

"God with Us"

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[0 : 00] Well, the Christmas season is upon us. It is good to see you all here this morning. For Advent, we are taking a break from our series in the book of Revelation, and we'll be looking at the beginning of the book of Matthew.

If you want to turn there with us, that's page 757 in your pew Bible, or you can follow along on the screen when we get to reading it. But if you read the beginning of the book of Matthew, you start with a genealogy.

What is a genealogy for? Well, when we encounter people on the street or you meet someone at church, you ask them a few questions, right? You ask, well, who are you?

Where did you come from? What family are you a part of? That might be less common today than it used to be. Today we often ask, what do you do? And so that's often our identity marker.

But all of this is questions that we ask in order to get to know someone. And as Matthew begins his genealogy, he is saying, I want to let you know something about the subject of my book.

[1 : 20] And his whole book is written about the person of Jesus Christ. And so he's starting with this genealogy to let us know more about him. That's an unusual form for us today.

I don't introduce myself to someone and say, I'm the son of Arthur Leslie Coburn III, who is the son of Arthur Leslie Coburn Jr., who is the son of, and I don't even remember my great-grandfather's name.

So I couldn't go back very far in my genealogy. But that's where Matthew starts. And before we get there, again, just want to frame this a little bit in our cultural context of the first century.

So genealogies today, if you went to ancestor.com, you would be getting a scientific genealogy. It would be based on your DNA.

And they would be tracing you back as best as they can to many, many generations. This is not necessarily what the biblical genealogies do.

[2 : 23] They are to establish family identity. You're a part of this family. It also, at times, are used to establish a royal lineage. So this is the line of kings.

And sometimes you have a jump from a father to not a son, because maybe there isn't a son, but to a nephew or to a sibling. So we need to recognize and bring the right expectations to this genealogy, or we're going to be disappointed and confused by it.

The genealogies in the Bible give us a sense of relationship to one another. And as you will see in this one, it skips some generations. And maybe others that we don't know about.

But we do know that a lot of what Matthew draws from comes from the Old Testament, the beginning of the book of 1 Chronicles. You can go back. If you want to do a careful study of what Matthew includes and doesn't include, you can do that.

But as we'll see at the very end of this passage, in verse 17, Matthew structures it purposefully. He says in verse 17 that there are three groups of generations of 14 that he's pointing out.

[3 : 38] From Abraham to David, from David to the exile in Babylon, and from Babylon to Jesus. Well, spoiler alert, those aren't full genealogies, right?

Some of them are longer periods. Some of them are shorter. It's skipping generations. So make sure you see that he's writing with a literary purpose, not a historical scientific purpose as he writes this.

Some of you are going to think really carefully, and you're going to count. And you realize, actually, his 14s aren't 14s at all. The first one is 13. The second one is 14. And the third one is 13.

So you think, okay, Matthew, what are you doing here? I don't understand. Well, I don't understand completely either. I will just tell you that up front. There's some fascinating, what commentators speculate.

One of them is that Matthew really wanted to write genealogies that had three sets of 14, which, if you do math and the commutative product, is actually six times seven.

[4 : 38] And so when you get to Jesus, you get the seventh seven, which is the beautiful, glorious, apocalyptic number of perfection. Maybe. Maybe. But if so, his math isn't very good.

The other reason why maybe Matthew refers to 14 is a, I'm just going to read this from the ESV study Bible notes because I couldn't say it more clearly than they did.

There is a Jewish practice of gematria giving numeric values to the consonants in a Hebrew word. So David's name would add D plus V plus D because the vowels don't count in Hebrew.

And so that would, the value of those would be six plus four, or four plus six plus four. And that adds up to 14. And so the whole point of this is to say this is about Jesus and his relationship to David.

And we'll talk about that today as we look at who is Jesus. So having given you all that introduction, let's read the passage together and then we'll dive in.

[5 : 46] So Matthew chapter one, verse one. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son 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 and Ram, the father of Aminadab.

And Aminadab, the father of Nashon and Nashon, the father of Salmon. And Salmon, 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. And Solomon, the father of Rehoboam and Rehoboam, the father of Abijah.

And Abijah, the father of Asaph and Asaph, the father of Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat, the father of Joram and Joram, the father of Uzziah and Uzziah, the father of Jotham and Jotham.

[6 : 47] The father of Ahaz and Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah and Hezekiah, the father of Manasseh and Manasseh, the father of Amos and Amos, the father of Josiah and Josiah, the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor and Azor, the father of Zadok and Zadok, the father of Achim and Achim, the father of Eliud and Eliud, the father of Eleazar and Eleazar, the father of Mathan, and Mathan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus 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 of Babylon to Christ, 14 generations.

Let's pray. Ask for God's help this morning. Lord, we ask for your help as we look at this word. Lord, we confess that this is an unusual way to communicate that we are unfamiliar with, and so we ask for your help this morning.

Lord, help us to see what you want to teach us through this genealogy. And Lord, open our eyes, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[8 : 20] Amen. So there are lots of things to say, and you may have looked ahead and noticed that actually Tyler's going to preach on this exact same passage next week, and he'll probably do better at pronouncing the names than I did.

So just be prepared. I'm going to pick out one thread of what I think Matthew is communicating to us this morning, and then Tyler's going to pick out another thread, because all of this is about the genealogy, or the genesis, or the source of this is where Jesus came from.

And next week, Tyler's going to look at the unusual people who are mentioned in this list, particularly. But for me, I'm going to focus on what Matthew emphasizes in verse 1, where he says this book is the genealogy, the genesis of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

And we're going to look at these two concepts this morning and what they have to say to us about Jesus as we celebrate Advent. So first, Jesus is the son of Abraham as he comes to this world.

What does this mean? Now, some of you have grown up in church. You have a good idea of what Abraham does. Some of you may not be as familiar. You go back to Genesis 12, and at the very beginning of history, when God wanted to create a people for his own glory, he called Abraham.

[9 : 50] And we see this in Genesis 12. He called him, and he says, I will make a covenant with you, and I will bless you, and I will make you the father of a great nation, and through you, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

He expounds on this a couple of chapters later in Genesis 17, starting verse 4, and I'm going to read these to you. Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be called Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you, and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And I will give you and your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.

So this one man wandering around the Middle East, God came to and said, I'm choosing you to be the beginning of a great work that I'm doing, making a special people for me.

[11 : 14] And if you know Abraham's story, you know that Abraham was married to Sarah, and Sarah was barren and couldn't have children, and then God miraculously provided a child so that this promise of inheritance could continue.

And you see this throughout the rest of Abraham and the patriarch story, and you see it resounding all the way down to Jesus who was born in an also similarly miraculous way from a virgin mother. And Abraham was the father of a great nation through whom God would bless the whole world. He would make a people for himself, and this people among all the peoples of the world was called to be a blessing to that world.

By the way, we see this a little bit as well because twice in this genealogy, we see that the descendants of Abraham and his brothers are included in this.

So God is thinking expansively of this, not merely in a singular linear way through this genealogy, but also expansively that God is creating a people out of the sons of Abraham.

[12 : 27] Now, the New Testament brings glorious clarity to us in terms of what this means. We could look at Romans 4. That's glorious but complicated.

So we're going to go to Galatians 3. Galatians 3.7, Paul says this so clearly for us. He says, Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles, that is, non-descendants of Abraham, genetically, by faith, preach the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying in you all the nations, shall all the nations be blessed.

So then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith, sons of Abraham, by faith in Jesus. And so what Matthew is telling us through this genealogy is that Jesus is the son of Abraham, the firstborn of a new and eternal people of God.

What God promised to Abraham to begin was a picture of what he would do finally and fully through Jesus. And not just through a heritage of DNA or of patriarchy or of lineage, but through a heritage of faith so that people from every tribe and tongue and nation, from all over the world, can come and by faith in Jesus be brought into this unique and wonderful and special thing that God is doing in making a people for himself.

[14 : 06] So what does this mean for us? It means that at Advent, we celebrate the coming of a new people of God, a people gathered by faith, not by genetics, not by heritage, not by culture.

Look around this room. Friends, I love being a part of this church because God has blessed us. Literally people from all over the world. And you're rubbing shoulders with them.

And you're having fellowship with them. And you're serving with them. What an incredible joy it is to see God bringing people who have nothing in common except their faith in Jesus to be his people. And Jesus comes as the son of Abraham and by faith in him, he calls us brothers and sisters, one another in God's family.

So friends, as we proceed in Advent, from Jesus, the son of Abraham, let us cherish the church and love one another for Jesus' sake.

[15 : 18] And let us be the church, blessing the nations around us, blessing our neighbors here, blessing to the ends of the earth in love and service, and then declaring the word of the gospel that by faith in Christ, we can be a part of the people of God.

But Matthew goes on. He says, not only is Jesus the son of Abraham, but he is the son of David. And in some ways, David, as I mentioned earlier, I think this may be the most central thought because in the whole book of Matthew, he's emphasizing the kingship of Jesus as he comes. And so David is the quintessential ideal king of Israel in the Old Testament. You see him listed before Abraham in verse one.

You see him in verse six. He gets the title, David the king, right? And we look at this and we think, okay, so Jesus comes not always as the beginning of a people of God, but he comes as a son of David.

And what does this mean? Friends, there's no way to shorten this. So I'm just gonna read to you from 2 Samuel 7. Because when David was, and again, read 1 and 2 Samuel.

[16:41] It's a great story of how God miraculously brought the most unlikely person, the youngest son of a family to become this unique person, this one that he called and anointed to be the king.

And God brought him through all of 1 Samuel in the first six chapters of 2 Samuel so that he might establish himself as the king of Israel. And God comes to David because David has said, God, I wanna build a great big house for you.

And God comes to him and says, David, I'm glad for the spirit, but you're not the one to build a house for me because what this story is about right now is I am building a house for you. And not just a physical palace, but I'm building you as a kingdom, a household that you will rule over.

So here's what God says to David. Now therefore, thus you shall say, he's talking to Nathan who will say this to David. Thus you shall say to my servant David, thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be the prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you.

And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

[18:01] And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more as formerly from the time I appointed judges over my people Israel.

And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the sons of men. But my steadfast love will not depart from him as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. Now, in typical Old Testament prophecy, you see some of these things fulfilled in Solomon, right?

[19:22] Solomon actually builds the temple. Solomon is disciplined by God because he doesn't obey him. But some of these promises clearly point beyond Solomon. They look ahead to a greater son of David and the Jewish people knew this.

They knew this instinctively. They knew it throughout. They longed for the coming Messiah would be often visioned as a son of David who would come and bring the promises here.

What are the promises here? That they would have victory over their enemies and live in peace in the world. That they would have a land where they could dwell in abundance and in safety and where they would have an eternal kingdom with an eternal throne that would rule over them.

And when we come to the time of Jesus, at the end of this genealogy, this is what the Jewish people were longing for. Because they were under the rule of Rome at that time.

And even their so-called king, Herod, was not in the line of David, was never going to fulfill these promises. And he was a scoundrel to boot. So he just, you know, they knew that there was something else that they were looking for as they were longing for the promises to David to be fulfilled in the return of the king.

[20:41] And yeah, go read Tolkien and see all the resonances here. I won't bore you with it today. But it's a beautiful thing. So Matthew is saying, the son of David is Jesus.

And he is going to come. Near the end of the book, at the last week of Jesus' life, as Jesus enters into Jerusalem, Matthew quotes Zechariah, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and

mounted on a donkey.

And as the crowds responded, as they threw down their cloaks in honoring of this Jesus, they said, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. Friends, what we celebrate, what Matthew wants us to see is what we celebrate in Advent is the coming of Jesus the king, the son of David.

But he does not come as the expectation, to fulfill the expectation of the first century Jews. He does not come on a white horse with an army at his back to conquer the Romans and kick them out or to depose Herod.

[22 : 00] He comes not on a white horse, but on a donkey. And he comes not to defeat Rome, but to defeat our greater enemies of sin and death and Satan.

Matthew wants us to see Jesus as the true king who will bring peace with God through his atoning death on the cross for us. Who will defeat the enemies through his resurrection so that sin and death no longer have power over those who are in the kingdom of Jesus by faith.

and the promise of an eternal kingdom because Jesus did not stay in the grave, but he rose again. He is ascended to the right hand of the Father. He will return again and in his eternal kingdom, he will never be deposed.

He will never be removed. And if we want to know where this world is going at the end of the ages, the Bible tells us it is the kingdom of Jesus that will reign forever.

We all long for kingdoms in our hearts. We actually often try to create them for ourselves.

[23 : 15] I want to build my kingdom, my family, my career, my job, my church. It's easy for all of us to want to build our own kingdoms. And sometimes when we know I can't build my own kingdom, we find someone else's kingdom and we latch onto them and we find our tribe and say these are my people and whoever the person is at the top, I'm going to let him be my king.

This is what Adam and Eve did in the garden when they said to God himself, I don't want you to be the king. I want to do this on my own, in my own way. But recall what we've just sung about Jesus. Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal spirit, rule in all our hearts alone. By thine all-sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

Friends, this is what the Magi traveled from far away to see as they laid down their gifts because they knew somehow that this baby was the coming king that the world was longing for.

[24 : 38] And they gave honor to him. Friends, will you do this? Will you honor the king who came in humility, born in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, who established his kingdom in obscurity by bringing hope and love and the word of God who fundamentally and finally made his kingdom real by offering himself up on the cross to die, not for people who wanted to follow him, but for rebellious people like you and me who want to go our own way, who rose from the dead.

This is Jesus, the son of David, the king, that Matthew wants us to respond to. And friends, isn't it amazing to think that this is what God is up to, that the people of God are also the inbreaking of the kingdom of God in this world.

Mike and Jenny, thank you for what you guys are doing, being a part of the kingdom of God breaking into this city and offering the hope and the life that comes through Jesus Christ and through the loving, sacrificial service of his people to the nations around him.

We see the kingdom there. We see it in our own fellowship as we humble ourselves and repent of our own kingdoms and turn to Jesus and say, Jesus, your kingdom is what I want more than anything.

So this Advent season, let us celebrate this Jesus, the son of Abraham, the son of David.

[26 : 23] Let's pray together. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for this Christmas season and as we sing the familiar carols and as we think about the lights and the presents and Lord, help us to see the deeper resonances.

Lord, as we prepare to celebrate your Advent, your coming to earth, the one who would establish the people of God forever, the one who would bring the kingdom of God in its richness.

And Lord, even as we celebrate these things, Lord, we look ahead and we long for your return.

Lord, for your second coming. Lord, when you will establish in fullness all that you have promised.

Oh, Lord, rule in our hearts today, we pray. In Jesus' name.