

# Christmas 2015

<sup>22</sup> *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*  
<sup>23</sup> *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”*  
*(which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:22–23 ESV)*

**This Jesus**  
**December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015**  
**Matthew 1:1-17**  
**Rev. Paul Carter**

## **Introduction:**

Good morning. Please open your Bibles to Matthew 1:1-17. For our three Christmas services this year; this morning, Christmas Eve and actual Christmas Sunday on December 27<sup>th</sup>; we will be working through the first 2 chapters of Matthew’s Gospel. Most scholars agree that the opening words of Matthew’s Gospel: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ” (Matthew 1:1 ESV), are intended to serve as a title for the first two chapters. The word translated there as “genealogy” also means origin. Matthew is telling us where Jesus came from, what kind of world he came to and what God means for him to do in it. Obviously then, these chapters make for appropriate reading and preaching over Christmas.

This morning we begin with Jesus’ family tree as find it in Matthew 1:1-17. Now, most of us find these long lists of names to be rather uninteresting. Many a good intention to read through the Bible in a year dies on January 1<sup>st</sup> when you come to Matthew 1. But actually this chapter is really important. Its important because of something we’ve been talking about in our walk through 2 Corinthians. The Apostle warns his people about the danger of believing in another Jesus, who is not Jesus and who will not save us in the end. He says in 2 Corinthians 11:

<sup>3</sup> I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. (2 Corinthians 11:3–4 ESV)

According to Paul, the devil's game plan is to send out false teachers who will preach a false Gospel and try to get you connected to another Jesus, who is no Jesus and who will not own you at the end. The devil wants nothing more than for you to hear from Jesus the most terrifying words in Scripture:

'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' (Matthew 7:23 ESV)

That's what the devil wants. He wants you to think that you are a Christian because you are in relationship with some Jesus who is not the real Jesus – that's why we need this chapter of the Bible! This chapter in the Bible connects Jesus to the story of the Old Testament. That's what a genealogy is – its basically a selective table of contents for the story of the Old Testament. Remember that the Apostle Paul said that the real church – the true covenant community is

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20 ESV)

Therefore you have to build your life and fasten your hope upon the Jesus that is anticipated by the Old Testament prophets and explicated by the New Testament Apostles. You need THIS JESUS to be a real Christian; you need this Jesus to be saved. There are other Jesuses out there and there are many so called Christians following them – but this is the Jesus you need.

So let me read to you what Matthew says about the history and origin and backstory of this Jesus - this is God's Word to us:

<sup>1</sup> The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,<sup>3</sup> and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,<sup>4</sup> and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,<sup>5</sup> and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,<sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,<sup>7</sup> and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,<sup>8</sup> and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah,<sup>9</sup> and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,<sup>10</sup> and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah,<sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup> And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,<sup>13</sup> and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor,<sup>14</sup> and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,<sup>15</sup> and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob,<sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

<sup>17</sup> 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. (Matthew 1:1–

17 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

## **This Jesus Is:**

The first and most important thing that Matthew wants us to see is that this Jesus is:

### **1. The Jesus Of The Promises**

He says that in opening verse; Jesus is:

the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1 ESV)

Abraham is the one to whom the promises were formally given and David is the one to whom God confirmed and clarified those promises and gave them their fullest expression. That is the first and most important point that Matthew is trying to make – Jesus is the Son of Promise; he is the one we've been waiting for.

If you know the story of the Bible you know that it starts really well and then it goes really bad really fast. If you were to plot this story on a graph, Genesis 1 and 2 would be at the very top of the page. They would represent the high water mark in the story when we were like God and with God and under God, for God and it was good.

Genesis 3 would be the tipping point, the turning point toward ruin. Adam and Eve rebel against God, they reject his Word, they believe the lie of the serpent and they fall into darkness and ruin. They are kicked out and they begin to descend down – every generation gets worse and worse such that by the time of Noah we are told that every inclination of the human heart is only evil all the time. We are falling and we are falling fast.

But along side this story of collapse and ruin there is a story of promise and hope. That story also begins in Genesis 3. In Genesis 3 – right after the fall – right at the tipping point – God speaks a word of promise. He says to the serpent in the hearing of the man and the woman:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15 ESV)

Now there is not much there admittedly – all we know is that God will not just wipe humanity off the map, our line will continue, women will keep having babies and one of those babies, eventually will come born of a woman and he will crush the head of our enemy the devil at some cost to himself – that’s all we know so far.

History goes on, things go from bad to worse but God does not forget his promise. Finally in Genesis 12 we are told that God is ready to enter into the human story in a special and redemptive way. He chooses a family – a family that looks as good as dead – Abraham and Sarah are old and they are barren but into that darkness God speaks a word of life. He says:

<sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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.” (Genesis 12:2–3 ESV)

That’s the beginning of what we call The Abrahamic Covenant. God begins to clarify and amplify his promises from Genesis 3 - the seed of the woman is going to be a son of Abraham; blessing will come to the world through the family and line of Abraham. God shows up a few more times in the story and continues to clarify his promise to Abraham saying for example in Genesis 22:18:

in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” (Genesis 22:18 ESV)

That word of promise comes AFTER the story of Abraham being willing to offer Isaac on the altar. He obeyed the strange command of God, we are told because he believed that God was able to call life out of death and to raise people from the dead. Paul says that in Romans 4:17 and we find the same thing in Hebrews 11:19.

So here is what we know so far. God is going to salvage the human story. He is going to overcome our sinfulness and defeat our rebelliousness, he is going to bring life out of death and he is going to bring blessing back to the whole world through the line and family of Abraham. The blessings are going to be given somehow through obedience and faith. That makes sense

actually because the FALL was all about doubting and disobeying God the word of God, so obviously, we have to go back through the same way we went out.

Fast forward a thousand years or so. A son of Abraham named David sits upon the throne of Israel. He is a good man – the best of men and we begin to wonder if this is the one we’ve been waiting for. God shows up again and he further clarifies the word of promise. He says:

<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:12–13 ESV)

Now we learn that the seed that is promised – the offspring – will come through the line of David. He will be a king of Israel and he will establish an eternal kingdom. God will build an eternal house inside a dying house. That’s the promise of God. Now I won’t overwhelm you with grammatical notes but the promise God makes to David includes a bunch of different tenses meaning that there is an overlap between promises that seem to be for a far future son of David and some promises about some nearer sons of David. Meaning that every son of David will be in some sense “a son of God” and an agent of the promises. When he obeys, God will bless, but one day the ultimate Son of David will come and he will ALWAYS obey and God will ultimately bless. That is the son of David anticipated by the Old Testament prophets.

Long after the death of the actual David and the immediate son of David – King Solomon – a prophet of God said this about the ultimate Son of David who was still to come:

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6–7 ESV)

A child will come – a Son of David – who will be like no son of David we’ve ever seen before. He will be called Wonderful Counselor – MIGHTY GOD, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace – are you hearing that? The seed of Abraham, the Son of David will be GOD and he will be king among us and over us FOREVER – that’s the ultimate promise of the Old Testament! God will come! He will enter our story and turn it around! We will not descend into darkness forever! At some point in the future God will enter in and turn it around and bring us back to himself! A child will come, Isaiah says – and Matthew says – THIS CHILD IS THAT JESUS! This is the

child of promise.

If you understand the story of the Old Testament then you know that nothing is more important than that – nothing is more important than finding that Jesus. Nothing else matters, the Apostle Paul says:

<sup>20</sup>For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. (2 Corinthians 1:19–20 ESV)

Only God can turn this around, only the PROMISE OF GOD can reverse the curse and darkness of sin and all the promises of God find their YES IN HIM!

Think of it like this. When Adam fell the world began to fall under darkness and curse. Before long the whole earth was death and shadow – that’s where the story of the Old Testament ends, it ends literally in death and shadow. The last king of the Jews lies defeated and chained in the dungeon of Babylon. All hope is lost – everything is dark and shadow. Where is the promise of God? And then all of the sudden:

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5 ESV)

If you were graphing this story the birth of Jesus comes at the bottom of the V. Just when you thought things couldn’t get any worse – just when it seems that all hope is lost – A LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT OVERCOME IT. The light wins. The light shines and begins to spread. God has come. He has come in the flesh just as he promised. This Jesus is the hope and the light of the world. This Jesus is the promise of Almighty God.

The second thing Matthew wants us to see is that this is:

## **2. The Jesus who will save us from our sins**

An angel of the Lord says that in verse 21:

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21 ESV)

Matthew prepares us for that by reminding us of Jesus' family tree. Jesus comes from a pretty dysfunctional family – he enters a story of darkness and sin. Consider just a few of the names that he mentions: Judah, Tamar, Perez, Rahab the prostitute, Ruth and Uriah. All of those names recall deeply disturbing stories that reveal the depths of human sin.

The story of Judah is a story about a man – a patriarch of Israel – who seduced a hooker who turned out to be his daughter in law and got her pregnant – with a child named Perez who is the great, great grandfather of Jesus.

How about the story of Ruth? Ruth is a Moabitess – that is to say she is from the group of people who were born out of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters. Do you remember that story? We never tell that story in Sunday School – there is no Flannel Board package for that one – because it is gross and inappropriate. But here it is – in Jesus' family tree. Jesus is descended from a bunch of in-bred perverts. He enters a sin story.

Or how about Uriah? Why mention him? Because the episode with Uriah is the story that reminds us that even the best of men is not the God man. We need more than a Golden Boy we need the God-Boy – we need Jesus! David fell when he saw the wife of Uriah bathing on a roof top. She was beautiful, David was powerful and the rest is history. He sent for her, he raped her and murdered her husband. That baby died, but he married her and had another son named Solomon, another great, great grandfather of Jesus.

Are you getting the picture? This is a sin story! When the angel says that Jesus came to save us from our sins he is saying – that kind of sin. The icky, gross, proud, abusive, violent, lustful, sexual type sin that is pretty much endemic to the human species. Jesus came to save us from THAT KIND OF SIN.

We should also see that this Jesus is:

### **3. The Jesus who will gather in the Gentiles**

Again, consider some of those names. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth – all three of those women were

Gentiles. Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth, as I mentioned was a Moabitess. Now, this isn't really a new point, because that was part of what was promised to Abraham. God said to Abraham:

in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Genesis 22:18 ESV)

Salvation comes through the Jews – Jesus was a Jew – but it is FOR all the nations of the earth. Matthew emphasizes that by mentioning these Gentile women.

Fourthly, we should see that this Jesus is:

#### **4. The Jesus who will do for us what we could never do for ourselves**

Again, consider some of the names. Rehoboam, Asa or Asaph, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah. Who are these people? These are all sons of David who were not THE SON OF DAVID. You see, way back in Deuteronomy 17 – before Israel even had kings- Moses said that a day would come when God would give them kings. The plan eventually would be to bless Israel and the world through an obedient king. The king would be under God – over all – just like we were supposed to be in the beginning. The king would know the law and rule with justice and equity. David got closer to that ideal than anyone else ever did but David was not Jesus and neither were his sons.

Rehoboam was an arrogant fool, Asa started out really well but in his old age he became arrogant, self reliant and petty. Jehoshaphat also started out very strong. He was a reformer and he was zealous but he was naïve and unwise. He made foolish alliance and he did not hate evil. Uzziah was a good man. A reformer, a wise and prosperous ruler but ultimately a man of pride. A man who over stepped his bounds and who did not fear the Lord. Each and every one of those sons of David failed to keep the covenant and to obey the Word of the Lord. They were good men – the best of men and they fell short.

By the end of the Old Testament we have almost lost hope in the line of David. The last Davidic king is a prisoner of the king of Babylon. Israel in ruins, the temple is destroyed and the people scattered. Where is our obedient son?

Matthew says: This baby is that Jesus! This is the Son of David – this is the obedient Son! He

will do for us what we could never do for ourselves! He will keep the whole law for his people and suffer the punishment their sins deserve – he will be our propitiation.

What Matthew says in narrative genealogy, the Apostle Paul says in straight forward prose:

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19 ESV)

Jesus is the obedient son.

Lastly, Matthew also wants us to see that this Jesus is:

## **5. The Jesus who ends the exile and brings his people back to God**

Look at 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. (Matthew 1:17 ESV)

Matthew has arranged his genealogy to highlight three main epochs – from Abraham to David, from David to exile and from exile to Jesus. That's a Jewish way of saying that this baby Jesus is all about promises made and exiles ended. That's what this is about! Jesus is the long awaited seed of the woman who will defeat our enemy, break our chains and bring us back to God. We want to go home. We have wandered far from God and far from glory and we want to go home. All of this goes back to the beginning. Do you remember how Genesis 3 ends?

<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" <sup>23</sup>therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22–24 ESV)

Because we would not live under God's Word, God sent us out and away from his blessings. He sent us into darkness, into curse and into exile but JESUS – The Word of God in the flesh – JESUS BRINGS US HOME! He ends our exile, he cancels the curse, he lights up the darkness and he brings us all the way home!

That's what this story is about! The story of the Bible has three main anchor points. The beginning, the cross and the end – which is also a new beginning; and Jesus is the centre of it all. He is God's plan of redemption – HE IS THE RESCUE MISSION! We are on the highway to hell, we are on a fast train to oblivion and Jesus comes down from heaven, gets on the crazy train and kills the conductor and he says: TAKE HOLD OF ME AND BE SAVED!

That's the story of the Bible! That's what Christmas is all about! This is the plan of God to redeem a people for himself. THIS IS JESUS – born of a woman, Seed of Abraham, Son of David; come to save his people from their sin. God with us, Emmanuel - this is the Word of the Lord – THANKS BE TO GOD! Let's pray together.