

The Character of His Kingdom

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Matthew

By Ty Blackburn

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Providence Church
2146 Buford Hwy
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

Website: www.providenceduluth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch

Turn with me in your Bibles to the first chapter of Matthew, Matthew 1. We're going to look this morning again at the passage we started looking at last week, Matthew 1:1-17, the genealogy. I'm gonna do a seven month study of the genealogy. I think that's gonna take that long to really... No. Lord willing, this is the last time on it. Just two weeks. But the title of last week's message was "The King Has Come," the title of this message is "The Character of His Kingdom." The character of his kingdom. I think that Matthew gives great hints to his audience about the character of the kingdom that he's about to explicate as he gives the full Gospel of Jesus. He's introducing it here in this genealogy and so it's the character of his kingdom. We're gonna see there's two dominant characteristics that we need to see from this but it's the character of his kingdom.

I was reading a commentator who spoke about the genealogy and made the comment that there are often layers to the genealogies, that as you look at them a little more carefully, there's much more there than originally meets the eye. It's difficult for us as Americans and 21st century people to really even approach genealogy. It's inaccessible to us, it's not easily relevant, but it was not that way to a first century Jewish audience that Matthew wrote to. He was writing predominantly to Jewish people to convince them that Jesus is truly the Messiah, that he is the King, that the long anticipated Messiah of the Old Testament that had been promised for centuries through all of the Old Testament, that he has now come. Jesus is he. That's his message and so he gives this genealogy to begin unpacking the glorious reality that Jesus is the long awaited King, the long awaited Messiah.

And genealogy was something that was much more, as I said, much more accessible to the first century Jewish audience. The Jews greatly valued genealogy. You know, in America this has only been a recent thing where people even care about genealogy. You know, ancestry.com, some of these things out there now? Thirty years ago nobody cared about genealogy. I mean, occasionally you might hear somebody talk about their ancestors but it was very rare, but that's not the way it was in Bible times and particularly for the Jewish people because God had wired it into the fabric of his word and his people that genealogy was significant. Matthew introduces his Gospel, begins with it so that he can basically prove that Jesus is legally qualified to be the Messiah. He's presenting Jesus' legal qualifications, his genetic legal qualifications, that he is of the line of David legally

through his earthly father, not literal Father but his step-dad basically, Joseph. And then Luke makes the same point that Jesus is biologically qualified through his mother Mary, that she's also of the line of David. And that was something that had to happen. The Jews knew that the Messiah would be from the lineage of David.

So the genealogy itself was much more natural and interesting to them, and these things are not normal for us so it's hard, and then you add to it the fact that we don't know the names and sometimes we even have trouble pronouncing the names and it's sort of just laborious to read through them. You think them, you're not saying it out loud but you just think the name and you're like, "How do I say that in my mind even?" Right? And so it's difficult but to help you understand this, I was trying to think of something that might help us understand how the first century Jewish reader would have heard this and the closest thing that I can get to as an American in the 21st century is to say if I were to say these names to you, you would think about what you're going to associations in your mind and I'm gonna suggest to you that the genealogy was just like what I'm about to do to you as Americans, people who live in America today. George Washington. Abraham Lincoln. FDR. JFK. Ronald Reagan. Bill Clinton. Now when I say those names, if you have any understanding of history at all, George Washington brings a lot of baggage with him, doesn't he? And all of those names do, some very good and some not so good, but when you hear those names, there are associations that go on in your mind and you're seeing something. You see even history unfold. I started with the earliest and I worked forward. I skipped over a lot, didn't I, but I hit some and you had associations. You might have thought of Reagan, you might have thought of for me that was the first time I was able to vote in 1984. You might have a thought like that. You might think about the economic prosperity of the '80s after the difficulties of the '70s. You might think of, you know, Clinton and some of the positives but also the negatives. Or FDR, World War II, the Depression. And so when they heard these names, they were hearing their history and, of course, their history wasn't just national history because our national history isn't ultimately of that much value. I mean, we're grateful for it but it's not of eternal significance, but their history was of eternal significance so they had that sense of this national kind of feeling, this understanding, the shared history and also the spiritual significance.

So when they heard these names, they thought about them differently than you and I do and so we want to try to hear as the original audience did. It's always an important principle in biblical hermeneutics is to try to hear the word on its own terms as the author inspired by the Spirit wrote to his audience, and this Jewish audience would note these things. And then also what we're gonna do is look for, and this is where the layers come in, you look for variations and distinctive elements in a genealogy because the basic formula of the genealogy is Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac was the father of Jacob, Jacob was the father of Judah, Judah was the father of Perez, Perez was the father of etc. all the way down. That's the basic thing. In fact, the word "father" occurs 39 times in this chapter. The underlying verb there is actually 40 times because it's one time translated "was born" in a passive sense, that is, Jesus was born. You see, Joseph did not beget him, he was born to Mary who was betrothed to Joseph. But you hear that over and over and over again so what you want to listen for is the times where something else is

added, other information that the inspired author feels compelled to give. What portrait is he painting based on what he tells us, the distinctive elements.

So in a moment we're gonna read it and I want you to listen as we read and then we're going to try to unpack it and we're gonna see, I think, two significant characteristics that show to us the nature, the character of the kingdom that Jesus has brought. So we're gonna read verses 1 to 17 of Matthew 1.

1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. 3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. 4 Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. 5 Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. 6 Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. 7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. 8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat...

Wait, Rehoboam. I'm sorry, I got messed up there and you recognize that I repeated Jehoshaphat. Isn't that interesting? A great name for a baby, by the way, Jehoshaphat. Okay,

7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. 8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah. 9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. 10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah. 11 Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. 12 After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. 13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor. 14 Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud. 15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. 16 Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that You might now speak to us through Your word. We acknowledge our poverty and our need of grace and we pray that Your Spirit might have His way in everything that happens, that He might have His way in our hearts and that He might foster deeper devotion to Jesus Christ as our King. We pray in His name. Amen.

So the character of his kingdom. The King has come and now we're talking about the character of his kingdom and looking at the elements that are distinctive that the author felt compelled to tell. There were several things that jumped out at you probably as we were reading and I want to try to unpack those a little further today. We talked last time about the issue of the 14 generations in verse 17 which he frames the discussion with and says that basically all of this that he's described breaks down into three distinct segments. You have the segment of Abraham to David, the second segment, David to the deportation to Babylon, third segment, the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, and he says 14 generations in each one.

One thing I forgot to mention last Sunday is an interesting thing that's going on here because we noted that he's taken, he's leaving some people out which was very common in genealogical recording, the significant thing is to show back to the source and so they sometimes would leave some out on purpose to make the right number, and so he makes 14, 14, 14. Why does he do that? One of the reasons I mentioned last time 7×2 , but there's something else going on. In Hebrew the way they count, letters have numerical value and the name David in Hebrew is three consonants. Actually in English we say d-v-d, right, would be the three main consonants in David. In Hebrew it's actually d-w-d, it would be Dawid in Hebrew actually. D-w-d. Dalet, the d, is the fourth letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Waw, the w, is the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet. $4-6-4$. $4 + 6 + 4$ is 14. So David, the numerical value of the name is 14. And Jews used to think this way, again, this is kind of foreign to us. We don't have numbers attached to, unless you're thinking of like Roman numerals. You know, we do that. You know, the letters and numbers there. But they actually thought of this, this is the way they wrote numbers was with letters. So the value of David is 14. 14, 14, 14.

Now so we saw that last time. That was something that was important but we want to move on beyond that to look at a couple other things about the kingdom, the character of the kingdom, and the first point is the King has come and his kingdom, the first characteristic of his kingdom, his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom. We touched on this a little bit last time but we need to see some other ways this is really emphasized. There is this sense in which he's unpacking for us the advancement of God's plan of salvation when he starts with Abraham and he ends with the Messiah. He's showing us there's this progression. We talked about it last time, there's the high point of Abraham, then there's the high point of David, then there's this strange high point of the deportation to Babylon, and what he's basically saying is the plan of God, God's plan of salvation is advancing through each successive element, including the deportation to Babylon.

Well, one of the things that he helps us clue into that even more when we're reading carefully is the repetition of the phrase "and his brothers." Did you note that as we were reading? He said in verse 2, "And Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers." Same phrase is repeated in verse 11, "Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon." Now what's going on here? "And his brothers," significance? The Jews hearing "Judah and his brothers" know, what? Who is he talking about? He's talking about the 12 sons of Jacob, Judah and his 11 brothers which make up the 12 sons of Jacob, the 12 sons of Israel. Remember Jacob's name is changed to Israel. It makes up the 12 tribes of Israel. So the beginning of the kingdom was when Judah and his brothers were born, the beginning of the nation.

So Jeconiah and his brothers, again, just like I said earlier, FDR, what does that bring up in your mind? The Great Depression and probably World War II. Jeconiah and his brothers, the sons of Josiah, and then he makes it explicit, the deportation to Babylon, but Jeconiah and his brothers, one of the things that happened at the time of the deportation when the kingdom ended, Josiah had two sons that reigned on the throne and actually three sons that reigned on the throne and one grandson, and here the author is speaking of Jeconiah and his brothers because you would call your uncle, your brother too. They're brothers in the family, brothers in the nation. When he says Jeconiah and his brothers, for the Jew who knows his history and all faithful Jews knew their history, what happened during the time of Jeconiah and his brothers was the Babylonian incursion and this terrible period of time. Basically what in 605-606, Nebuchadnezzar comes and besieges Jerusalem for the first time and it starts a 20 year period of adversity after adversity. Three separate incursions by the Babylonians. Three invasions, 605, 597, and 586. Jeconiah and his brothers were the four different kings that reigned during that 20 year period and so when he says Jeconiah and his brothers, that connotes and carries with it all of the pain and the agony associated with the exile.

Then, of course, he makes it even more emphatic by repeating the phrase of the deportation to Babylon. That occurs four times in the passage. It occurs twice in verse 17 when he says, "Abraham to David, David to deportation, deportation to the Messiah." But in verse 11 and 12, it's even more emphatic. When he says Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon, okay, he's put another marker there and that marker is just like what he did in verse 6, "Jesse was the father of David the king." You see how he added "the king," right? He's telling us this is a marker. He started at Abraham, he's gone down to David, it happens to be at 14 when he gets to David and he says, "David the king." So then he goes from Solomon, he starts, here's the next one, Solomon and then Rehoboam, and he goes down and he comes to Jeconiah, number 14, and he says, "and his brothers," and he says, "at the time of the deportation to Babylon."

So he's marked it just like he did with David, but look what he does in verse 12, he adds it again. "After the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah became the father of..." If he was consistent with what he did before, he wouldn't say that. I mean, he didn't say Jesse was the father of David the king, David the king was the father of Solomon. Do you see that in verse 6? It doesn't occur that way. He doesn't remind you of the king, David being the

king twice there, but he reminds you of the deportation to Babylon twice emphatically, verses 11 and 12. At the time of the deportation of Babylon, after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel. He's really emphasizing that and wants us to really think about that as readers.

And it adds to that, now this is one of my breaks into the numbers for those of you who like to pay attention to the numbers. What's interesting here is and a good scholarly reader should pay attention to the numbers, by the way, so you should repent if you don't. But there are actually 41 names in the list. Now what is $14 + 14 + 14$? It's 42. There's 41 names in the list. What's going on? Abraham to David is 14. Solomon to Jeconiah is 14. But after Jeconiah, you have 13 to Jesus. What's going on? He's using Jeconiah twice in the number list. Jeconiah is number 14 on the second segment, but he also is number 1 on the third segment. Matthew's not making any mistakes here, what he's doing now think about it, it makes sense too. Jeconiah was born, where? He was born in the land at the time of the kingdom of Israel. When did Jeconiah have his son? He had his son in Babylon after the kingdom's over. A whole other era has entered and so emphasizing that, he actually even does the numbers that way. This is the kind of thing that the Jewish reader would look at and puzzle over and say he's really making this emphatic, the deportation to Babylon.

Now to understand then, what is that? It's emphasizing the exile, this 70 year period between 606 and 536 BC. We've been studying Ezra previously, right? And so Ezra tells the story of what happened from 538 to basically 420 BC. It picks up right after the exile is over. But here, he wants us to think about the exile. The exile is significant. God's plan is advancing during the exile and he's causing his readers to think about, I think he's causing his readers to understand the nature of the kingdom by thinking even about what did God, you know, I said before, Abraham, the kingdom of God is advancing. God calls Abram and he makes him Abraham and look at all the great acts of faith and the covenant with Abraham and all that God is doing to show he's going to save, he's going to send a Savior through Abraham. And then David comes along and God chooses a man after his own heart. And now he tells us, as we saw last week in 2 Samuel 7, that, "I'm going to advance My salvation. My plan of salvation is going to advance because I'm going to send not only a descendant of Abraham but a descendant of Abraham through David. David, the king. You need a king to reign over you. This is how My salvation is going to come." That's the second high water mark.

Then thirdly, the deportation to Babylon which seems like mountain, mountain, valley, cave, hole, but in reality he's saying, "No, the valley is a mountain." In a sense, what's happening is Abraham, David, deportation, Christ. You're advancing and moving forward. The plan is advancing. It's not just staying the same, it's advancing. How did the deportation to Babylon which he's emphasizing with these careful details, how does that advance God's plan of salvation? What it does is it clarifies that the kingdom is spiritual. It is not a physical kingdom. The "and his brothers, and his brothers" that brackets it, "Judah and his brothers. Jeconiah and his brothers." That bracketed at this point in history God was revealing himself through the kingdom of Israel, a national people in a specific place, and his dealings with them, he's teaching us. But it's moving forward to say that no

longer is it about a physical kingdom and physical descent. It is about a spiritual kingdom.

Now, in fact, make a note of this and I encourage you to look at these passages and we're gonna look at a couple of them. Who were the three exilic prophets? The three exilic prophets, some people call Jeremiah is kind of a, he's the first, I think. He's a pre-exilic prophet who ministers during the exile too, at the very beginning of the exile. So Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are three men God calls during the time of the exile to minister to God's people and they speak God's word, and in them God's plan of salvation crystallizes and becomes incredibly clear.

Now think about Daniel. We preached through Daniel. Some of you have been here 10 years, as Ted said earlier. I think about 10 years ago I remember preaching through Daniel, '09 maybe, something like that? Well, in Daniel, Daniel has these visions, remember? He's in Babylon. He is a Jew who's taken captive in 606, goes to Babylon, is raised, lives throughout the entire exile, dies shortly afterwards apparently, and what does Daniel see? Daniel sees visions in chapter 2 and chapter 7 of the kingdoms of this world. The gold head, silver chest, bronze thighs, legs and feet of iron and clay. Four different kingdoms and the message is, "Listen, Israel, you're no longer ever gonna be a kingdom yourself again. You're gonna be under the dominion of four great kingdoms. First, the Babylonians. Then, the Persians. Then, the Greeks. Then, the Romans. And in the day of the Roman kingdom, God's gonna take a little stone that's cut out of a mountain without hands, this little stone and He's gonna cast it against those kingdoms and it's just gonna destroy them, and that little stone's gonna fill the whole world." He's telling us that his kingdom is going to come through one apparently unlikely person, and this is gonna bring in the true kingdom of God. Also in chapter 7 with the four dreadful beasts, and the message is these beasts are reigning on the earth, the Son of Man is the true spiritual King. That's Daniel's exilic message.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel's message is similar and complementary. Turn with me to Jeremiah 31. And you can think about, in fact, this three, these three mountains I was talking about, Abraham. I wish I had more time to unpack this but the covenant is a key organizing principle in the Bible. How do you come to know God? This is essentially the whole problem of the Scriptures, how can sinners be made right with God? How can sinners be saved? You must enter a covenant relationship with the living God. He reveals himself in terms of these covenants. He makes a covenant with Abraham. Covenant is basically God promising things and us committing to live in relationship with him in submission to him, but in the Abrahamic covenant we see that God's going to do it, it's going to be all of grace. You see it in Genesis 15, Genesis 12, Genesis 17. These are passages that unpack the Abrahamic covenant.

Well, this is how I've got to come into a covenant relationship with God. It's by faith that I come in, Genesis 15. Abraham believed God and it's credited to him as righteousness. But then salvation's gonna happen as this covenant is clarified, that to be in relationship to God also means to be in relationship to his king, the son that he sends, David. David will come to reign and the Davidic covenant is the promise that God will put someone,

2 Samuel 7:14 and following, God will send a king, a son of David to reign over his throne forever.

Then the new covenant. These correspond with these three mountains, Abraham, David, the deportation, because what you're gonna see in Jeremiah 31 is the unpacking of the new covenant. And what God is doing, he's not changing the covenant, he's further clarifying it. The Abrahamic covenant is still in force. The Davidic covenant is still in force and now the new covenant is bringing it, it's like flowering to its full beauty and glory.

Look what he says. Now this is Jeremiah comforting the people as they are experiencing that 20 years of terror and they're being plucked out of the land and he tells them in Jeremiah 31:31, "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke,'" this is the Mosaic covenant he's talking about. That's in force only in that Jesus has fulfilled it and we now live by the Spirit and are able to walk in obedience to it by the Spirit. He says, "The covenant I'm making is not like the covenant which I made with their fathers," verse 32, "in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD." Verse 33, "'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'" He's speaking of what God is going to do through Christ when Jesus comes. And what did he say? "This is the new," what, the night before he's crucified? Every time we have the Lord's Supper? "This is the new covenant in My blood." Jesus has come to inaugurate the new covenant that Jeremiah prophesied of and the deportation to Babylon helped clarify it, helped them get their eyes off of the earthly kingdom and caring about the geopolitical realities. That's not what's important. It's not important who's in charge. Does it matter if it's Babylon or Persia or Greece or Rome or the USA? Does that matter? No. What matters is Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. That's what this is trying to say to the Jews in the first century and to us today. This kingdom and it comes to people who have a heart change.

Turn to Ezekiel 36:22. Here Ezekiel prophesying in Babylon, in the land of Babylon himself, he's a captive and God gives him these words to speak to the house of Israel in captivity. This is what he says, verse 22, "Therefore," the Lord says to them, "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD,' declares the Lord GOD, 'when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the

lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." He's picturing exactly the same thing. What's gonna happen is God is going to recreate a people by giving them new hearts. He's gonna take out stony hearts and give us hearts of flesh. He's gonna give us a new nature. This is the new covenant.

So all the Old Testament was pointing toward a Messiah who would come to inaugurate a spiritual kingdom which would be realized and experienced by people who were spiritually reborn. So God is about the spiritual kingdom. That's the first characteristic. It's a spiritual kingdom. Back to Matthew 1. Secondly, it is a universal kingdom. This is the second characteristic. The kingdom, the King has come and the kingdom he has brought is a universal kingdom, that is, it is open to all.

Three subpoints here. It's open to all who come, that's the first subpoint. Now isn't it interesting that he spends time telling us there are four women, actually five counting Mary but the four we're going to focus on are the first four in the genealogy proper. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. This is so abnormal to put women in the genealogy in the first place and then he picks women who have unique characteristics and somewhat surprising. I mean, first of all, three of these women are definitely Gentiles. Tamar was a Canaanite who married Judah. Rahab was not only, she was remember a resident of Jericho, but she was a harlot. All of Jericho was destroyed but Rahab was not and she became a part of the line of Christ. Then Ruth was a Moabitess. Remember when we studied Ruth a couple of years ago, how the author of the book continually calls her Ruth the Moabitess? Ruth the Moabitess. It's like you read it and you're like, "Hey, I already got that." But he knows you have that but he doesn't think you have it enough. Ruth the Moabitess. It is amazing that God is showing mercy to this woman, Ruth the Moabitess. In fact, why is that? Because God had judged the Moabites because they had been so evil in the attacks they had made on his people when the people were moving toward the Promised Land. And God had decreed in Deuteronomy 23, I think it's verse 3, he said that a Moabite cannot come into the temple for 10 generations. In fact, it also says never. That's what they deserve. Then the Lord shows kindness to Ruth and not only to let her be saved by coming to be a part of Israel and blessed by being married to Boaz, but in the line of Christ.

So those three are definitely Gentiles. Bathsheba is, we don't know her nationality but we know she was married to someone who was a Gentile, Uriah. It's interesting. In fact, the way that this in the Greek it does not say "by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah." Literally in the text it says David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah the Hittite. I don't know why the NASB adds Bathsheba here. I love the NASB, the New American Standard, because they don't do this kind of thing and the other translations, especially the NIV, tend to do this. They supply words to make things flow better and you miss some emphases. And here the name Bathsheba is not there. He wants you to think about David was the father of Solomon by the woman who had been the wife of

Uriah. Now how does that read? You know, it's like this is where you would say, "Hey, you know," it's like somebody gets talking, you know, you're in a group of people and maybe one of your family members starts sharing things about your family that you'd like you'd rather keep quiet. Have you ever had that happen? You know, "Hey," you have to tell your little one, "Hey, we don't talk about that, you know, among people we don't know." Well, sometimes it's probably good that stuff comes out anyway but this is kind of the feeling here. "Really? Matthew, why are you bringing up Rahab, Ruth? Okay, we could accept those maybe but why Tamar and Bathsheba? What's the relevance?"

He's telling us, first of all, like I said, three of them are definitely Gentiles, one's married to a Gentile, so the Gospel is for all people. The recipients of the kingdom, it's a universal kingdom. It is available to all who come. In fact, nice bookend when you put the last chapter of Matthew and Jesus' words to his disciples, "Go and make disciples of every nation." Even though he's writing to a Jewish audience, he's telling them, "Listen, guys, the kingdom is different. It's a spiritual kingdom. It's a universal kingdom."

So it's open to all who come. Second subpoint. It's a universal kingdom. A., was open to all who come. B., by grace. By grace. I think he picks these people. I mentioned there's really something somewhat illicit about three for sure and Ruth is a little questionable if you remember the story of Ruth and how she approaches Boaz. She's encouraged by... anyway, we can't go into that but read that and read your footnotes in a good study Bible and that'll help you with that. But Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. Tamar, she's in the line of Christ because she seduced her father-in-law to have relations with her and that child, the firstborn child of that illicit relationship is in the line of Christ. Do you see why I'm saying that maybe you would rather us not, "Hey, guys, Matthew, what are you doing here? There's Gentiles listening." Rahab was a harlot, a prostitute. Bathsheba is the one that David saw as he was up on his palace, he saw her bathing and he had an affair with her and then killed Uriah, and we're told, not her name Bathsheba, but we're told about the man's name who died and was murdered by David.

What is this saying? This is saying something about the character of this kingdom, that our King that has come, it's a different kind of kingdom. This is a kingdom of grace. This is a King who welcomes sinners. You read this carefully and when you read later into Matthew and you see Jesus consorting and talking with tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners, you wouldn't be so surprised. Our God is a God who saves sinners. He's a God of great grace.

I remember the first time reading Tamar, or the story to teach it and preach it, I was preaching through Genesis 37 to 50 maybe 20 years ago, and in Genesis 37 to 50 is a great section because it's the story of Joseph and it's really an illustration of the doctrine of divine providence. Remember the story of Joseph, how he's sold into slavery and yet God brings about salvation through it. You read chapter 37 and he's sold into slavery and then you come to chapter 38 and it's the story of Judah and Tamar. And I remember when I was there, I'm like, "Lord," I didn't want to skip over it. I'm trying to be faithful to the text so I've got to talk about what this says and I'm really kind of irritated about it, you know? I mean, I know that's ridiculous and foolish. It shows my unbelief and my

stupidity but at first glance I'm thinking, "Why is this here?" Because what happens is Judah, one of the sons who's not a good guy in Genesis 37 to 50. I mean, he's relatively speaking pretty good. He's less bad than some but he's going to be the one through whom the Messiah is going to come we're gonna find out in Genesis 49, but early on we don't know that and Genesis 38, he gets married to a Canaanite woman, his son gets married to a Canaanite woman, and his son, his eldest son dies before they have any children. I think it's Er, e-r. Then after Er dies, they practice the principle of Levirate marriage. It was just understood this is the way it should be, and then God later codifies it in the law, but they understood that a woman without a child is hopeless. She's gonna have to turn to prostitution. There's no other way to make a living unless she can go back to her father's house.

So he gives his second son, Onan, to her and says, "You are to raise up for her offspring. You go and take her as your wife in addition to your other wives." This is just part of what they had to do at that time in history, raise up a descendant for her. Onan is wicked in his heart. He doesn't want to conceive a child that will be his dead brother's child and so he does not appropriately consummate the relationship and God strikes him dead. So Judah's lost his oldest son and the second oldest son. He has one more son, a guy named Shelah and Shelah is young and he tells Tamar, he says, "You need to go home to your father's house and when Shelah is old enough, I will give you to him and he will raise up descendants for you.

So her father brings her into his house but her father's probably getting older. Shelah gets to be a man and Judah doesn't call and what she does is she dresses up like a prostitute, she knows Judah is coming into the area, she dresses up like a prostitute. We're told Judah's wife had died right before this. He's making his way to check on his sheep and he sees her and he doesn't recognize her because she's dressed up, she's got a veil, and he has relations with her. Then he didn't have anything to pay her with he says, "I'll pay you a goat." She says, "Give me a pledge." He gives her his like signet kind of identification and then he leaves. Three months later he learns that his daughter-in-law is pregnant and he basically says, "Let's go find her and burn her."

Well, the word gets to Tamar, "They're coming after you," and she sends word to Judah, "The man to whom this belongs is the one who has impregnated me." Judah receives it, recognizes it as his own and says, "She has been more righteous than I." He doesn't again have relations with her because that is not appropriate for a man to have relationships with his son's wife. That's unthinkable but it happened. She gives birth to two boys, twin boys, Perez and Zerah. Oh yeah, they're in the passage. They're mentioned here in this passage, both names. My memory is really impressive, isn't it? Perez and Zerah by Tamar.

Interesting part of the story, why did you include the twin boy, Zerah? It recalls to them, the reader, Genesis 38. When you read the story in Genesis 38, you know what you find out is that as she's giving birth to twins, they know they're twins, I guess because of the size and they can tell that she's struggling. One puts, a hand comes out of the womb and the midwife takes a scarlet thread and ties it around a hand. Well, the next thing you

know, the baby comes out and it's not the one with the thread tied around his hand, the scarlet thread, and they call him Perez because he made a breech. Basically he fought to get out first to get the right of the firstborn. The other one is named Zerah who comes out with the scarlet thread. What's up with that? You know, these are things the Lord's kind of teaching us through that sometimes we don't know right up front.

Well, it's interesting when you kind of keep reading, Rahab. I mentioned Rahab, right? She is a prostitute in Jericho when the people are about to destroy Jericho or they're about to come into the land. They send spies in ahead of time and you can read about this in Joshua 2. They send spies in. This time the spies do a good job, not like Numbers, and they go and scout out the land and they come back and report to Joshua. While they're there in Jericho, word gets out that they're there, the spies have come in and that they had been seen with Rahab and Rahab hides them and lies for them because the king sends word, "Let's send out those guys that are spies." She says, "They left. They probably went up into the hill country. If you hurry, you can catch them." Then she lowers them out of her window. She had a window on the wall, lowers them out of the window at night. They escape and get back but she gets them to promise before they leave, she says, "You must promise me that you will have mercy on me." She basically, "Have mercy on me when you come back and my household." And they say, "If you will put a scarlet thread out of your window, then we will have mercy on you and everyone in that household with the scarlet thread." Interesting, two places in the Old Testament where a scarlet thread is talked about, those two which both occur here in the genealogy.

What is that? I think the Lord is saying something about grace because what happened with her was she received grace and mercy. Everyone else in Jericho died except for Rahab and her family and everyone who gathered in her room. Think about it. The wall fell down but the part of Rahab's wall where her house was, it stood up because God is a God of mercy and grace and she ran to him seeking deliverance which brings us to the third point. It's a universal kingdom available to all who come, A. B., by grace. C., through faith. All four of these women are examples of faith, grace and faith. How do you get saved? You receive Jesus Christ and the finished work of what he has done. His death at Calvary, you receive it as a gift. Salvation is entirely outside of you and me. There's nothing we merit. It's a gift. It's gracious. It is a gift of grace but it must be received by faith, believing, trusting, surrendering faith, and all four of these women are examples of faith.

Tamar, I think she's in here because even as sordid as the details are, she is an example of faith. She knew that what God's word says to do and somehow she was a part of preserving the line of Christ. It's as if the line is about to fall and she preserved it. Now ultimately God preserved it and God uses even the sinful actions of wicked people to accomplish his glorious purpose. This is why we don't have to fret over what the nations are doing. No matter what they're doing, God is on his throne.

So she's an example of faith. Rahab is certainly an example of faith. In fact, when you read into Joshua 2, she basically says, "Listen, the fear of your God is over all of the people. We heard what happened to the Egyptians and we know that you're going to

destroy us. Please have mercy on me!" So she's running to God for mercy. That's faith, believing. In fact, Hebrews 11:6 says without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who comes to him must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of all who diligently seek him. He's a rewarder of all who diligently seek him. There is Rahab diligently seeking him, believing that he's a God of mercy. He allowed her to protect them so that he could save her.

Ruth. What a beautiful picture of grace and faith. The Moabitess who is without hope, along with Naomi. No hope for prosperity. No hope for sustenance. And yet she goes to Boaz' field. Well, first of all, her faith is expressed in when her mother-in-law tells her, "Go back." She has no children, "Go back to your family. Marry somebody else among your people because I won't be able to give you any sons. All my sons are dead." And Ruth says to her, "Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your God shall be my God and your people my people, and do not cause me to go away from you." She clings to Naomi and to the God of Naomi. And it's beautiful what Boaz says in chapter 2 when he meets her. Remember, she goes to his field by happenstance and she's gleaning there and Boaz, this older man, single, older man comes. He sees her, "Who is that gleaning?" And his servant tells him, "It's Ruth the Moabitess. She came and asked if.. she's Naomi's daughter-in-law." And Boaz already knows who she is and he immediately walks over to her and he says, "Listen, you don't need to go anywhere else. You come and you glean here anytime and I'm gonna make sure that you're taken care of. My servants will not harass you." And he says, "I heard about what you did for your mother-in-law." Then he says, well, let me just read it. He says, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law," this is Ruth 2:11, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know." That's saving faith, leaving everything else and going to someone you didn't know and becoming a part of something you didn't know, Jesus. He goes on to say, "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

Our God is a God who lets sinners come seek refuge under his wings. Now listen to that, he says he will punish to the uttermost the one who rebels against him. Sinners will be punished and yet our God is a God who says, "Even though I'm pronouncing judgment, run to Me for mercy. Run to Me for mercy and believe that I'm a merciful God and you shall have mercy." And that is saving faith, when you run to God believing his word, that he will have mercy on the one who calls upon his Son. He will have mercy upon the one who bows the knee to King Jesus. If you will bow the knee to Jesus, you will have mercy and forgiveness and blessing forever.

This is the message of this Gospel. This is the message of the genealogy, that the kingdom is different. It's a spiritual kingdom but it is a universal kingdom and it is open to all who will repent and believe. The glorious salvation that God has made known. In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem those from the curse of the law by giving himself.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are for so great a salvation, for such a beautiful glorious plan, Lord, so much more wonderful than we could ever have dreamed. It's beyond our ability to ever even imagine. It's just like Your word says, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him." Your Gospel is that. We marvel. Lord, we want our hearts to be fully Yours. We want to submit to the kingship of Jesus fully. I pray for those that are here that have not yet submitted to His Lordship, have not yet repented and placed their faith in Jesus. Lord, today is the day of salvation. Let them be saved today. Help them run to You in their hearts and receive You as their Master, as their loving Savior, their loving King.

And Father, for those of us who belong to You but who forget that Your kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, we get preoccupied with the natural and the physical. We know it's a part of living, we have to do certain things but we think on these things too much. Help us be more heavenly minded. Help us be about what You're about, forming us into the image of Jesus. And Lord, help us be earnest to share this glorious message with everyone, every creature. Forgive us for thinking that some people are beyond the reach of Your grace, that they just seem too far, too far removed from us and we don't reach out as we should. Lord, help us repent of that and realize that in those moments where we see such distance, those are actually moments where You may show Your glory by bringing someone to life.

Most of all, O God, we worship You and we praise You for who You are. You are so so incredibly good, so lovely and beautiful and wonderful. In Your Son we see all of Your glory and all of Your beauty, the radiance of Your glory in His face and we pray in His name. Amen.