

The Genesis of Jesus Christ

Matthew 1:1-17

Halifax: 22 June 2003

Introduction

- Today: A new series in Matthew
 - Matthew's gospel focuses on Jesus as the righteous king
 - He shows in particular that Jesus is the king of the Jews...
 - that is, that He is the one that was promised to them and that came to save them as God's Covenant people.
 - He is, in other words, the Saviour the Church.
 - But Matthew also shows how the Jews rejected Him as King.
 - Many of the covenant people are apostate.
 - This is no less true today where there are many who are baptised in His name, who boast that they are Christians, but who have no saving faith.
 - Matthew also shows how even though He was largely rejected by the Covenant people, yet God exalted Him to be king over all...
 - Not just the king of the Jews, but of the nations...
 - Not just having authority over earth, but in heaven and earth.
 - In preaching from this gospel,
 - My hope is that God's Spirit will teach you to delight in Jesus as your King so that you will gladly submit to Him and eagerly promote His kingdom—
 - in your homes, in the church, in your city, and in all the world.
 - Matthew's Gospel begins by presenting the Genealogy of Jesus Christ.
 - This is laid out for us in Matthew 1:1-17, the portion we will look at today.
 - We might call this the beginnings or the Genesis of Jesus Christ.

I. Jesus Christ is presented here as the new Genesis for mankind!

- He is the new Genesis for *you*!
 - A. Matthew begins his gospel with the words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ."
 1. The word "genealogy" in our Bibles translates the word "Genesis."
 - a. It would seem that Matthew is deliberately echoing the language of Moses in Genesis 5:1 where it says:
 - 1) "This is the book of the genealogy (Genesis) of Adam."

- The word *Adam* means man—and though it is the personal name of the first man,
 - In Genesis 5 it is used to refer to mankind.
 - Moses sets out the beginnings or the origins—the genesis of mankind in chapter 5.
- 2) Now Matthew comes along, writing a gospel for the Jews who were very familiar with Genesis 5, and says:
- Matt 1:1: “The book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ.”
 - It is as if he is saying:
 - “As Moses spoke about the Genesis of Adam, so I am going to tell you about the Genesis of Jesus Christ.”
2. Brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is the new Adam—the new man!
- a. He is the new beginning for mankind—
 - a man that brings to us a new beginning that we so desperately need!
 - b. We needed a new beginning because in the first Adam, there was death.
 - 1) Genesis 5 is about all these men that were born, but then died.
 - As Paul says, “In Adam all die.”
 - Man’s Genesis was wonderful in that God created him and brought him into being—
 - but the glory of man was marred by sin and death.
 - The account of man’s genesis is the terrible story of good becoming evil—
 - of man corrupting himself and becoming subject to judgement.
 - 2) Sin entered the world when Adam rebelled against God...
 - and God brought death (and all the hardships and suffering that we face in this world) as a judgement upon man for his rebellion.
 - The glory of man was turned to shame.
 - c. Anyone looking at the history of mankind would be compelled to say,
 - “If only man could have a new beginning!”
 - “If only there was some way to start all over again...”
 - And here, in Matthew 1, is the Genesis of Jesus Christ!
 - Here is the origin of the One who makes things new!

- Here is the origin of the One...
 - who takes what was dead and makes it alive,
 - who takes what was guilty and makes it righteous,
 - who takes what was ruined and makes it whole,
 - who takes what was alienated from God and brings it near,
 - who takes what was defiled and makes it holy.
 - This is the Genesis of Jesus Christ, the New beginning for mankind!
- B. The New Beginning He brings is in His name... Jesus Christ.
- It is by this name, Jesus Christ, that Matthew presents Him in v. 1:
 - “The book of the genealogy of **Jesus Christ**.”
 - You will find that Matthew very rarely refers to Him elsewhere by His full name: “Jesus Christ,”
 - but here at the beginning of his gospel, he wants to emphasise His name.
1. The name **Jesus** means: “Jehovah saves.”
 - a. God brought Jesus into our fallen world to save His people from their sin and misery.
 - Jesus was sent with the mission to do whatever it took to save us...
 - not only to live a righteous life for us...
 - but even to give his life as a ransom for us on the cross.
 - b. When Jesus is brought into our world, something radically new is brought in—salvation—He is the Genesis or the beginning of salvation.
 - He introduces salvation into a world that had no real salvation other than what had been promised to come through Him...
 - And if He had not come into the world, there would be no salvation here.
 - We had no way to save ourselves...
 - He is our new beginning.
 2. His second name: **Christ**, means: “The Messiah” or “The Anointed One.”
 - a. This name speaks of one who is God’s agent—one connected to Him and sent by Him.
 - 1) In the Old Testament,
 - God anointed prophets to show that they were there to speak for Him to His people.

- He anointed priests to show that they were there to consecrate His people by sacrifices and prayers to make them holy and acceptable...
- And He anointed kings to show that they were there to bring His rule to bear in the lives of His people and to lead them in battle against their enemies.
- Because these anointed ones were connected to God—
 - they were able to form a link between God and His people.
 - They were the agents who brought God's ministry and made it accessible to Israel.
- b. But all along, God spoke of One that would be anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.
 - In Deuteronomy 18:15, we are told of a greater prophet than Moses:
 - “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,”
 - This prophet was the one by whom all the others prophets spoke.
 - In Psalm 110:4, we are told of greater priest than Aaron:
 - “The LORD has sworn And will not relent, ‘You *are* a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.’”
 - This one was to have an unchangeable priesthood.
 - In Zech 9:9, God's people are instructed about a king that is greater than David.
 - “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He *is* just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”
 - Here is a king that would be without sin and would bring salvation.
- c. Yes, all these others were anointed of God—
 - But Jesus is the foundation and origin—the genesis of anointing.
 - He is **the Christ, the** anointed one.
 - It is in Him that all other anointing begins.
 - He is the One who is truly connected to God and so the one who connects His people to God.
 - He is the Mediator between God and man.
 - As our prophet, He effectively brings God's words to us...

- As our priest, He offers acceptable sacrifices to God and intercedes for us to make us righteous...
- As our King, He governs us in God's ways and delivers us from all our enemies—even death.

TRANS> Jesus Christ is the new beginning for mankind.

- Without Him, you have only the first Genesis of sin and death...
- But in Jesus Christ, righteousness and life are found...
- There is a whole new Genesis!

II. This Genesis of Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of God's promise of grace.

- A. Matthew shows us that Jesus' coming is not sudden—
 - it is not something unanticipated—
 - not something that suddenly appeared in the world without forewarning—
 - He is the son of Abraham and the son of David—
- 1. His coming was the fulfilment of promises that God made to His people dating all the way back to Abraham.
 - In fact, the promises go back long before Abraham,
 - but it was from Abraham that God clearly called out a distinct people to be identified as His own...
 - a people to whom Christ was promised.
 - It is from this time that the Covenant sign of circumcision was given to mark out God's people as distinct from others.
- 2. Christianity is not like some religions—like Mormonism—or even Islam—that suddenly appear in the world...
 - Everything in God's Old Testament revelation points to Jesus so that He is the expected one and the longed for one.
 - a. When John the Baptist sees Him and declares,
 - “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,”
 - These are words that are meaningful because there is a long history of God's people making sacrifices to atone for sin.
 - If there were no such history and preparation, John's word would be sheer nonsense.

- b. By a series of promises and ceremonies, God had prepared His people and through them, the whole world, for the coming of Christ.
 - When the time had come for Jesus to appear, there were many in Israel and in the world who were looking for and expecting Him.
 - When Anna saw him at His presentation at the temple,
 - she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.
 - Many others upon seeing Him call Him the son of David.
 - This only made sense because God had promised a son to David that would inherit his throne forever.
 - Clearly He was expected by many—
 - He was the son promised to Abraham—
 - He was the son promised to David.
 - c. So His appearing, although it was a new thing, was not an unanticipated thing.
 - It was connected to all the promises of grace that God had given before.
 - The promises were given both for those who received them in their own day as well as for us who came after they were fulfilled.
 - Matthew presents Christ as having roots that reach back to these promises...
 - Christ is presented in these promises and we can understand who He is only as we embrace the promises and understand Him as the fulfilment of them.
 - Matthew presents Him as the son of Abraham and the Son of David.
 - He is not a mystical figure, but a real person whose genealogy is presented to us.
 - He truly came in human flesh, and entered into this world.
- B. There were three great periods of promised grace to which Matthew refers, each comprising 14 generations.
- These three periods are defined in verse 17—
 - 1) “So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations.”
 - This first period begins with Abraham and ends with David.
 - It is the period that gradually brings about the establishment of the Kingdom.

- 2) The verse continues: “from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations”
- This second period begins with David.
 - This is the period of the monarchy in which the kingdom gradually deteriorates, being ruined by idolatry.
- 3) Verse 17 continues: “from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.”
- This third period is one of obscurity and weakness for the kingdom of God.
 - It is a period of preparation for the coming of Christ—
 - The people are, as it were, in the wilderness, and that is where Christ comes to meet them.
- Consider now the promise of grace that was given at the beginning of each period.
1. First, to Abraham.
- a. God comes to this man and promises to multiply His descendants as the stars of heaven as the sand of the seashore!
- And the promise is much more than just numbers...
 - God promises to be a God to Abraham and his seed...
 - He promises that they will be His people!
 - In other words, it is not just that Abraham will have a lot of descendants, but that he will have a lot of descendants that belong to God!
 - There is no greater blessing for a sinner to hear than that he and his descendants will be taken as God's very own people!
 - How can it be that sinful human flesh can walk before God and be blameless?
 - How is that the holy God of heaven can call sinners “my people?”

TRANS> And what is more...

- b. God promised this to a man who was barren and unable to produce one child by his lawfully wedded wife.
- This barrenness is something that God appointed for Abraham to make it perfectly clear that children who belong to Him are the product of His grace.

- Abraham's barrenness testifies to all of us as God's people that we cannot produce children for God's kingdom apart from God's grace.
 - All we can produce is fallen children who are fit for rejection by God and eternal Hell!
 - And what do we see of Abraham's seed but a people who are continually going astray but who are continually kept by God's grace.
 - We do not see a people clinging to God on their own, but a people kept by His gracious working—
 - He sends His law to guide them and keep them looking to Christ,
 - He sends troubles to correct them,
 - He sends leaders like Moses and Joshua and Samuel to call them back to Himself.
- c. Ultimately, the promise to Abraham is nothing less than the promise of Jesus Christ!
 - Jesus Christ is the One who makes it possible for Abraham and his seed to belong to God!
 - Without Christ, there would be no fruitfulness—no soul would be saved...
 - Without Christ, they are full of sin and guilt and without hope.
 - The blessing of Abraham is found only by attaching yourself to Jesus Christ.

TRANS> And so by God's grace, the seed of Abraham becomes a multitude—

- a multitude that belongs to God and is brought together in the land of promise under David,
 - their enemies being conquered and God's government being established.

2. This leads us into the next period of promised grace which begins with David.
 - a. To David, God promises that He will establish His throne forever and that his seed will be seated on that throne to reign forever.
 - It is the promise of a godly kingdom in which God's anointed king rules in righteousness and is gladly obeyed by God's people.
 - It will be a reign in which the people are unified in the truth of God, both in faith and practice.
 - It speaks of an end of oppression rebellion in all their societies—from their homes to their cities and their nation.
 - It is the promise of absolute victory over all enemies that would oppose God's people,

- not only by direct attack to destroy them,
- but also by temptation to entice them to follow other God's and worship idols.

b. But what happened instead in this period?

- 1) Things looked very promising at first with Solomon as peace and unity prevailed, and the covenant nation was feared by all their enemies.
- 2) But it was not long until Solomon's heart was led away by women and he,
 - as the very one who was to unify the people in the true worship of God
 - began to set up idols.
- 3) Soon, the kingdom was severed in two and...
 - under Jeroboam,
 - the northern side was led away from true worship and into blatant idolatry.
 - It is only a few generations until the southern kingdom of Judah falls into the same condition...
 - Under king Ahaz, Judah begins to look very much like a pagan kingdom rather than the city of God.
 - In time, the wickedness became so great that God led His people into captivity to serve foreign nations.

c. Where was the unity that God had promised to David?

- The enemies of God's anointed king rejoiced and his throne was cast down to the ground.
- But the promise of grace to David still stood, awaiting fulfilment in Jesus Christ.
 - David and his sons could not keep the kingdom together,
 - they could not maintain unity under God—
 - they could not keep the nation from idolatry—
 - they could not even keep themselves from idolatry.
 - But God's promise could not fail:
 - "Once by my holiness I have sworn, I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon" (Psalm 89:35-37)
 - The promise was still alive, though waiting fulfilment in David's seed.

3. The collapse of David's throne brings us into the third period of promised grace.
 - a. Here are the people of God, in bondage to a foreign nation because of their idolatry with no reigning king of their own.
 - And it is at this very time that God comes with His promise of grace to make a new covenant with them.
 - This promise is set forth in Jeremiah 31:31-34:
 - “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”
 - To summarise, God promises three things here:
 - to bring them out of captivity,
 - to give them the holy Spirit to change their hearts,
 - and to forgive their sins.
 - b. This covenant was fulfilled in a shadowy way when Cyrus issued his decree to release captive Israel that they might rebuild Jerusalem.
 - God gave His Spirit to His people as Nehemiah, Ezra, Zerrubababel and others led them in rebuilding the city...
 - He also forgave their sins that had caused Him to drive them into Babylon in the first place...
 - But clearly the gracious promise was far greater than what they experienced in returning to Jerusalem.
 - They knew that God had something better for them in the Son of Abraham and the Son of David.
 - c. Once again, the promise of grace was waiting to find ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ.
 - It was not until He came that the full assurance of the forgiveness of sins was realised when He suffered in our place on the cross.
 - It was not until then that our sins were actually taken away by Jesus.
 - And it was not until His resurrection that the Spirit was poured out on His people to give them a new heart, zealous to serve God.

- It was then that the church was raised with Him to walk in newness of life, experiencing the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

C. Each of the three periods had their own fulfilments—

1. Each one was brought to a completion as signified by the number fourteen.
 - a. Matthew intentionally leaves out a few names in order to get three fourteens, not because he is trying to deceive people about the time...
 - but in order to make a point.
 - Each fourteen represents two sevens...
 - Seven is the number of completeness or perfection.
 - This is to show that each of the three periods of promise ran their full course...
 - The seed of Abraham was multiplied to make a people for God...
 - The house of David did reign, there was unity and victory over enemies...
 - And Israel was delivered from captivity...
 - Each of these periods was complete...
 - In each the promise of grace found a measure of fulfilment in a shadowy way—
 - but in none was the fullness of promised grace realised.
 - b. Matthew has presented three periods of fourteen generations which is six sevens or 42 generations.
 - Now it is time for the seventh seven!
 - Now it is time of the complete fulfilment...
 - The Jubilee came in Israel at the seventh seven...
 - The Jubilee was the time when all slaves were freed and all debts were forgiven—everything was restored once again!
 - Matthew presents Jesus Christ as the One who Himself brings in that great sabbath of sabbaths—
 - He is the one who brings the liberation and rest to His people.
 - He is the One who fulfilled all things that were promised to Abraham, to David, and to the returning captives!
 - In Him we are made true sons,

- in Him we find a king who brings us into perfect unity and destroys our enemies,
- in Him the Spirit is poured out to give us new life and our sins are fully forgiven.
- He is the new beginning for the people of God.

TRANS> And Matthew, knowing that God's people cannot save themselves,

- not only presents Jesus here as a new beginning for us...
- But also presents the people of God as those who desperately need a new beginning!

III. Look now at the way Matthew presents Christ's forefathers.

A. He highlights their sins and imperfections—

1. See how he goes out of his way to mention Tamar...
 - Perhaps you remember the story of Tamar in Gen 38—
 - Tamar had married Judah's eldest son (Er), but God judged him with death because he was wicked.
 - As the custom was, she married his brother Onan, but God also judged him and killed him for he too was wicked.
 - Judah promised to give his third son to Tamar in time, but did not follow through...
 - So Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute in order that she might have relations with Judah, her father in law!
 - By this incestuous union, twins were conceived, and Perez, one of the twins, became a progenitor of Jesus Christ.
 - Ordinarily, women are not mentioned in genealogies, but Matthew draws attention to this disgraceful union.
 - He presents Christ as a the child of incest.
2. Matthew does the same thing with several others of Christ's progenitors...
 - In verse 5 we find Rahab mentioned...
 - She was a prostitute from Canaan.
 - Again in verse 5, Matthew mentions Ruth, a Moabite—
 - the Moabites had been excluded from the people of God... for they had sought to curse Israel and lead her astray.

- In verse 6, Matthew highlights the fact that Solomon was begotten of the woman David took to himself by adultery which included the murder of her husband.
- Thus Matthew shows that Christ is the descendent of adultery.
- Matthew does not omit the names of Ahaz who tried to make Israel into a pagan nation and led them into the worship of idols—
 - In v. 11, he highlights the fact that Judah was carried away to Babylon.
 - There was such idolatry that God had to spit his people out of the land, and yet, these kings are all in the line of Jesus...
 - Jesus is presented as the son of idol worshippers.

B. Why does Matthew present things in this way?

- Would it not have been much more decorous to pass over some of these things rather than to highlight them?
 - It seems almost blasphemous to say that Jesus Christ, as far as his earthly line, is the son of incest, the child of a prostitute of Canaan, the son of a Moabite, the child of an adulterous marriage, the son of idolaters.
 - What is the purpose in presenting all these shameful things?
 - What can you learn from this?

1. First of all, learn that there is no cause for boasting in the church!

- a. A boasting church is a most unbecoming thing!
 - Matthew presents the covenant people here in their true colours!
 - His gospel is particularly for the Jews,
 - and their great error that kept them from Christ—
 - the error that undid them—
 - was boasting!
- b. Matthew is smacking them right in the face with the reality of David's line.
 - He is showing them that there is no merit to be found in the Old Testament Church!
 - It is only by grace that they can hope to stand—
 - the record of their history proves that they will never find merit in themselves, but must look to the One God has provided.
 - Jesus Christ is the new genesis—
 - He is the one that God promised to Abraham and to David and to the captives in Babylon.

- If anyone is to boast, let him boast in Jesus Christ.
 - You have nothing but sin to show to God...
 - Jesus Christ has nothing but righteousness.
- c. Jesus did not come to save us because we were good, but because we were sinners.
- Bring your merit or the church's merit to God and you will be condemned.
 - Bring Christ and His merit and you will be saved.
- What Matthew says here to the Old Testament Church applies just as much to the New Testament Church.
 - Paul warns the Gentiles who have been brought into Christ's kingdom that if they start to boast, they will be cut off just like the boasting Jews were cut off.
 - Let Matthew teach you not to boast!
 - As Paul says, "Where then is boasting? It is excluded! By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."
2. Secondly, learn from Christ's shameful lineage that the glory of Christ is not enhanced by the glory of His ancestors, but in how He abased Himself to come to us.
- a. It would be futile to try to dress up sinners in such a way as to make them worthy of begetting Christ.
 - To pretend to do so would only diminish His glory—
 - it would be an artificial glory with no real substance to it.
 - b. Just as the glory of Christ's sacrifice is enhanced because He not only died, but died the shameful death of the cross—
 - so the glory of His incarnation is enhanced in that He not only was born of human flesh, but of sinful human flesh!
 - His identification with sinners is His honour—
 - He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance!
 - He did not come to escape our disgraces, but to bear them away!
 - c. But don't misunderstand the point.
 - 1) It was not that the Holy Son of God didn't care that we were sinners.

- You know how some people will boast of their tolerance and acceptance of sinners when the driving force behind their acceptance of sinners is their own love of sin.
- It is no virtue for a man who loves his adultery to be tolerant of adulterous women...
 - or a woman who loves to gossip to be tolerant of her gossiping friends...
 - or an idol worshipper to be tolerant of other idol worshippers.
 - This is not so much tolerance as it is rejoicing in wickedness.

2) Jesus has no love for sin.

- Jesus hates sin and despises the shame of sin.
- It is like an open sewer to Him—
 - It is repulsive...
 - much more repulsive than any of us can understand!
- He hated sin so much that He never once yielded to it—
 - not even in His thoughts—
 - And even though he faced the strongest, most crafty temptations that Satan could muster.
 - He never yielded to them.
- To Him, as the holy Son of God,
 - identifying with our sin was the worst thing that He could imagine because He hated sin...
- And yet...
 - because of His great love for sinners—
 - He left the glory of Heaven and came down into the cesspool of human depravity in order that He might save some.
 - He associated Himself with us in order that He might rescue us.
 - Matthew glories in the fact that he came to those who were so unworthy!

TRANS> And this leads to the next thing that you can learn as you consider His shameful pedigree.

3. Learn that wherever you have been—however dirty you have made yourself—
 - a. by incest or adultery or idolatry—

- Here is a Saviour for you!
 - His glory is not in saving the righteous, but sinners.
- b. If you want to have a new beginning in Jesus Christ—
- If you want to be saved from your sin and joined to God—
 - You only need to bring one thing with you to be accepted by Him...
 - Your sin!
- 1) Are you barren like Abraham?
 - Come to Christ and you will abound with fruitfulness.
 - 2) Are you out of control like the house of David, overcome by your enemies and filled with corruption?
 - Come to Christ and you will be subdued under God and all your enemies will be defeated.
 - 3) Are you in bondage to sin and Satan because of your guilt—like the captives in Babylon?
 - Ask Christ and He will give you the Holy Spirit to live a new life for Him...
 - Ask Christ, and He will wash away all your sins in His blood that was shed on the cross.

Conclusion:

Christ is the only way for sinners to start over—

- He is the new Genesis for the world!
- He is the new beginning for you if you would but humble yourself and come to Him.
 - Why not start over with Him today—
 - He offers a fresh new start to needy sinners.
 - He is Jesus Christ.