

Matthew 1:1-17 - The Genealogies

I. Introduction

A. This morning, we are diving into the first story of Matthew

1. And as we talked about last week, Matthew starts with a genealogy - a list of Jesus' ancestors
2. I imagine that many of you are probably slightly bored by the genealogies of the Bible - they really don't fit well into a western context and sometimes it's hard to understand why they are there - at least, I have felt that way in the past
3. And this morning, I'm probably not going to radically change your view of the genealogies, we aren't going to be able to turn them into an action scene, but I do hope that we can see this morning that they have a purpose and are an important part of Scripture's testimony to Christ

B. In fact, the genealogies are really Matthew's purpose statement for His entire gospel

1. Matthew calls his book - *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ*,
2. In other words, Matthew saw the genealogy as incredibly important, the entire book is somehow going to be an exposition of this genealogy, this book is going to prove that what we see in this genealogy is true
3. So, we shouldn't skip over the genealogy, instead we should try to see what the genealogy is pointing us to and try to understand how that is the center of Matthew's gospel
4. And Matthew gives us a lot of help in this task - first he actually starts the book with two genealogies, the first is incredibly abbreviated and the second somewhat abbreviated
 - a. Verse 1 contains the first - *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*
 - b. This verse helps organize our thoughts about the Matthew's genealogies
 - c. Whatever he's going to say in his next genealogy is going to be centered on Abraham and David
5. Second, Matthew gives us a summary statement at the end that helps draw our attention to his purpose
 - a. Verse 17 - *So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.*
6. These first and last verses show us that Matthew's genealogy is carefully designed to draw our attention to certain events from Israel's past
 - a. Because Matthew is carefully designing the genealogy to draw our attention to specific points, his genealogy isn't meant to be complete
 - i. He doesn't necessarily have to cover every generation
 - ii. And we know he skipped several generations in the section of Israel and Judah's kings
 - iii. And he probably skipped generations in the other sections as well,
 - b. Moreover, Matthew's genealogy may not even be meant to give us a literal ancestry relationship between each of the names on the list
 - i. In fact, we know that one of the father/son pairs on this list was not father/son but uncle/nephew
 - ii. Matthew seems to be tracing not genetics but rather royal authority, how does the royal promise to Abraham pass down through the years to David and through the kings of Israel to Jesus
 - c. Matthew's purpose isn't to nail down a family tree for Jesus, but rather to draw our attention to how Jesus is connected to the past especially how Jesus is connected to the kings of Israel and the promise to Abraham, that is, how Jesus is the fulfillment of what God had done before
 - i. This is a side note, but this helps us understand why the genealogies in Luke 3 and Matthew 1 are so different - Matthew's purpose isn't the same as Luke's purpose and they trace different concepts through the years

C. So, let's go ahead and read Matthew 1:1-17

1. Proposition: Matthew starts with a boring list of names because He wants us to be excited about who Jesus is and what He has come to do! Because:
2. Outline:
 - a. Jesus Fulfills Israel's History
 - b. Jesus Fulfills God's Promise
 - c. And, Therefore, Jesus Will Fulfill God's Promise

II. Jesus Fulfills Israel's History

A. As we just noted, Matthew's genealogy is carefully designed to connect Jesus to three events in Israel's history

1. First, Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is the heir of the promise to Abraham, so he connects Jesus to Abraham
2. Second, Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is the heir of the promise to David, so he connects Jesus to David
3. Third, Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is connected, somehow, to the exile

B. Jesus is connected to Abraham and Genesis 12-17

1. I love that we have recently studied both Genesis and Exodus together as a church because Matthew is going to draw heavily on both books, especially here in the introduction
2. And before we get to Abraham, we need to stop and notice that with the very first words of the book, Matthew is already drawing our attention to Genesis
 - a. Matthew 1:1 starts - *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ*
 - b. We shouldn't miss that the wording of this first verse is identical to the Greek translation of the phrase from Genesis - *these are the generations of...*
 - c. As Matthew introduces us to Jesus, he starts at the very beginning - somehow Jesus is connected to the first stories of the Bible and somehow Jesus is going to be a new beginning, a fulfillment of what went before
3. But then Matthew dives into his genealogy and tells us that the primary story that he wants us to remember from Genesis is the story of Abraham
 - a. Amazingly, it was two years ago that we studied the story of Abraham together (it doesn't seem like that long ago to me), but I hope we all still remember some of the high points of the story of Abraham
 - b. First, in Genesis 12, God calls what appears to be a rather random man named Abram out of Ur and promises him, in Genesis 12:1-3 - *Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*
 - c. Abram obeys God's call and goes to Canaan, and a lot of things happen there, but we'll pick up the story again in Genesis 15, when Abram is starting to wonder if his descendants will really inherit the promise,
 - d. Genesis 15:1-6 - *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*
 - e. God promised Abram specifically that one of his own offspring would be his heir, and Abram believed God, but he had hard times in faith and took concubine to try to produce an heir, but God speaks to Abram again
 - f. Genesis 17:1-8 - *When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "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 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 to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."*
 - g. Despite Abram's failure, God declares that His promise will not be revoked, His covenant with Abram and Abram's offspring is an eternal covenant and God changes Abram's name to Abraham to symbolize this
4. Matthew connects Jesus to this story - God promised that one of Abraham's sons would inherit the promise
 - a. One of Abraham's descendants would be blessed and therefore be a blessing to all nations
 - b. One of Abraham's descendants would establish a new nation
 - c. One of Abraham's descendants would receive royal authority
 - d. One of Abraham's descendants would inherit the land
 - e. And Matthew calls us to see that Jesus is, at least, a descendant of Abraham - could it be possible that He is the true promised Son? Could Jesus be the answer to God's promise? Matthew clearly thinks so!

C. Jesus is connected to David and I Chronicles 17

1. Matthew continues his genealogy and as we go through the generations we think of all the things that happened
 - a. Abraham's descendants went to Egypt and became slaves, but God raised up Moses as the deliverer
 - b. At Sinai, God makes a covenant with Israel, making them into a holy nation and then they slowly march toward the promised land and take possession of the land promised to Abraham
 - c. But then a period of turmoil ensues, the time of the Judges, Israel had inherited the promises of land and nationhood given to Abraham, but they didn't have a king yet - the royal line had not been established
2. But then Matthew pauses again at David and the establishment of the royal line
 - a. With the crowning of David, the subduing of the land and the temple and the peace of Solomon, the promises to Abraham seemed to be reaching their zenith and we read about this period in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles
 - b. And actually, the pattern of this genealogy is meant to draw our attention to Chronicles, another book in the Old Testament that starts with lengthy genealogies, tracing out the history of David's line
 - c. The promise to Abraham reached to David, but didn't stop there because God made another promise to David, another promise of a son - II Chronicles 17:10-14 - *Moreover, I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.*
 - d. God promises David that one of his sons would inherit the kingdom and would rule forever, and Chronicles and the second section of Matthew's genealogy are all looking for this promised son of David - when will a king arise that will rule forever?
3. Matthew connects Jesus to this story as well - God promised David a son who would rule the nations
 - a. And Matthew calls us to see that Jesus is, at least, a descendant of David - could it be possible that He is the promised Son of David? Could Jesus be the answer to God's promise? Again, Matthew clearly thinks so!

D. Jesus is connected to the Exile

1. Matthew continues his genealogy past David as well and through the kings of Israel
 - a. And as we go through the list we see some good kings and we see some bad kings
 - b. But none of the good kings are good enough and the bad kings end up drawing God's wrath down on Israel and Judah until Judah is sent into exile in Babylon
2. And Matthew pauses here again, he pauses at the exile to Babylon
 - a. This is the most interesting pause that Matthew makes, because he is not connecting Jesus to a specific person or a specific promise, but rather to a specific event and it's not a good event
 - b. Importantly, notice that Matthew doesn't pause at the return from exile, he doesn't pause at Shealtiel, who returned from Babylon, or at Zerubbabel, who became governor and rebuilt the temple
 - c. Instead, he pauses at the exile and says: the event that Jesus really needs to be connected to is the exile
3. Matthew, more-or-less, completely overlooks the return from exile
 - a. And this fits into Matthew's pattern of looking at the promises to Abraham and to David
 - b. The Jews had returned from exile and resettled in the land of Canaan, but the promises hadn't been fulfilled
 - c. The Jews were living in Canaan, but they didn't possess it, the promise to Abraham had been lost, foreign powers owned the land and they served foreign nations
 - d. For a short while, the Jews had a governor who was a son of David, but he wasn't the king, he served foreign kings, he was merely a minister of foreign empires
 - e. In Matthew's mind, the return from exile wasn't the answer to the exile, the return from exile had not fulfilled the promises, the return from exile had ended them up in bondage in the own land
4. So Matthew connects Jesus to the exile - there needed to be a better answer to the exile, so Matthew pauses at the exile, but then he continues his genealogy until it reaches to the Anointed One, to the Christ
 - a. And most of the names from the exile to Jesus are people we know nothing about - for generations the promise seemed to have been lost, but the promise persisted in a line that eventually produced an anointed king, a son who could inherit all of the promises
5. In sum, Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is the answer to the exile
 - a. God gave promises to Abraham and David, but those promises were lost in the exile
 - b. But God is faithful and He preserved a line until One would come who would truly lead Israel back from exile

III. Jesus Fulfills God's Promise

A. This second point isn't really looking at the genealogy in a different way, but thinking about what the genealogy teaches us about Jesus - if Jesus fulfills Israel's history, what does that say about God's promise, about Jesus?

1. So I want to look at three things the genealogy teaches us about Jesus this morning
2. First, Jesus was according to God's promise
3. Second, Jesus was according to God's faithfulness
4. Third, Jesus was according to God's grace

B. The genealogy proves that Jesus was according to God's promise, that is in Jesus God's promise was true

1. What I mean in this point is that there were many so-called messiahs during the Greek and Roman occupations
 - a. In fact, the Rabbi Gamaliel makes this exact point in Acts 5:34-39 - *But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"*
 - b. There were lots of people claiming to be somebody back then, lots of people that tried to be saviors of the Jewish nation, lots of people that tried to claim the promises for themselves - why should we listen to Jesus' claim? Why is He any different than the rest of the pretenders?
2. Now we could go through Scripture and list hundreds of ways that Jesus is different than the other pretenders to the crown, but the point that Matthew makes here is that God told us who would come and inherit the promises
 - a. The promise would be inherited by a son of Abraham and a son of David - the promise has to come from the royal line, the promise couldn't be fulfilled by just anyone
 - b. And Matthew, in his genealogy, stands on the rooftops and yells out - Jesus fits the bill! The rest of these guys were claiming authority for themselves, but Jesus is according to God's promise! God's promises weren't worthless, in fact, they were exactly fulfilled in Jesus.
3. So God's promise was true in Jesus - in Jesus as Son of Abraham and a Son of David had risen up to claim His birthright, to lay hold of the promises and to reign as king over Israel
 - a. The fulfillment of the promise matched what God had promised, the promise had been specific to Jesus
 - b. God's promise ages ago had been true, God had promised correctly because God had planned to fulfill His promise in Jesus Christ

C. The genealogy also proves that Jesus was according to God's faithfulness, that is in Jesus God's promise was kept

1. What I mean here is that, not only was the promise specific to Jesus, but God kept His promise
 - a. Obviously these are closely related concepts, but I want to consider both of them
 - b. If God had kept the promise, but had not done it in the way that He had said He would, we would have been confused, perhaps God would be faithful to the promise, but He had not been truthful about how He would do it - but in Jesus He was true to His promise
 - c. But, if God had not kept the promise, we would say that He was not faithful - He didn't fulfill what He had promised to Abraham in David - but in Jesus, He was both faithful and true to His promise
2. And part of Matthew's purpose in His genealogy is to make us think about that
 - a. We might get bored reading through a list of names because there's so little information and all it seems to represent is long periods of boring time
 - b. And, in one way, that's exactly true - the genealogy records a long period where there were lots of boring times, lots of times when God was silent, lots of times when the promise didn't seem to mean that much
 - c. So, as we go through the genealogies, we should have a sense of how long the promise lay dormant, we should have a sense of how long the descendants of Abraham waited, how many people lived and died never seeing the promise
 - d. This long delay might have caused the people of Israel to despair of the promise, but Matthew is showing us that, though the time may have been long, God was always prepared to be faithful to His promise
 - e. God's delay was not a failure in His promise, but a waiting until the time was fulfilled

D. The genealogy proves that Jesus was according to God's grace, that is in Jesus God's promise was unexpected

1. Before we do some application, I want to go back and look at the genealogy one more time
 - a. Matthew's genealogy isn't just 'A the father of B' all the way down the line, four times he expands his formula
 - b. Matthew 1:3 - *Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar,*
 - c. Matthew 1:5 - *Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab*
 - d. Matthew 1:5 - *Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth*
 - e. Matthew 1:6 - *David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah*
2. Four times Matthew includes women in the genealogy
 - a. In the first century, it would be very unnatural to include women in a genealogy, so Matthew must be pointing us to something when he does - and the women Matthew includes are exceptional
 - b. If you remember the story back in Genesis, Tamar was the wife of two of Judah's sons and promised to Judah's third son after the first two died - but Judah delayed and Tamar took matters into her own hands, tricking and seducing Judah into producing an heir with her - a story of incest
 - c. And then we move to Joshua, Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute, someone who seems that they couldn't be further from the promise
 - d. The third woman seems to have the best record, but Ruth still was a Gentile, in fact a Moabitess, excluded by God's judgment from the tabernacle through the generations, and moreover she had been married to an Israelite who had abandoned the promise and left the promised land
 - e. And finally Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah - a story of adultery, murder and judgment from God
 - f. Matthew includes women in the genealogy, and he seems to do so to draw attention to the flaws in the genealogy - the people in Jesus' genealogy weren't perfect, they had lots of problems
3. But the women don't only highlight the problems in Jesus' genealogy, they also highlight faith in the promise
 - a. Judah and Tamar may have engaged in incest, but the undercurrent of the story is that Tamar cared more about God's promise than Judah did, so that, at the end, Judah declares that Tamar is more righteous than he
 - b. Rahab may have been a prostitute, but when the spies came, she joined herself to God's people and clung to the promise
 - c. Ruth may have been a Moabitess, but she left her people and clung to Naomi and took hold of the promise
 - d. The women may highlight the sordid stories of Jesus' genealogy, but they also show that God's promise fulfilled in Jesus is for those who are sinful but place their trust in God's promise
4. But perhaps the most important thing the women highlight is that God used those who were the most unexpected to fulfill His promise
 - a. Because there is actually a fifth woman listed in the genealogy in Matthew 1:16 - *Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ*
 - b. A virgin betrothed to a man gives birth, and many, even her betrothed, must have accused her of adultery
 - i. We have a behind the scenes look at what really happened, as Joseph eventually did as well,
 - ii. But Mary didn't seem like the most likely choice for a mother to Jesus
 - iii. Jesus being born of Mary just mired Jesus in more scandal, at least in appearance
 - c. But maybe this was God's purpose, because he had always used the unlikely to further His promises
 - i. Who would have guessed that an incestuous relationship, a prostitute, a Moabitess, and an adulterous and murderous relationship would be the means that God would use to further His promise?
 - ii. Who would have guessed that a virgin would be the means that God would use to further His promise?
 - d. Or maybe, we should have guessed that, because that's how God always works
 - i. As David himself said, in Psalm 8 - *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.*
 - ii. Part of God's display of His glory is selecting the unworthy and the unexpected, the weak and powerless to display His salvation
5. And so Jesus is according to God's grace
 - a. None of the people in this genealogy deserved for the promise to be fulfilled, but God fulfilled it anyway
 - b. And God provided that, through faith, they could participate in the promise as well
 - c. So Jesus' genealogy doesn't call us to honor and revere those who were the ancestors of Jesus, but rather to see that Jesus is an act completely of God's grace, an act of mercy for undeserving sinners
 - d. And maybe we, as undeserving sinners, can participate in the promise in Jesus as well, through faith - which leads us to our last point this morning

IV. Jesus Will Fulfill God's Promise

A. Jesus the Promise: If Jesus is the heir of Abraham, then we can keep trusting all of God's promises

1. Matthew calls us to see that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise, but he also calls us to see that the length of time between the promise and the fulfillment was no indication of a failure in God's purpose to fulfill the promise
 - a. Matthew is making the same point that Paul makes in II Corinthians 1:20 - *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Jesus]. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.*
 - b. Matthew and Paul look back at Israel's history and say, "Wow! It may have taken a while, but God kept every promise He made in Jesus. God has been completely faithful to His promise."
2. But, what does this genealogy have to do with us on the other side the fulfillment? - Is it merely knowledge that we can file away - a long time ago people wondered if God would keep His promise, but He did, end of story?
 - a. No, I don't think so, because, in a way, we are still waiting for the fulfillment of the promise
 - b. The promise may have been fulfilled in Jesus, but Paul can still say, in Romans 8:23-25 - *And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*
 - c. The promise was fulfilled, but we are still waiting - God has accomplished what He promised in Jesus, but we haven't completely laid hold of it yet - we are in the now and not yet
3. And so, as we see Jesus the promise, we should be encouraged to keep trusting in God's promise
 - a. Just as the time may have seemed long to many of the generations listed in Matthew's genealogy, so too the time may seem long to us until Jesus returns
 - b. But length of time has never indicated a lack of God's faithfulness, Peter says it elegantly in II Peter 3:8-10 - *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*
4. When we read this genealogy, we should be encouraged that we can rest and wait eagerly for God's promise - He's going to keep it, He always has

B. Jesus the King: If Jesus is the heir of David, then we must bow the knee to our king

1. Another of Matthew's purposes is to trace Jesus' royal descent - to prove and support Jesus' claim to the throne
2. And so, as we read the genealogy, we shouldn't overlook Jesus' claim to kingship - if this is Jesus' genealogy, then He is the king - He has the right to claim authority, to take the throne of David and to rule over all the nations
3. When we read the genealogies we should be preparing ourselves to bow the knee to this king - we should be preparing ourselves to hear His teaching and obey, to see His example and follow, to set aside ourselves and our will in order to fulfill the will of our king
4. We'll develop this theme as we go through Matthew, but let's start hear and be ready to hear it - if Jesus is the king then Jesus is the king - He deserves our worship and our obedience

C. Jesus the Savior: If Jesus is the answer to the exile, then we must seek Him to save us

1. As we went through the genealogy, we saw that Matthew's third purpose is to prepare us for a Savior - to prepare us to see that Jesus is the one who will bring God's people back from exile and that He is the display of God's grace
 - a. In a way, the genealogy is just a prelude to the angel's proclamation to Joseph in Matthew 1:21 - *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*
 - b. The genealogy reminds us that humanity needs a savior, but it also holds out hope that Jesus is that savior, that Jesus will undo the curse and give grace to those who don't deserve it
2. And so, as we see Jesus the Savior, we should respond in faith
 - a. The women of the genealogy teach us this - these were women that needed salvation, but they were also women that sought it in faith, and the answer was Jesus
 - b. And the answer is the same for us - we are those who need to be saved, those who are mired in all sorts of sin; we are those who don't deserve the promise, those who have been exiled from God's land
 - c. But, if we place our faith earnestly in Jesus, in the way that Rahab or Ruth did, giving up everything else to pursue this savior, to pursue this promise, then Jesus will undo the curse
3. So, as we read Matthew's genealogy, we should be reminded that we need a savior and be encouraged to run after Jesus wholeheartedly, looking for salvation in Him