

The Promised King

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[0 : 00] There should be an outline, a very simple one, that you might have picked up on your way in, and that might help you to follow along as well. And we are going to look at this genealogy, this list of names for tonight, as a way of understanding who Jesus is.

Now, I've always been very tempted to try and trace my ancestry. Perhaps try out Ancestry.com, you've seen those on SBS TV, have you?

To see how far back I can go. I don't know, has anyone done that? No? Yeah. Do you know how much the pricing structure is?

Probably charging a lot and not giving much information, probably. But I've always been interested to see if I had any famous forebears, right? Because after all, the surname Chu, I don't know whether you're familiar, is the same as Zhou in the Mandarin equivalent.

And the Zhou dynasty was actually the first and longest in China that united the kingdom at the very start. So who knows?

[1 : 18] I may have royal blood. Now, sadly, I'm not famous enough for SBS to do this research for me. Not like Manu there. And, you know, put me on their program, Who Do You Think You Are?

So, I don't know. Maybe one day I'll get on to Ancestry.com. Well, people are attracted to their genealogy, aren't they? Because they want to understand their own history and find clues, perhaps to their own personality.

Maybe some things in their family, some patterns in their life. Now, if you, however, you're part of the royal family, then genealogy is even more important, isn't it?

Because it is your sole claim to sit on the throne, isn't it? And something like this is the reason why Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy.

It's true that Jesus needed to be a descendant of Abraham and David. But actually, Matthew is not giving us the genealogy to look back, but rather to look forward.

[2 : 27] And that's why the list actually begins with Abraham and then moves forward to Jesus. So, the list is meant to be forward-looking, not backward.

Now, let me explain a bit more. Because if you look at the British monarchy, for example, every name in the royal genealogy was a king or a queen, right?

So, King Charles, he's a king. His mother, Queen Elizabeth, she was a queen. Before her, King George, King Edward.

We won't talk about King Edward, but King Edward. And then all the way back to Henry VIII and even beyond that. Every one of those names were kings or queens.

But with the genealogy here, not every name actually is noteworthy. Yes, Abraham and David were a few significant women, get a mention.

[3 : 30] But that's a story for another day. But there are also names in there that actually don't mean much. And it's good on Ruth and George for reading them. But actually, they're just names.

Historians have even noted that there are probably missing links in the genealogy. And some generations have been skipped. So, Matthew's aim here is not to be historically precise, even though he is, as though he was trying to prove Jesus is of the right lineage, which he is.

He was trying to show something more as well, something else. What is it? Well, King Lee explained at the start with the reading that the list is broken up into three distinct sections.

And you can see that in your Bible. And so the markers at the start of each section is actually noteworthy. Namely, Abraham, David, and the time of exile.

Because at each of these significant points in Israel's history, we get something that God does to reveal his plans for Israel and the world.

[4 : 40] What he does is make promises and prophecies that is then fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. So, tonight I want to actually go through some of these promises.

First, the promises to Abraham, which we find in Genesis. That is the first book in the Bible. So, in chapter 12, verse 1 to 3, you don't have to look up. It's on the slide.

Look up at the Bible, that is. You can look up at the slides. The Lord had said to Abraham, Go from your country, your people, and your father's household 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 the people on earth will be blessed through you.

This is the point at which, as King Lee said, the nation of Israel was born, when God promised to make her into a great nation and to bless her.

[5 : 40] But there was a problem. If you read in Genesis, Abraham was having a difficulty giving birth. Well, he wasn't having difficulty giving birth. His wife was. But he was having a difficulty having a son.

And so God assured Abraham with a further promise in chapter 15, verse 4 and 5. On the slide. Then the word of the Lord came to him. This man, that is, he was talking about Lot, his nephew, who was traveling with him.

This man is not to be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir. He took him outside and said, look up at the sky and count the stars, if indeed you can count them.

Then he said to them, so shall your offspring be. Now, here we see that the descendants of Abraham will be many. But at the very end, when the word offspring is used, which is also translated seed, that is the same word that God used when Adam and Eve were cursed for their sin.

Because in amongst that curse was this promise regarding the serpent in chapter 3 and verse 15. I will put enmity between you and the woman, that is, between you the serpent and the woman, and between your offspring, that word seed, and hers.

[6 : 56] He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. God's promise that there will be an offspring of Eve, a seed, that will crush Satan's head, even as the seed himself is wounded.

The word seed and offspring here and throughout is always in the singular, not plural. One person, not many.

So, this is the first layer of promise that God is giving to Israel, that there will be a great nation, and through the seed, one person, seed of Abraham, Satan's head will be crushed.

So, life chugs along from Abraham, and then we get to David. And as we know, David was chosen as God's king of Israel, who, unlike King Saul just before him, was demanded by the people.

David was chosen by God. And in David's reign, God makes another significant promise. So, we jump all the way now into the middle of the Old Testament to 2 Samuel, chapter 7.

[8 : 07] And it's at this point that King David's reign was finally secure, right? His desire then was to build a temple fit for God. He, David, was living in a palace made with beautiful cedar, while God, or rather the ark, which symbolized God's presence, was still in a tent.

So, it's a bit similar that when one day you might build your own mansion in Doncaster, maybe, on a huge block like this. But then, you end up putting your parent-in-law, when they come to visit, in a shack down in the backyard, right?

A bit like that. Don't you ever do that, all right? Just in case. So, God's response, though, was to say, Yes, I recognize your desire, David, but I'm going to make you a promise instead.

And so, on the next few verses, he says, When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring, there you have that word again, the seed, to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom.

He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Now, David's son, Solomon, does go on to build a physical temple for the Lord, of which you can see that today, the Western Wall in Jerusalem, they're still standing.

[9 : 35] But God had other bigger plans for David. He's saying here that he will raise up David's offspring, who will build not a physical house, but a spiritual dwelling for God's name.

And this offspring will be a king forever. Thus, it's not surprising that expectations in Israel are heightened, right? For this promise to be fulfilled.

And so, you know, if you're reading along this genealogy in Matthew, for the first time, your anticipation might be, Oh, okay, 14 generations, we get to David, and after 14 generations, yeah, we'll get this king, wouldn't we?

But no, instead, as we heard, what did we get? We got an exile. That is, the people were driven out of the land in which God had given them. So, not only is there not a king, they didn't even have their own land anymore.

They were no longer a nation, homeless. So, has God failed in His promise at that point? Well, no, because God had warned as well in other promises, which we haven't looked at, that if Israel rebelled against God and started to worship idols, then this would be the consequence.

[10 : 59] They will be punished through exile, even though God also promised that one day, He will bring them back. And so, that's exactly what verse 12 in Matthew chapter 1 says, because it says, after the exile to Babylon, right?

Israel did return. Now, there are so many promises given by God during this time, during the exile, that it's not possible for me to go through them today. They weren't given to individuals by and large, but they were given to the nation as a whole.

And many of these you will find at the end of the Old Testament, what we call the books by major and minor prophets. And of the major prophets, if you look at the contents list of your Bible, there are four major prophets there, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

If you look at all those four major prophets, all of them speak about a time that God promises would happen after the return from exile.

And next week, if you come again, we'll focus on one of these promises in Jeremiah, which is really what is spoken of in the next section in Matthew's Gospel.

[12 : 15] And as to the prophecies, they don't just concern a return from exile, those promises also foreshadow that God will raise up a king to rule forever, just as he promised David.

And now he's given a title of Messiah, or in the Greek, Christ. And that's where Jesus Christ, his name comes from. It's not his surname, it's actually his title.

And in his introduction, Matthew here is trying to show that all these promises that are in the Old Testament look forward and are fulfilled now in this person of Jesus.

Because Jesus, Matthew says, is the promised Messiah. Promises given to Abraham, the promises given to David, the promises given to Israel during the exile, every Old Testament promise, in fact, given by God, is now fulfilled in the coming of Jesus.

And you can see that clearly when you look back in the verses because even right there in verse 1, it says this is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the promised Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham.

[13 : 25] And then when you go all the way to the end of our passage in verse 16 and 17, when Ruth read that at the end, Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah, promised.

Thus there were 14 generations, all from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile, and 14 from the exile to the Messiah. So you can see Matthew is focused on telling us that this Jesus is the Messiah that the Old Testament is talking about.

Now, some of you might be wondering what's this thing to do with the 14 generations. There are a few theories around it, but it could be that seven being a symbol of completeness, like, you know, seven days of creation, that sort of thing.

We have six lots of seven generations. Right? So you guys, six sevens, there you go. All right? Matthew thought of it before, whichever basketballer did.

And it is, I think, to then signify that Jesus then, when he comes, is the start of the seventh and final generation. That is, he brings God's plan of salvation and history even, to completion.

[14 : 40] He is it. He is the final and ultimate goal of God. So Jesus then is the promised king of Christmas, God's chosen and anointed Messiah.

In fact, if you read through Matthew's Gospel, and I encourage those of you who haven't done it to do so, you will see that Matthew, at key points in the entire narrative, he will remind us with the following words.

Or he will quote, when he says something has happened, he will say, this is occurring in order to fulfill what was written in the Scriptures. And his point, again, is to say, every promise that was made in the Old Testament is now being fulfilled by what Jesus does or is.

So you see, the Bible is not just a book about God's commands, right? About what's right and what's wrong. Yes, there are parts of it that relate to instructions from God.

But just as importantly, the Bible is also full of God's promises given to us thousands of years ahead of time, repeated over and over again, so that when finally, what God has planned for history comes to pass, we can't miss it.

[16 : 02] But we can have full confidence that actually, this is from God. Jesus coming as a child during Christmas is the start of bringing all of God's promises to fruition.

And of course, when we come to Good Friday and Easter, when Jesus dies on the cross to save us, we see then God bring His promise, plan, all of His promises to then final completion.

His birth is the start of these promises being fulfilled and then His death and resurrection is the completion of all these promises. Now, if your parents made you a promise in passing, you know, they like to do all these things sometimes, don't they?

You might not take too much notice of it if it's just a one-time only thing, right? Although I know some children that will hold their parents to every single word they say. But if it's just one time, you might go, oh yeah, okay, they were just saying, may not mean it.

But if, however, a parent keeps making the same promise over and over again, consistently, over a long time, then it creates a heightened expectation, doesn't it?

[17:17] You know that they're serious, that they want their children to know it's serious. And you know that, yeah, they're intent on going through with it. Friends, what we have in the Bible is God doing exactly that, making promises repeatedly, over and over, consistently, layer upon layer, because God is serious about bringing this plan to pass.

And He rightly wants to raise our expectations and hopes so that when finally He does bring it to pass, by sending His Son Jesus into the world to take our place on the cross, we should rightly sit up and notice and go, oh, He finally is doing it.

We should treat it seriously because God has taken the time and effort and the patience to tell us over and over and over again, over thousands of years, just exactly what He's going to do, which He did.

And friends, these are not just promises to Israel because even though you may not be a Jew, it applies to you as well. God had the whole world in mind when He gave those promises in the Bible.

Go back, if you can, to Genesis chapter 12 on the slide again. And if you look at that promise, that very first promise, the first part, that's for Abraham and the Jews because it says, I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.

[18:49] But then look at the second part. That's for each and every one of us because it says there, I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse.

And then He says, all peoples on earth, that's us, will be blessed through Abraham or through the seed of Abraham.

So, to bless Abraham here is to believe in Jesus, to recognize Abraham as the blessing, or rather recognize Jesus as the blessing that comes from Abraham.

So, when we believe in Jesus as God's Messiah, God says here that I will bless you. Conversely, rejecting Jesus is to curse Abraham and that brings God's judgment upon us.

But overall, He says, my plan, my intent is to bless all peoples through the son of Abraham, the son of David, Jesus, the Messiah.

[19:51] And Jesus Himself gives us this promise in another gospel. So, many of you will be familiar with John 3.16. It says, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

The words here used may be different to Genesis, so believe instead of bless, condemn, not curse, but the point is still the same, isn't it?

And so, friends, if you are new to the Christian faith and you've been invited here today to check it out, then let me urge you to take God's promises here seriously. please come check it out in the Bible so that you can make an informed choice.

In fact, early next year in February we'll be running a course to do just that. It's called Christianity Explored. We hold it on a Wednesday night and it runs over nine weeks. So, if that's you, why don't you think about joining us?

[21 : 06] If you like, please head down to the welcome desk after the service and grab one of this. it's got an invitation in there with a QR code inside to register, but we also are giving out the free Gospel of Mark for you to start reading.

I really can't overemphasize how important this is because God has meticulously prepared all of this for us by revealing His plan through His promises in the Bible.

And it's all here, isn't it? Right in front of you in that book, in that black book, the Bible. The Bible itself helps us to understand what's going on in this world.

It helps us to understand what's going on in our own lives. And the key then is to see that Jesus, first and foremost, is the promised King that to work out things for our life and to work out things in the world, we must first come to Him as our Lord and Savior.

This is Jesus who has come to us as a child at Christmas so that He can then go on to be our Messiah, our Savior, our Lord by dying for us on the cross.

[22 : 24] Will you believe this? Do you see that this is God's promise for all of us, for all of our lives? Well, let me pause now so that you can quietly reflect on those two questions.

If you need, it's repeated in the outline again right at the bottom. And then after that, I'll close in prayer and then we're going to sing again.

Let me pray. Father, thank you for showing us your plan for this world by giving us all the promises that are found in the Bible and fulfilling them.

Where there are questions among us tonight, please answer them. Help those who seek to find and please humble all of us to believe that Jesus is the one who will save us from our sins.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.