

The King's Family Tree

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[0 : 0 0] that Charles finally became king and with him we've heard a whole lot more about the royal family this year, haven't we? And not to mention with the Meghan and Harry documentary or I don't know what they're calling it on Netflix now, but we've certainly heard a whole lot more, including seeing family trees and the like. A family tree, perhaps like this one. This is a selective one, it's just got the main players, because what's really important about the royal family tree is the line of succession, which is the purple line there.

That's why sometimes they even put numbers on who is going to be the next king or queen. And so after Charles, of course, is William and then his three children and then poor old Harry is number five after his nephew, little Louis. Well, today we're looking at Matthew's gospel, which begins with another royal family tree, as it were. And we haven't looked at Matthew's gospel for a while and he quotes Micah later on and we've just finished a series on Micah, so I thought it'd be good to follow on from it. But as I said, it begins with this selective line of succession and not to the king of Britain, but to the promised king of the world, actually. And we know it's selective because there are actually names missing from the genealogy.

And despite saying there are 14 generations in each paragraph, the last one actually only has 13 unless you count Jeconiah's name twice. And so the point that Matthew is trying to make here is not an exhaustive historical science textbook. No, no, this is a theological book. He wants to make points about God and particularly about Jesus. And he doesn't waste any time because he kicks off with a big, bold headline. You see verse one? He says, this is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Immediately we are told that Jesus is the Messiah, which is the Old Testament Hebrew name for the anointed one or king. Christ is the New Testament Greek name for the same thing. For some reason, our NIV uses the word Messiah, even though this is the New Testament, possibly because people today think that Christ is Jesus's surname, which is understandable, but it is a title for king. Either way, it's a bold headline already, claiming that Jesus is king.

But then Matthew kind of drops the microphone, as it were. He drops these two biggest names of Jewish history, David and Abraham. If you're a tennis player, it'd be like saying you're the son of Federer, the son of Rod Laver. I mean, they're big names, aren't they? Or if you're into soccer, you know, the son of Ronaldo, the son of Beckham, although Ronaldo's in all sorts of trouble at the World Cup at the moment, isn't he? But you get the idea. This is big. And these names aren't just the biggest in Jewish history. They actually have worldwide implications. At first, the son of David not only applies you have royal blood, but the blood of God's forever king, the one who would rule the nations. Back in chapter 2 Samuel chapter 7, God said to David that he would raise up his own offspring, children, to succeed him, his own flesh and blood. And then God said he will be their father and they will be his son. So every king in David's line was actually known as a son of God.

But then he says he'll establish David's house and kingdom forever. At the throne of this ruler from David will endure or be established forever. And it's this same son of God, the same king, who in Psalm 2 we're told, God says, I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth, your possession. Do you see this king, this son of David would end up ruling the world? Do you see how big this is, how loaded this phrase is? I remember reading about a primary school boy's wish list about what he wanted for the future. And he included number one, to get a girlfriend, number two, to kiss her, and number three, to rule the world. But he's not a son of David. He's got no chance. But Jesus is. But also verse one, he's the son of Abraham, which is another loaded term.

[4 : 49] It doesn't just mean he's an Israelite like every other descendant from Abraham. I mean, being descended from David meant the same thing. Rather, Matthew's making the point that Jesus is the one descendant, the one offspring of Abraham, through whom God would bless all the peoples of the earth, as we heard in our first reading. Do you remember, sin has caused our world to be cursed with disease, disaster, and death. Yes, there's great things to enjoy in our world, but it's often punctuated by the pain of disease and disaster and sadly death. We know it all too well, don't we? And after death is the curse of judgment for our sin.

But again, as we heard in our first reading, all the peoples of the earth will be blessed instead of cursed through a descendant of Abraham. And in fact, later on in Genesis, God reaffirms that promise. He says at the top of the screen to Abraham, through your offspring, your seed, your child, all nations on the earth will be blessed.

And the New Testament makes clear that this offspring is one person who is Christ, the King, the Messiah. For God's blessing would always come through God's King. That's how much impact this King would have on the world around him. And so Matthew is making the point that Jesus is that King, that Messiah, that Christ, who is the Son of David, the forever King, through whom God's blessing would come to the nations of the world, the Son of Abraham.

King Charles may be king of the Commonwealth, but he doesn't have that kind of worldwide impact, does he? The headlines at the moment for him, which countries does King Charles reign over?

And it kind of lists 15 countries where he's the head of state, including ours. But even then, he doesn't impact us much, does he? You know, does Charles shape your life at all?

[7 : 04] But Matthew's headline is, Jesus is King. He rules and brings God's blessing to the world. He is the one who shapes the lives of billions of people now as Christians. He shapes our lives. And he's the one who will judge every life in the world on that last day.

That's a pretty big worldwide impact, isn't it? How's that for a headline to start with? But then next, Matthew traces the line of succession to Jesus, starting with Abraham to David.

And as he does, Matthew makes these little additions to the pattern of became the father of, became the father of, and so on and so on. And he makes these little additions which kind of stand out and I think make subtle points.

It's his way of making a subtle point, breaking the pattern to add something else. And so to help you see them on the back of your outline, I've repointed the passage and highlighted these additions.

[8 : 14] I'm using a slightly more literal translation there. And notice in the first big paragraph from verse 2, the first addition we come to is, and his brothers.

The tribe of Judah was the tribe that was promised kingship would come from it. But again, the king impacts others. And his brothers reminds us that there's more than just the king.

There is the whole nation of Israel that came from the 12 brothers that became the 12 tribes, if you remember. And then Matthew adds even more variations, like including three foreign women in this line of succession.

Do you notice? The first one is by Tamar, then by Rahab, and then by Ruth. And that's unusual for that time to include foreign women in a line of succession.

And while it might point to the inclusion of foreigners, you know, Gentiles like us, into the Messiah's family, I think Matthew's point is helping us to see how God works even through the lowly who by faith act rightly.

[9 : 29] You see, a foreigner would have been seen as lowly in Israel's eyes. And a foreign woman even more so. And what's more, all three of these particular women had stigmas attached to them.

You know, something that, some sort of dishonor. So, for example, Tamar was thought to be a black widow. Her first two husbands died.

And so Judah didn't want to give her the third son in case she killed him again somehow or other. And so she was forced to pretend to be a prostitute. Rahab was a prostitute, if you remember.

And Ruth was often referred to as a Moabite, who were the enemies of Israel. And so they all, you see, had a stigma. They all carried some sort of dishonor.

And yet each one of them, by faith, acted rightly. A Tamar sought to obey God's word about continuing the family line, without which David would not be born.

[10 : 32] And so despite her behavior, Judah himself ends up saying that she, Tamar, is more righteous than I. And then there's Rahab at the bottom, who believed that Israel's God, she said to the spies, the Lord your God is the true God, the God in heaven above and on earth below.

Because she believed that, then she acted rightly and hid the spies, if you remember. And then there was Ruth, who went with her mother-in-law Naomi to care for her and to make Naomi's God her God.

And all this, God used to provide David at the end of, or halfway through verse 6, the end of the first paragraph, David the king.

Every Jew knew David was the king, by the way. Matthew didn't need to add that variation, the king. But again, he adds it to highlight what this family tree is about, this line of succession to provide a king through whom God's blessing would come to the world.

And for a moment in history, it looked like it did. David brought peace and prosperity to the kingdom. But then David sinned.

[11 : 52] And so came the curse of exile. Do you see the rest of verse 6 in the second big paragraph? We move to the next stage of history. David became the father of Solomon from the wife of, not him, but another man, Uriah.

Here's Matthew's next variation. And he doesn't name the woman. We know her. Her name is Bathsheba. And people often include her in the list of women.

But she's not actually named, and she wasn't actually a foreigner. Rather, Matthew deliberately mentions Uriah. And that she was the wife of this man because David had an affair.

He took another man's wife, didn't he? Matthew's highlighting that even this good king, David, still sinned. And then, because of this sin, things actually began to unravel.

In 2 Samuel, God says to David, because of this, the sword will never depart from your house. Because he took the wife of Uriah. And that's what we see in the rest of the paragraph.

[13 : 02] In the rest of the paragraph, there is a whole stack of kings mentioned, which Helen did very well to pronounce. I'm not going to reread them. But there are a bunch of kings and a mixture of some good, some bad, and some absolutely horrific.

And so, for example, in verse 8, Matthew mentions Joram, who did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and was so hopeless that we're told in 2 Chronicles that when he passed away, he passed away to no one's regret.

Can you imagine going to a funeral where no one regrets they're gone? How hopeless would you have to be to have that happen? But that's the type of king he was.

And then it gets worse. It goes from hopeless to horrific. In verse 9, it mentions Ahaz, who we're also told in 2 Chronicles, actually sacrificed his own children to other gods.

Can you believe that? And it gets even worse. Verse 10 mentions Manasseh, who not only sacrificed his own kids, but led the nation astray so that they were worse than the nations around them.

[14 : 10] And at the bottom, shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem with it from end to end. I mean, that's really horrific.

And while their inclusion in this family tree might point to how sinners are included in Jesus' spiritual family, some of those kings never repented.

And so they were never included in Jesus' spiritual family tree, even though they are historically. And so I think Matthew's point here is to show us how sin reigns and ruins, because it starts with the sin of David.

And it just unravels from there, right down to the end of that second paragraph, where Matthew adds the variation, where all the brothers, and at that time, at the time of the deportation to Babylon, they end up going into exile.

You see, sin reigns through this period, and it ruins and it leads to the exile. You don't normally include your darkest family secret in your family tree, do you?

[15 : 23] You might name Aunt Ethel, but you don't normally include how she then went to exile into Tasmania or wherever. I shouldn't pick on Ethel or Tasmania.

But Matthew does include it here, doesn't he? It's out of the ordinary to show how sin reigns and ruins, even the good King David, which led to the curse of exile.

And yet, it still won't stop God's plan to bring blessing. God will have to deal with sin, which we'll see next week with Jesus' name.

But this week, nothing will stop him providing this King through whom blessing would come to the world. And this is what we see in the third big paragraph.

Notice in verse 12, how Matthew adds another variation. This time he says, after the deportation to Babylon. He highlights there is an after. There is life after judgment for Israel, because he's determined to bless the world.

[16 : 25] And so we move from the deportation out of Babylon to the bottom of verse 16, to Jesus, who is called the Christ.

God has worked in history to provide the promised King, the Christ, who would bring God's blessing to the world. And again, he works through the lowly, who by faith act rightly like Mary this time.

Notice how Matthew also highlights Mary here. She's called not the wife of Joseph, but Joseph is called the husband of Mary. It's an unusual way to put it for this time in history.

And Mary, the mother of Jesus. And in fact, Mary herself regarded her as lowly. In Luke's gospel, when the angel tells Mary she's going to have a child, she responds by saying, I'm the Lord's servant.

And then she welcomes God's word. May it be fulfilled, as you've said. And then she praises God. And notice for being mindful of her humble state, her lowly state.

[17 : 35] You see, God works through those who are seen as lowly in the world's eyes, yet by faith act rightly in God's eyes. I don't know if you've ever heard of Edward Kimball.

You probably haven't. And that's probably because he was a Sunday school teacher in 1858. I'm not expecting you to remember him. But he was also a very shy man and so kind of lowly in the world's eyes.

And yet he faithfully taught the kids about Jesus at his Sunday school class, including one student called Dwight Moody, who would leave his shoe store and become an evangelist in America, whom God in turn used to impact the life of Frederick Meyer, whom God in turn used to train up a young Christian called Wilbur Chapman, who in turn used to invite a speaker.

During a week of meetings in 1932, meetings where a young teenager, 16 years old, attended and was converted. And that teenager's name was Billy Graham.

And he grew up to see thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people saved. God used him to do that. And it all started with this lowly Sunday school teacher, who by faith acted rightly.

[18 : 53] And God worked through him to accomplish his purposes. For Mary, though, it's not raising up the greatest evangelist of the 20th century.

It's raising up the promised king and savior of every century. Jesus, who is called the Christ. Which brings us to the summary in verse 17.

Do you see verse 17? Therefore, all the generations from Abraham to David are 14 generations. And from David to the deportation to Babylon are 14 generations. And from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ are 14 generations.

And Matthew summarizes the family tree and kind of says there's 14 generations to each. Although technically, the last only has 13. And while they're all historical figures, Matthew wants to make the point that he can see God at work through history.

And so that's why he kind of summarizes it as 14, 14, 14. It's a neat summary that suggests someone was working behind the scenes in history.

[20 : 00] Someone like God to bring about the birth of this promised king. And the implication is we are now in a new era of Jesus, the king.

Who would bring God's blessing to the world. The fulfillment of all these promises has begun. You see, Matthew mentions no other king after Jesus, does he?

There's no other king. It just ends with Jesus. And you've got to remember that Matthew actually wrote this well after Jesus was crucified. So he had time to add another king in if he wanted to.

But he knew Jesus rose from the dead and remains that promised king. And so it ends with him. And we are in this era of his reign now.

The one who brings God's blessing to the world. It's kind of like a day if you think about it like a day. How many hours does a day have? Anyone? Not enough. Yeah, well said.

[21 : 00] Well said. But anyway, anyone else? 24 hours, right? That's true, not enough. But 24 hours. And we could divide a 24-hour day into three parts, just like the genealogy is divided into three sections, which equals eight hours for each part.

So, for example, 9 a.m. to 5 a.m. are like the nice time between Abraham and David the king, the first paragraph. You know, you get to sleep in and start at 9 o'clock.

Life's good. The sun's shining. That kind of thing. But then the next section, the next lot of three or eight hours is from 5 o'clock to 1 a.m. where things go dark, like King David's sin and all those kings.

But then the next section from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m. where things get light, like the time from exile to Jesus, the promised king. And by 9 a.m.

It's a new day. It's a new era where the sun shines. And we are in that new day now, that really long day, as we saw in Micah, that begins with Jesus' first arrival and ends with his second.

[22 : 11] And the point is, the time of the king who brings God's blessing to the world has come. That's why we'll sing in a moment, joy to the world. The Lord has come.

Let earth receive her king. And when the verse goes on to say, he comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found.

Bless rather than curse, you see. You see, Christmas is about remembering that the king who brings God's blessing has come. Now is the time to receive him.

And so have you? Have you turned to and trust in Jesus as your king? So that you might receive the blessing of being saved from judgment, as well as the blessing of being part of his family tree, not the historical, but the spiritual one.

Plus the guarantee of every physical blessing in the life to come. Have you received Jesus as your king? And for us who have, then firstly, will we continue to follow him as our king?

[23 : 22] Which perhaps from this passage means continuing by faith to act rightly, even though in the world's eyes we're seen as lowly. I mean, Christians are more and more these days, aren't they?

Seen as lowly in the world's eyes. And yet despite that we are to by faith keep acting rightly, that we might even be used by God to accomplish his purposes. The Friday night after my son's final VCE exam, there was a year 12 party somewhere out in Warrandyte.

But it already sounds sketchy, right? And there was going to be alcohol and no supervision and all that sort of thing. But he and a couple of mates decided that they would come here to youth group instead.

It was a Friday night. Now, I don't know if it was him or someone else, but that's pretty lowly in the world's eyes, isn't it? You know, party, youth group, lame, lowly.

And yet by faith he still acted rightly and ended up bringing some more mates along to youth group that night. It was used by God. I don't know what it looks like for you in your life.

[24 : 33] And we'll think again about what it means to follow him as our king on Christmas Day. But despite being lowly in the world's eyes, by faith we're to keep acting rightly in God's, that we might even be used by him.

And secondly, will we do what we can to help others receive him, to become part of that spiritual family tree? For now is the time. It's why Jesus famously says at the end of Matthew's gospel, All authority in heaven on earth has been given to me.

I am the king. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, that God's blessing through Abraham might come to all nations.

We spent some time last Wednesday night at our monthly prayer night praying for our non-Christian family and friends. Why not take a moment this week to do the same? Pray for opportunities to invite them to a carols or Christmas service.

Or if they live far away, perhaps pray that God might raise up a Christian to put in their path to invite them instead. Or, you know, send Christmas cards with a Bible verse on it, like John 3.16.

[25 : 40] In fact, you can even download things like this from the internet. John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only son. It's in the shape of a Christmas tree. It's \$6.58. You can use it as many times as you like.

Whatever it is, will you do what you can to help others receive him, to join his family and receive God's blessings? I've ran out of time for the last point, so let me just wrap up.

This family tree of Jesus shows us a whole lot more than this family tree of Charles, doesn't it? For the family tree of King Jesus shows us that God has been in control, working in the world to accomplish his purposes.

It shows us how he often does this through the lowly, who by faith act rightly. And it shows us that we are now in a new era of Jesus, the promised King, through whom his blessings come.

So may we continue to follow him in this life. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for the Lord Jesus, and we thank you for this reminder of how you worked in history, that you provide your promised King, through whom we might receive your blessings.

[26 : 57] Help us to do what we can to help others receive him as their King, and help us, we pray, to keep living with him as our King, continuing by faith to act rightly, that we may even be used by you in this life.

Help us in this, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.