

The long-promised Messiah

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[0 : 00] And Jenny, thanks BTU for practising that reading and reading all those fantastic names all the way through. So here we go together this morning with these verses open in front of us.

I don't know if you've ever seen this programme, Who Do You Think You Are?! It's been running for about 20 years on the BBC. Who Do You Think You Are? Probably sounds a little bit boring. It's a kind of family tree programme, a genealogy series, but it is very super popular.

And what happens in this programme is that over an hour of TV, you follow a celebrity who traces their family tree. One generation back, two generations back and so on and so on, discovering surprises from their past.

Sometimes it is quite fun. This chap, anyone recognise him? Danny Dyer from EastEnders. He discovered, as he was tracing back his family tree, that his great great 22 times great grandfather, is Edward III, 14th King of England.

Danny Dyer is a direct descendant of royalty. He was pretty shocked. He stood there for half an hour like this, and then pretty happy about it. And then he kind of swaggered home. I'm related to royalty.

[1 : 16] Other times, Who Do You Think You Are? Not quite so fun. Because as you go back two generations or three generations, you will uncover darker things. Maybe suffering or hardship or cruelty.

What makes it a really interesting programme, what I really like about it, is it's not called, Where Do You Think You've Come From? It's called, Who Do You Think You Are? Because as the celebrity discovers their roots and goes back in their family history, they get more of a sense of who they are as a person.

Why they are as they are today. Where they stand in the world. Their significance. That is what investigating a family tree does for you. It places you.

Not just where you've come from, but who you are. Might make you really, really keen to investigate your family tree. Tell me more, that would be interesting. Could I go on TV? Or, you might want to run away from any kind of family tree analysis.

Because I guess some of us might know if we delve back just a little bit in our family history, it might uncover all sorts of confusion and pain and darkness.

[2 : 26] Actually, it could be you're very aware of where you've come from and the family you're connected to. And maybe you think it's affected you today and not really that much for good.

Family trees, though, are really significant. Who do you think you are? And so I think, isn't it strange? Looks boring, but it's not.

Isn't it strange? The first chapter of the New Testament begins with a part of a family tree. Matthew 1 verse 1. This is the genealogy of Jesus. So at the end of Matthew 1, you get to the action because Mary gives birth to Jesus and there's an nativity scene and the baby in the manger and the moment we celebrate.

But before that, right at the start of the New Testament, up front, on purpose, one massive branch of the family tree of this baby. Why? Why? It's not for Jesus's interest so he can discover secrets from his past.

His family line is written for us. Because as we delve into his roots, where he has come from, we see who he is as a person, where he stands in the world and his significance.

[3 : 39] But not just his. You also see the real personal impact he can have on us and our lives today, whoever we are and whatever our personal family history is like.

So let's look at it together. Three things this family line tells us about the one in the manger. Firstly, ask, who is Jesus? This will not be new to us, we who've been in church these past five or six

weeks.

Jesus is the long promised Messiah. Do you see that in the text? Verse one, this is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Or verse 16 at the end, Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah. Thus, verse 17, 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile to Babylon, and 14 from the exile to the Messiah.

Jesus, the Messiah. You might know from football, from politics, what Messiah means.

[4 : 46] How people speak of him today. This is Jurgen Klopp, ex-manager of Liverpool football team, not the latest one, as Mark reminds me. He was a very good manager. The headline in the Liverpool Echo.

Is Liverpool boss Klopp the Messiah? It means, is he going to deliver us? Will he be our saviour? Will he lead us in the good times as a football club?

In politics. Is Donald Trump, people asked, the Messiah? Is he the one who's going to make America great again? No, but that's the sense of the word.

Like the Messiah, the one, the deliverer, the ruler we've been waiting for. And to a first century Jew, reading Matthew, mention of the Messiah means something very concrete and wonderful.

Here's a question for anyone who's been in Sunday club, leaders and children. One thousand years before Jesus came, who was the first God-approved king of Israel?

[5 : 49] Not Saul. He was a bad king, not chosen. Anyone remember? Do you know? King Herod. Not King Herod, no. No, no. Good guess. Good guess. Anybody know who was pointed after Saul?

Anybody know? Sunday club leaders, I'll open it to you. Judith. It was King David. It was King David. He was the first one, the first God-approved king. And he is in this genealogy on purpose, you see.

Verse one, Jesus the Messiah, the son of David. And he appears in verse six. Jesus, the father of King David. Okay, we're going to think about this together. Let's get the genealogies up.

It's going to feel a bit like a classroom, but we are going to do it. So here we go. Part one. This is all of Matthew one, one to 17 with a few bits missed out.

Part two. And then finally, right. Is it going to work? Part three, part one, part two, part three of the genealogy.

[6 : 55] And the Lord God, you see that in the text. It's down here. Is it verse six? I can't see now. Here's King David. Lord God chose King David to be the king over Israel and to lead them.

To lead them in knowing God and defend and deliver them from their enemies. And under David's rule, Israel's meant to enjoy the good life. To be happy together in relationship with their God.

But David didn't rule forever and he died. And so in his kindness, God made enormous promises. He promised. He promised. In fact, he swore an oath to David.

A sure oath he will not revoke. That's like this is really going to happen. One of your descendants I will place on your throne. This promise of a king, it grew, it blossomed.

Think of Isaiah nine that we looked at together as a church and in Sunday club a few weeks ago.

For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given. The government will be on his shoulders.

[7 : 58] He will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne.

That's God's promise. There will be a mighty son of David who will reign. And when he comes, he'll deliver us from the shadow of death and from evil.

And he'll establish peace in our world forever. And that is what Matthew one is about. I need two people, I think, to come and help me.

To come and sit on a chair and be a throne wearer. Anyone want to come and help? Philip, you're the man. Yep, come. You come and sit on here and you pop that throne in your head.

Anybody who would like to help Philip? Just one person I'm looking for. Well done there. Christine, yeah, great. Christine, you can be one of the kings of Israel. That absolutely fits perfectly. So, do you see what happens in the text?

[8 : 56] We haven't got 28 seats, so it's not going to be quite right. But, from verse 6, we follow the line of King David through history. King David dies.

King David was the father of Solomon. So, David, it's goodbye to you and it's hello Solomon. Next seat, go to the next seat. Quick, quick, go to the next seat.

And after Solomon came another king. The king was Rehoboam. And after Rehoboam came Abijah.

And after Abijah came Asa. Yep, crown on the head. Son of David, after son of David. So, if we had our five seats, here they are. David, Solomon, Solomon, Rehoboam, Rehoboam, Abijah, Abijah, Asa, son of David.

So, until in verse 11, did you see, we won't go on for all of them. Everything seems lost. Because 400 years after King David, God sends the people of Israel into exile in Babylon.

[10:02] No kings, obviously, anymore. They're sent away. The royal line of David is cut off. It's ended. There's no throne ruler. There's no ruler on the throne of Israel. And all hope is seemingly gone.

Until in verse 12, the people returned from exile in 500s BC. And having returned, they waited and yet no Messiah came.

But, in the darkness, the true kingly line continued. Century after century. Philip, you're back on this chair over here.

Because there was Jeconiah. Secretly. And after Jeconiah came Shealtiel. And after Shealtiel, you know what to do now, came Zerubbabel.

Year after passing year. Okay, slow down. And the legal, true kingly line continued year after year after year.

[11:02] Until, do you see this in the text? 1,000 years after King David. 28 generations later. We arrive finally at verse 16. And the fulfillment of God's promise.

They didn't wear crowns, these people in that time. But Jacob was the father of Joseph. He didn't really wear a crown. But he was a descendant of David.

And Joseph was the husband of Mary. And we know who Mary is. And Mary was the mother of Jesus. Exactly right.

And so, if you can imagine back all these generations, if we had all these chairs out and Philip sitting on the end here. He's come. The Messiah is born.

So, in the legal line to the succession to the throne over hundreds and hundreds of years, he is the son of David. God's anointed deliverer who's come to reign on David's throne.

[12:06] He's here. Help us. Thank you very much. You can go and sit back down. Jesus, the long-promised Messiah, the son of David. Let's just reflect on this briefly because we've talked about this quite a bit in church these past few weeks.

Why spend so much time on that here, Matthew? And simply, I think, to give first century Jews and people like us today rock solid confidence in who Jesus is.

We live in a world of such strong opinions and loud atheists and vague spirituality and Jesus as one option among many. It is possible to sometimes end up being a bit wavery about the Christian faith, about Jesus.

Even committed Christians secretly wondering if this stuff we talk about or mum and dad taught me could simply just be not true. But Matthew 1 is very bold and very clear.

These are claims about history. It happened. It happened. Clear, written promises in the Old Testament. Historical events. Who do you think you are?

[13:09] A flesh and blood family line you can follow all the way through the centuries. And more than anything else, the fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus.

Is this too simple to say at Christmas time? Jesus, not a figment of our imagination. Jesus, not a random baby accidentally caught up in a religion that goes mainstream.

Jesus, not a self-made king, giving it a go and hoping people will follow him. No, no. God promised a son of David and Jesus has come. Born in history in the family line of promise directly descended from David.

Here. For sure he'll grow up. He'll act with justice and righteousness. He'll show himself to be the mighty God. He'll rise from the dead as king and lord of all.

But even at the beginning, as he wriggles in the manger, you can have absolute confidence in who he is. He's the long promised Messiah. But not just for Jewish people.

[14:15] Because second here, touch more briefly, the one in the manger, he is the hope of the nations. He comes for the whole world. I'm going to keep using my globe this week as I did last week.

In verse one, do you notice this in the genealogy? Look in the text again. Jesus is the son of David and also the son of Abraham.

The family tree starts in verse two with Abraham, the father of Isaac. And in verse 17, he appears again, 14 generations in all from Abraham to David.

And talk of Abraham takes us right back to Genesis chapter 12. You looked at this in Sunday Club about four weeks ago, I think. And the promise of God, which shapes all his dealings with humanity. Because in Genesis 12, God promised to deal with the curse of death that overshadows the whole world. I read a little bit ago about a 14 year old girl who was dying of a disease.

[15:21] It was very, very sad. And she got permission to have her body cryogenically frozen after she died, put in a freezer. And she said, I want to live.

I want to live longer. And I think that in the future they might find a cure for my cancer and wake me up. That's tragic. Desperate.

It is understandable to want to live longer and even to live forever. And to a whole world of people dying and cut off from their maker 2,000 years before the birth of Jesus, God made this promise to and through Abraham.

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I'll 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 peoples on earth will be blessed through you. That is ultimately the blessing of death defeated and restored life with God. Not just for Abraham and his people, but for all peoples on earth.

[16:29] Through Abraham, through his seed, through a son. And in Matthew 1 verse 1, Matthew says Jesus comes as the son of Abraham.

Fulfilling God's promises, Jesus is the one to deliver all people, all nations from the shadow of death. He is the hope of the nations.

And the lovely thing is you see this within the family tree itself. Now here's a question. Did you notice here in the genealogy, who are the unusual standout people?

Any unusual standout people? I've highlighted a little bit for you. Who do you notice who we haven't mentioned, who's sort of standing out, sticking out a bit? Well, I will read them.

You can see them in red, right? Tamar and Rahab and Ruth and Uriah's wife in that first bit. Four women, apart from Mary, who are mentioned.

[17:31] So in verse 3, Zerach's mother was Tamar. In verse 5, you see Salmon, the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. And then Boaz, the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.

And in verse 6, David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. Why put their names, Matthew, in Jesus' family tree? And the answer is in part, they're all foreigners.

They are not Jewish. And Tamar was likely a Canaanite. And Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute. And Ruth was from Moab, another little nation.

And Uriah's wife was a Hittite. And so weaved into Jesus' ancestry, these foreign women, who all became part of God's multi-ethnic people.

For sure in Matthew's Gospel, we will go on and meet the Magi from the east, who will come and worship him. We'll hear of a wedding feast with many coming from east and west.

[18:33] And we'll hear Jesus, having risen from the dead, overcoming the curse of death, saying to his followers, go and make disciples of all nations. But even here, as he wriggles in the manger, his family line stretching back volumes.

He will be the hope of the nations. I love how St John's Orchard Park is quite an international church. Is that not great?

Not quite now today, because some people are away. And sorry if I've missed you off. But I immediately the other day thought of South African, Jamaican, Czech, Nigerian, Indian, Bermudan, Scottish, Hungarian, Canadian, American, Japanese, Australian, Hongkonger and English.

And probably a few more. Indonesian. Why are we so multinational? Why are we so international? Because it's not like this in the mosque.

And it's not like this in the Gurdwara down the road. We are like this because Jesus was born to bless the nations. So wherever you're from, you can come to him.

[19:40] All around the world this Christmas, people will celebrate his birth. Because he is the hope of the nations. I've got a fresh photo from this morning. This is from northwest Pakistan, near the Afghan border.

And it's a bit earlier in the day. It was while we were all asleep. But there's Alistair and Naomi somewhere in there. Possibly at the back there, in front of Ambisan.

Alistair and Naomi belong to the church here. And this morning they were there. Outside. And then inside, a group of people singing together praises for Jesus.

That was this morning, near the Afghan border. Because Jesus came to bless the nations. He's the only hope of the nations.

And he is the only hope for Orchard Park. This multi-ethnic, multi-religious mix of a place. Because all of us are dying. And all of us are hopeless by ourselves and cut off from God.

[20 : 43] And all of us need the son of Abraham. Who beats death and offers us the blessing of eternal life. Who is Jesus? He is the long-promised Messiah. He is the hope of the nations, finally.

Just woven very quietly through this family tree. But so obviously in his life. Jesus is the friend of sinners. And we just noticed these women.

The standout women of chapter 1. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Uriah's wife. It's not just that they're foreign and included. In Genesis 38, Tamar secretly seduced her father-in-law into sleeping with her.

But she was desperate. And Judah himself acted wickedly. Such a murky tale of family sin in those days.

Rahab, most likely, was the prostitute from Joshua 2. Ruth was a woman of integrity. Yet even she was found one night lying in the darkness at the feet of a noble man.

[21 : 50] And the mother of Solomon was Uriah's wife. King David had spotted her bathing. And he wanted her. And he took her.

He committed adultery. And then he had her husband Uriah killed on purpose. Why mention Uriah's wife? Why put it like that?

Why not just clean up this family line? I think this is offside to say. It's hard not to think of the British royal family stripping Andrew of his titles and blotting him out.

Why don't you just leave out the sinners and pass over the rotten people? Why would you include them in the family line of Jesus? The answer is because the Lord Jesus comes into the world not only from these kinds of people, but for these kinds of people.

And the angel will say in Matthew 1, you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. And that is what he came to do.

[22 : 55] In the middle of his public ministry, people say of him sneeringly, here is a friend of tax collectors and sinners because he is.

He sits and he eats with the shamed and the sinful and the guilty and the broken. And then he goes to the cross to die for sinners, dying the death they should die, that they might be forgiven and live.

There is such a breathtakingly beautiful thing about him that he came for people like you and me. And that's Matthew 1.

Who do you think you are? I think it's a great TV program. You reach back into someone's history, their family history, you discover maybe cruelty and darkness, or even that you're related to royalty. You certainly learn something about who you are. Who is Jesus? Born of Joseph and Mary the first Christmas. Hear this this morning. The one born in the manger.

[24 : 00] He is the central person in all of human history and in all of God's plans for his world. He is the long promised Messiah. He is the death-defeating hope of the nations.

And he is the forgiveness and life-giving friend of sinners. And the wonderful thing today, which so many of us know, is that this Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world, he is for us.

So today and this Christmas, Jesus can be our Messiah and our hope and our friend. Because today, when you come to Jesus Christ, you put your faith in him and you follow him, you become a member of his kingdom.

You become part of his people, his family. You can do that. And so if it's okay to do this, and it is, you can add yourself in a sense to what comes next.

You put your faith in Jesus, you come to him and you join him. You become a member of his people, his kingdom, his family.

[25 : 14] You can do that. Wherever you're from, you can come to him. Because he is the hope of the nations. Whatever you've done, whatever shame and guilt and naughtiness there is in your family history or your life, you can come to him.

Because he is the friend of sinners. You can come to Jesus and join his family for good. And then along with brothers and sisters through history and here and around the world, you will find yourself

in this enormous family that is secure and saved and safe and included.

And that is because you belong to Jesus. And really, if you wanted a program about yourself, when you come to Jesus and put your faith in him, that is ultimately and wonderfully what will shape who you are, both now and all the way through to eternity.

I'm going to pray. Let me lead us in a prayer and then we're going to sing together. Let me lead us in a prayer and then we're going to sing together. Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Our Father, we praise you for these ancient truths for us today. Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ.

[26 : 44] Thank you that all your promises through history find their fulfillment in him. Thank you that he was born to rule as king of all. Thank you that he was born to die as the friend of sinners.

Thank you that having died, he rose from the dead and now blesses the nations as people from all over the world come to him. Help us this Christmas, we pray, to see beyond what we're used to and to be freshly encouraged and thrilled.

with the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, our Messiah and our friend. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.