To Babylon. The city of Jerusalem. And its temple. Destroyed. Flattened. I guess the nearest.

[21 : 35] We could have ever come to it. Would have been. If the. Invasion plans. Of Nazi Germany. Had succeeded. In the spring. Of 1940. If Churchill.

And the royal family. And the senior politicians. And senior civil servants. Had all been. Executed. Parliament destroyed. Buckingham Palace destroyed. And all the.

Youth. And the most promising people. In the country. Had been deported. To concentration camps. In mainland Europe. Europe. Or in the same way. The exile. Appeared to be the end of the world.

As far as. God's people were concerned. No king. No temple. No homelands. And yes. It's true. That 70 years later. A remnant. Did return.

A small number returns. Under. Zerubbabel. Who is mentioned there. In verses 12 and 13. Yes. Under him. The walls of Jerusalem. Were rebuilt. Under him.

[22 : 30] The temple. Was rebuilt. But it was pathetic. Feeble. Compared with what. The city of Jerusalem. Had been. And compared with the temple.

Under King Solomon. Indeed. Those who attended. The opening ceremony. Of that second temple. Were told they wept. When they compared it. With the previous temple.

Because it looked so. Pathetic. And things didn't get any better. In fact. That list of descendants there. In verses 13 to 15.

After Zerubbabel. Abiud. Eliakim. And so on. None of them. Get a single mention. In the Old Testament. Zerubbabel is the last one.

To be named. Which I take it is precisely the point. Because they were nobodies. Not even worthy of a footnote. In Old Testament.

[23 : 27] History. And therefore you see. Whereas. And therefore. The Old Testament ends. With God's people. Yes they are back in the land. They are no longer in physical exile.

So to speak. But they are still in spiritual exile. They are still under God's judgment. The prophet Isaiah had promised.

That one day God would come. And rescue his people. That one day he would come. And establish his kingdom. That God would deal. With the problem of his people's sin. And rebellion.

And rescue them from judgment. But as we get to the end. Of the Old Testament. They are still waiting. For that day to come. And so once again.

In this third section. The turning point. If you like. Comes where the pattern. Is broken. Have a look at verse 16. And Jacob. The father of Joseph.

[24 : 22] And Joseph. The father. But no. It doesn't go like that. Doesn't it? Does it? It's Jacob. The father of Joseph. The husband of Mary. Of whom Jesus was born.

Who is called. The Christ. Here is a hint. Of an unnatural. Birth. Of the Christ. Here at last.

Is the one. Who will rescue. From sin. And judgment. As the angel. Says to Joseph. In Matthew 1. 21. She will bear.

A son. And you shall call. His name. Jesus. For he will save. His people. From their sins. Jesus. Is the Christ. The anointed one. The king. Who will rule forever. Who will rescue. From sin. Who will rescue. From judgment. Who will bring blessing.

[25 : 20] To the nations. Now over the next few weeks. As we look at. The rest of Matthew.

Chapters 1 to 4. We're going to see. What that involves. And what that looks like. But I want to

finish.

If I may. Just with two final. Applications. For us this morning. First of all. It's fairly clear. Isn't it? That we need to understand. The Old Testament. If we are to grasp. The real significance. Of Jesus Christ. The Christmas story. Doesn't start. With the birth. Of one little baby. In a stable. 2,000 years ago. It starts.

With the promise. To Abraham. 2,000 years. Earlier. 4,000 years ago. For us. Because of course. Without the Old Testament. We can't really understand.

The world we live in. A beautiful world. Where everything was good. But is now a full and distorted world. Where even in Dulwich. Yes there is. There is purpose and joy.

[26 : 16] But also there is pain. And meaninglessness. Without the Old Testament. We can't understand. The significance of the blessing. That Jesus brings.

Because as we look through. This list of kings. We can only despair. Can't we? As we find ourselves thinking. Well. How on earth. Will this blessing. That God has promised. Ever come. Until that is. The arrival. We have the arrival. Of the king. Who will rule. Forever. Yes we need to understand. Our Old Testaments.

If we are to grasp. The significance. Of Jesus. I hope that's an encouragement. To the many of us. Who are in study groups. At the moment. Studying. A Bible overview. Over the course. Of the year. This year. To persevere in that. Just as we see. How significant. Jesus is. As we'll see. Gradually. How he fulfills. All the promises.

[27 : 11] Of the Old Testament. But then the second. Final application. That God keeps his promises. It is extraordinary here. Isn't it? Where we see.

It was 2,000 years. Between the promise to Abraham. And the coming of Jesus. It was 1,000 years. Between the promise to David. And the coming of Jesus.

It was 600 years. Between the exile. And the coming. Of Jesus. But now. In the birth of Jesus. God is about to. Fulfill.

All those. Promises. Now of course. Part of the privilege. We have. Of being. Christians. In the 21st century. Is that we live.

After. The birth. Of Jesus. We can look back. Can't we? On those 4,000 years. And see how God. Has kept. All those promises. But of course.

[28 : 04] We can still find ourselves. As I was asking the questions. We look ahead. Well yes. There are still promises. To be fulfilled. Will Jesus really. Come. As we look at our world.

It looks so permanent. Doesn't it? As one year. Follows on from another. As we celebrate Christmas. Yet again. As we go through. The same routines in life. Day after day. Month after month. Year after year.

Will Jesus really come? Today is Advent Sunday. When traditionally. The church looks ahead. To the return. Of Jesus. But will there really be. A new heavens.

And a new earth. As God has promised. Will there really be a day. When one day. Every knee. Will bow before Jesus. As Lord. When one day. Every tongue.

Will confess. That he. Is Lord. Why yes. Because God. Keeps his promises. Let's pray together.

[29 : 00] And just a few moments.

For quiet reflection. Before we pray. the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David the son of Abraham heavenly father we praise you very much for the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ thank you for showing us this morning the significance of his coming into the world to bring blessing to the nations the king who will rule forever to rescue from sin and judgment heavenly father we're sorry when we live our lives as if our own agendas are what really matter and we pray that as we plan ahead as we think about our own ambitions our own priorities that they would be those of the one who is king forever and we ask it for his namesake

Amen