

Matthew Chap 1

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter that we read in Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1, and we could read at verse 17.

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, and so on.

Now, I suppose to a certain extent a lot of people wonder, well, what's the point in reading this great list of names, and some names very hard to pronounce? Maybe if there's a really good Hebrew scholar here would say, well, I'm afraid you got quite a lot of these names wrong.

Your actual pronunciation wasn't altogether correct. Well, I'm sorry, that might be so. But it's a very interesting list of names that we have here.

And what we have here really is a family tree. And family trees are fascinating. There's a growing interest in family trees, and people today, a lot of people are trying to find out, they're trying to source, they're trying to delve into their family trees.

[1 : 26] I suppose it's something we have lost. If you went back two or three generations ago, people had a much greater awareness of who they were, of they could trace back generation after generation.

That's the way that people often, I know that, just for myself, my father was from Carleway, and I was known as Kanye Haramad, Ian Alistair.

My father was Norman, his father was Ian, his father was, and there was that kind of run, that kind of run back. And people could go way, way back, generations.

A lot of them would go back six, seven, no problem to see who they were. But I suppose as time has gone on and people have moved a lot more, there's so much more movement in the world that we live in today, it's often a bit harder to be able to trace the way that we used to.

But it's often interesting. And if we start delving back into our genealogies, we often discover that we're related to people that we didn't realize. And say, oh, it's interesting. I didn't know.

[2 : 34] Dear me, I'm a third cousin of so-and-so. And I'm sure in here, if we started to go through our genealogies, we'd find that loads of you are actually related, that you never realize.

So genealogies are very, very interesting. But this, what we have here, is a tracing, as it were, of Jesus' family tree.

And Luke and Matthew both do it in a different way. Luke follows from Mary's lineage, whereas Matthew follows through Joseph's.

But of course, Joseph, as we remember, was the foster father of Jesus. Mary was his actual mother, but Joseph, as we know, was not Jesus' actual father.

And Matthew is very careful, of course, of how he puts that, because remember what Matthew says is, Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

[3 : 37] Everybody else is the father of. The father of so-and-so. So the father of that son, Abram, was the father of Isaac, and Isaac, the father of Jacob, and Jacob, the father of Jude, and so on.

But this is where it stops and changes, so that it's Jacob, the father of Joseph, Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. So Matthew is very careful not to say that Joseph is the father of Jesus, because he wasn't, well, as we say, I don't know whether you call it a stepfather or a foster father, but Mary, of course, was the mother.

Now, there are quite a few things that we can look at and just look at quite briefly here. And one of the things that the family tree will always do for us is remind us, you might say, well, why are you doing that?

But it always reminds us of our mortality. Because as you look at this list, and it's not an exhaustive list, this, what we have here, but as you look at this list, it reminds us that here were people, great people, people, many of these people made their name in the day.

Some of these people were landmarks in their community and landmarks in the nation. And some of these people appeared invincible. Some of these people would say, how will life go on without them?

[5 : 08] And yet, every one of them had their day. They came, they lived, and they died. And, of course, this is part of what makes life so difficult.

Because we always mourn and lament when those who are close to us, those who have influenced our life, those who are part of our life, are taken away.

And when we look at a family tree, and sometimes when we look at a family tree, and we just see the names, but when you think of what each person was, and sometimes, for instance, you can see it, say, even on our own island, there are parts of this island that little communities and all that are there, all that's left now are broken down old homes, just the ruins of homes.

And if you went back 100 years, it would be to the people living there, inconceivable, they just could never believe that a day would come, and not very far down the line, when the sound of children's laughter, when the sound of song, when the sound of working, when the sound of talking, would no longer be heard.

But all throughout our islands, and throughout our island, throughout our land, there are places that are completely empty, which were once thriving communities.

[6 : 42] And that's part of what makes life sometimes very difficult. We look back, and there's always a tinge of sadness, even although you might come to a community, and you say, well, I wonder who all these homes, people lived in them, and you can sometimes let your mind drift.

But there's always a sadness in it to think, these were homes where people lived, and loved, and laughed. Now they're all empty, they're gone, everything, it's just, it's gone, complete ruin.

And this speaks to us, of course, so clearly of the fall. And this is part of what has brought so much sorrow and sadness into this world. However much happiness, however much joy, there's always behind it somewhere in this world, there's a tale of sorrow somewhere.

Something to drag us down, something to remind us of our own frailty, of our own mortality, and of the fact that we're only here for a wee while.

As the Word of God says, the place which once knew us will know us no more. And so it's into this picture of generation after generation after generation that we come to find that it is along into this that Jesus comes.

[7 : 56] But while Matthew traces Jesus' human genealogy, his human ancestry, he also traces his divine, because Jesus, as we know, was a Christ.

He was a God-man. And that's why, again, Matthew places great emphasis that Jesus, while he was born of a human mother, that no human father played any part in the conception of Jesus.

It was this in this amazing way. We've often said that it's a mystery, where, as the Scripture puts it beautifully, where Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, and where she conceived.

And, of course, it was the Holy Spirit who worked within Mary, and, of course, Jesus was formed of Mary's substance.

It tells us that the humanity that Jesus took was the exact same humanity, humanity, the same type of humanity that any baby being born and conceived and being growing in the womb would be.

[9 : 09] So that he took absolute human nature. And yet God kept clean or free, as it were, from any defilement so that there was no sin attached.

And he was exactly like us, except without sin. So it's into this world that Jesus came through the generations, and he became part with us.

And, of course, the wonderful thing we know about the Lord Jesus Christ is that Jesus Christ came into this world to die and to be the Savior of sinners.

And that's why the gospel that we have is, the gospel is good news. Now, the thing about news is news is something that has happened.

When you turn on the television to watch the news, the news isn't made up of a program telling you about things that might be. We get programs that tell us about things that might be.

[10 : 09] That's not what the news does. The news tells us about things that have already taken place. And often these things, they may impact us some of the things they won't.

But that's what news is. It's telling us what has already taken place. And that's why the gospel is good news, because the gospel is telling us about something that has already taken place. It's not telling us about something that is yet to be. It's telling us about something that has already happened. And we know, of course, what that is, that Jesus Christ came into this world and that he died on the cross for sinners.

All the doing has been done. And the gospel tells us, or requires of us, is that we accept the work of Jesus as our own.

It's very simple in many ways. So that's why the gospel is good news. It's telling us about something that has already happened. But then we come and we see this again, this list.

[11 : 17] And as we say, it's not a complete list, but it covers, there's three lots of 14 generations given to us. It's not an exhaustive list, but a list from Abraham to David, from David to the exile, and from the exile to the time of Jesus.

And one of the things when you read through this list, and if you have a little Bible knowledge, one of the things that strikes you is that in this list, there are people you wouldn't expect to be there.

And there are also missing people you think would be there. If you and I were to work out, supposing we had what we would say, well, I would imagine this will be the list.

This will be the genealogy. This will be the line that Christ will come. And we would pick the particular characters in the Bible. But that's not the way it works.

There are people in this list that we would probably, if all being honest, we would not expect to be there. And that's one of the beautiful things about the Bible, is it's honesty.

[12 : 27] And again, one of the unusual things, maybe not to us today, but certainly way back in the time there, in the Jews going back 2,000 years ago, you find there that it includes, including Mary, that there are five women mentioned.

And again, that was something that we didn't, because it was all the inheritance and the identity tended to be through the father. But there are here, there are women being mentioned.

And again, that was quite unique. But another thing which really makes it quite amazing is that some of the people, and if we can highlight two or three of the women there, are women that we would have to say at a particular period in their life, were of really questionable morals.

And this is what makes the whole thing, and we'll come, we'll tie it all in just in a very short time. because one of the people that's mentioned there is Tamar.

And if we read about it in Genesis, Tamar is the woman who slept with her father-in-law, Judah.

[13 : 46] There's a quite remarkable story in the whole thing. And yet Tamar and Judah are here. Judah, of course, was a son of Jacob. Now you would say to yourself, surely the line that God is going to bring Jesus through, if there's going to be a son of Jacob, it's got to be Joseph.

You'd say to yourself, it's got to be Joseph. Joseph, the man who was so upright, the man who refused the advances of Potiphar's wife and ended up in prison because of it.

Joseph who just didn't put a foot wrong, an exemplary character. It's got to be Joseph. No, it's not. It's Judah. Despite his wildness and his immorality, it's Judah.

And in fact, we see there the great promise that Jacob gave regarding Judah before he died. Jacob said of Judah that the scepter will not depart from Judah.

The scepter, of course, speaking about the royalty. And it was through the line of Judah that David came and eventually Jesus came. And in fact, Jesus in the book of Revelation is termed the lion of the tribe of Judah.

[15 : 08] Judah. So it's really quite remarkable. Then another woman is mentioned here, which again may be a surprise, as again is Rahab.

And again, we all remember who Rahab was. Rahab was a prostitute who lived in Jericho, this city that was ready for destruction. And remember how everybody in Jericho was to be put to death because the Canaanites had become so evil that God's judgment was going to fall upon them.

And Jericho was to be utterly destroyed. But remember when the spies came into Jericho, Rahab hid them because Rahab had come to believe in God.

And she hid the spies and she said, I know God is going to destroy this city. We've heard about it and we fear. And she did it, we're told, by faith because she wanted to identify with God's people.

And she was spared and her family were spared. And she became part, she was brought into Israel and lived amongst Israel and her family became part of Israel.

[16:20] So that we find that Jesus, that when we follow through the genealogy of Jesus, this woman Rahab is part of it.

And then we have Ruth, a very different type of character, but again, an outsider. Ruth, you remember, was a Moabitess woman. Ruth was a beautiful woman, a wonderful woman who showed the most incredible commitment to her family and to God.

But we must never lose sight again of this, that Ruth at one time had been a heathen Moabite girl who embraced the God of Israel, came to live in Israel, and in fact turns out to be the great grandmother of King David.

There was not a woman in the whole land but would have loved the honor of being the great grandmother of King David. But that honor was given to a young, well, she had been a girl from Moab who had come in.

So again, the Lord is showing here, well, we'll see just in one moment, there's one other person that strikes us here. And it mentions here, and David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.

[17:40] It doesn't actually mention who that is, but we know that that, of course, was Bathsheba. And we all know that this was the low point in David's life.

And we often tend to think of his low point was the actual relationship with Bathsheba, but there was a lower point than that. And that's what God particularly mentions.

God, remember, said of David that he was an exemplary character. He was a man after my own heart with the exception of what he did to Uriah the Hittite.

Who was Uriah? Well, we know Uriah was Bathsheba's husband. But David had an elite group that went with him everywhere. Remember how David was on the run for years, and he had people who were so dedicated and loyal to him.

They were like the SAS. They were ferocious fighters, and people who put their life on the line for David time and again. And some of their exploits are recorded in Scripture where they single-handedly defeated an enemy.

[18:44] They were powerful men. And there's a list given of David's mighty men. And amongst that list is Uriah the Hittite.

So this man, Uriah, was somebody who put his life on the line day after day. He was in David's elite band, the most loyal group you could possibly find.

And remember what David did. He went behind Uriah's back. He stole Uriah's wife. And then in order to conceal what he did, he had Uriah killed.

It was the ultimate betrayal. And it was the black, dark spot on David's life. And we've got to remember why God forgave David his sin.

David's life was never the same again. You reap what you sow. And there were so many problems developed into David's family which came out from that.

[19:50] However, this is the amazing thing, is that David had several wives. He had lots of children. But again, the line that Jesus comes from is from this relationship that David has with Bathsheba.

He married Bathsheba. And it's David and Bathsheba's child, Solomon, that the royal line runs. And so when you look at all this, you say to yourself, right, what comes out from this to us?

What is the word of God? Is it well almost screaming to us? And it's one word, it's grace. That's what it's saying. It's grace. Yes, we know that Jesus Christ is God's great gift of grace to us.

But when we go through the genealogy of Jesus, it is speaking to us of story after story after story of grace, where God is working in an amazing way in people's lives, lives that are so sordid and lives that have become a total mess.

And yet there's grace. There's grace. There's grace. And through this grace comes to us the great gift of all, Jesus Christ. And, you know, being part of the kingdom of God's grace is freedom.

[21:18] That's one of the great things. You know, the Bible tells us that in Jesus Christ, there is freedom, there is liberty. Well, we can discover that liberty in lots of ways.

But you know one way that we discover that freedom and liberty? In Christ, we are all equals.

This is the amazing thing is that the Rahabs are able to sit beside the Davids. You see, all one in Christ Jesus.

And you know what that does? It does two things for us. One thing is it has to remove judgment from us so that we're not to start looking down and say, oh, well, look at this person, look at that person.

We are all here because of grace and grace alone. Amazing grace. And the Christian cannot start looking down on this person and that person because all our lives are filled with warts.

[22 : 23] But the Lord loves us warts and all. That's the beauty of it. And, you know, the other thing it does is we live in an age where people are always having to try and prove themselves, whether it's in school or in work or in wherever.

Society is so often, it's so demanding that people prove themselves. Do you know what the gospel of Jesus Christ does? The grace, it takes away that pressure.

You don't have to prove anything because Jesus has done everything. We are here by grace. And that is liberty.

I'm a Christian. What have you done? I've done nothing. Jesus has done it all for me. Do you know that? That is a testimony in the kingdom of God.

Because people so often say, I want to see your CV. Do we bring a CV to Jesus? No. We come as we are. Doesn't matter what our past is.

[23 : 30] Doesn't matter what our present is. We just come as we are. And if we come asking Him to be our Lord and our Savior, He will accept us as we are.

So that we don't have to prove anything to anybody. We don't have to tell people, oh, well, I did this and I did that. That's how I got into the kingdom. Freedom. Another person said, well, I had to do, I did this and I did that and I did the next thing.

It's all of grace. And that is freedom. That is liberty. So that there's no pressures, no great demands upon us to try and be anybody.

And you see, in the church, and that's why the church, it's very important for the church to realize this. That the church is made up of all types of different people. And that we're all, we're all just one together.

Because remember, we're going to be in glory together. And we're going to live in perfect harmony and in perfect peace, one with another. And the church should learn and should strive for that here on earth.

[24 : 41] But as we come to conclude, just one thing. While we're looking here at all these different names, we come then to the birth of Jesus. And we find that the angel said to Joseph that in this dream, do not fear, take Mary as your wife, and so on, and behold, we're told, she shall bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

And we're told why? Because he shall save his people from their sins. Christ is his official title.

The appointed one, the anointed one, the one who is sent, he is the Messiah. This is, as it were, almost the divine appointment. Jesus is his human name.

But through that appointment, he will save his people from their sins. And he's also, his name shall be Emmanuel, which means God with us.

Isn't that extraordinary? We're talking of grace. The creator God, the God who has brought all things into being, this vast universe, this amazing world that we live in, by the word of his power, he's come with us.

[26 : 06] And this is, this is what Jesus did. He came to live with us. He took human nature in order to live with us, to walk with us, to talk with us, to share with us, to die for us, to take all our pains, all our sorrows, and all our sins upon himself in order to set us free.

No wonder we said, it's good news. I hope and pray that this good news is really good news for you, and that you will know this Jesus as your own.

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks for the grace of God, the marvelous grace of God.

Forgive us, Lord, for times when we can't cope with it.

Forgive us, Lord, for the times when maybe the judgmental or legalistic side of our life rises up and say, oh, I can't cope, this is, don't know if this is right.

Help us to understand more and more of what grace is. And give us that, not just acceptance of grace, but joy in grace. O Lord, bless us, we pray, and guide us as we journey on.

[27 : 25] And we give thanks for every good thing that we receive from your hand. Watch over us and part us with your blessing for giving us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Our concluding psalm is Psalm 22.

Amen.