

MATTHEW 1:1-17 - KING OF THE JEWS AND KING OF KINGS

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Let's turn to Matthew 1:1-17.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1, ESV)

Matthew begins at the beginning - literally. His opening words link back to about a dozen statements in Genesis that use the word "generations" – the Hebrew word is toledot – to refer to a span of time, a period of history. For instance, Genesis 2:4 says **These are the generations – the toledot – of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.** And, Genesis 5:1 says, **This is the book of the generations – the toledot – of Adam.** Genesis goes on to talk about the toledot of Noah, of the sons of Noah, of Shem, of Terah, of Ishmael, of Isaac, of Esau, and of Jacob. The period of time lasts until the next period begins, so **the generations of the heavens and the earth** continue until **the generations of Adam** begin, and **the generations of Adam** continue until **the generations of Noah** begin. You see how it goes.

Well, Matthew begins with **the generations of Jesus Christ**, using the very same phrasing found in Genesis 5:1: **the book of the generations of Adam.** At first glance we might think that Matthew is just talking about Jesus' past. That would make Jesus the end of the line. But following the pattern of Genesis means that Matthew is not just describing Jesus' history, but His future, and the future of all who are in Him. The genealogy is certainly important, as we will see, but it is only the beginning of **the generations of Jesus Christ.**

Matthew 1:1 says that Jesus is **the Son of David and the Son of Abraham.** These are very important titles.

As the Son of David, Jesus is the King of the Jews. He is the promised descendant who would occupy David's throne for eternity. Jesus is called "Son of David" nine times in Matthew (see Matthew 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30-31, 21:9, 21:15, 22:42).

The Lord made a promise to David and the people of Israel:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your ^{singular} offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:12-13; see also Psalm 132:11; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5).

It might seem that this was fulfilled by Solomon, but Solomon was appointed king before David died. The true fulfillment of this promise is in Jesus the King. Israel hoped and longed for this King. Isaiah wrote about Him. Jeremiah wrote about Him. The nation set their eyes on Him. He is the Anointed One of God.

TRANSITION: But Jesus is more than the King of the Jews.

As the Son of Abraham, Jesus is the King of kings. Abraham was not a Jew; he wasn't even a Hebrew. He was a Chaldean, from the area we know as southern Iraq or Kuwait. He was from a family of idolatrous polytheists (see Joshua 24:2). But the One True God called Abraham out of his idolatry and into a salvation relationship with Himself.

And He promised Abraham that one of his descendants would be the cause of blessing of the entire earth:

I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring [singular, not plural] as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice. (Genesis 22:17-18).

It is because Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords that the Gentiles can hope for reconciliation to their Creator.

TRANSITION: Let's take a look at Jesus' genealogy.

JESUS' GENEALOGY

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. (Matthew 1:2-17, ESV)

This is quite a list of names. It was certainly impressive to the Jews of Jesus' time. It traces Him back to Abraham, the patriarch of patriarchs, through the line of David. It includes other famous and notable men like Boaz, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Incredibly, it shows that Jesus was descended from every single king of Judah.

But it also includes people whose sins are unmistakable, not just Abraham and David, but Judah, Solomon, Rehoboam, Ahaz, and others. It includes four women, which is not unheard of – some of the Old Testament genealogies list women - but not common. I've preached through the stories of these women, all of whom were Gentiles. Tamar was a Canaanite, and acted like a prostitute to deceive Judah into sleeping with her. Rahab was a Canaanite and a prostitute. Ruth was a Moabite. Bathsheba was a Hittite, and was involved in David's adultery.

So the truth is that Jesus' genealogy is as sordid and corrupt as anyone's could be. More than half the kings mentioned between David and Jehoniah were condemned by God for doing evil.

What's more, Jesus' genealogy doesn't reveal a steady rise in righteousness and holiness until He appears; quite the opposite, in fact. Matthew 1:2-6 describes Abraham to David, Israel's first true king. This really was a golden time as the family of one man becomes an entire nation. Matthew 1:6-11 goes on to describe the steady decline of the kingdom, which was divided after Solomon's death because of Solomon's sin. Many of those mentioned here did evil in the sight of the Lord, such as Rehoboam (Second Chronicles 12:13-14). And Matthew 1:12-16 speaks of the time from the captivity to Jesus' birth, during which Israel was, at best, an occupied nation.

All of this to say that Israel did not steadily ascend in importance and holiness until it culminated in the birth of the King, but rather peaked at the end of the first period (Abraham to David), and then declined into insignificance because of the failure of her kings (David to the captivity). In the final group, from the captivity to Joseph, the family dwindled into obscurity, until David's line is represented by a poor carpenter in Nazareth.

And then Jesus is born, a sudden burst of light and glory. **The people who walked in darkness saw a great light; those who dwelt in a land of darkness, on them light shone** (Isaiah 9:2).

BRINGING IT HOME

Let's think about what we learn from these verses.

FIRST, IT SHOWS THAT GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES.

He promised Abraham, **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed** (Genesis 12:3). He promised to raise up a righteous Savior and Judge through the line of David (Isaiah 11:1-4). The Bible tells us, and the genealogy proves, that God cannot and does not lie (Numbers 23:19; John 14:2).

Satan successfully tempted Eve to believe that God had lied to her and Adam about the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We focus a lot of attention on Satan's words, "Has God really said?", and rightly so; all sin and rebellion is a rejection of God's Word. But more than doubting God's Word, Adam and Eve believed that God could, and would, lie to them if it suited His purposes. They decided they could not trust Him; they had to rely on their own wisdom, and their new friend, the Talking Snake.

Ever since then the Lord has made promises in His Word, and demonstrated His trustworthiness by His actions. Even though it took about 2,000 years to fulfill His promise to Abraham, and 700 years to fulfill His promise to David, God kept His Word to them and the nation.

Let's take just one promise made by the Lord:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30, ESV)

This is true. He proves it to be true in our daily lives. If you will come to Him, take His yoke, and learn from Him, He will give you rest, and you will find rest for your soul. I've met people who said, "I tried Jesus, and it didn't work for me." But Jesus didn't say, "Try me." He said a) come to Me (that is, in repentance, forsaking your sin and rebellion), b) take My yoke upon you (that is, submit yourself to Him as Lord), and c) learn from Me (believe what He says and obey what He commands). Not one person who has repented of their sin, come to Christ, submitted to His Lordship, and committed themselves to believing Him and obeying Him, fails to find rest. In fact, repentance, submission, and faithful obedience IS rest.

SECOND, IT REMINDS US THAT SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE.

Salvation doesn't run in families.

Righteous David was the father of unrighteous Solomon, who was the father of unrighteous Rehoboam, who was the father of unrighteous Abijah, who was the father of righteous Asaph, who was the father of righteous Jehoshaphat, who was the father of unrighteous Joram, who was the father of righteous Uzziah, and on it goes.

Those who are born again are **born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.** (John 1:13). We can and ought to raise our children to know the Scriptures and the truth of the Gospel, but we cannot raise them to BE Christians. They must be MADE Christians by the sovereign choice of God the Father, the sufficient atonement of Jesus Christ, and the effective working of the Holy Spirit. We must not stop evangelizing our children until we see the evidence in their lives that they have been born again.

And we evangelize them in the confidence that God does save, and when He saves, He completely and radically changes the sinner's heart. The grace of God is wonderfully powerful.

Romans 5:20-21 says that

... where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21, ESV)

Grace is not merely how we are forgiven, but how we are transformed.

Paul writes in First Corinthians 15:10,

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10, ESV)

Grace works. Grace exerts. Grace sweats. We know that God's grace has come upon someone, because they themselves are changed in heart and behavior.

AND THIRD, WE ARE REMINDED OF THE MERCY AND COMPASSION OF OUR GOD.

Philippians 2:6-8 says Jesus **humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross**. This humbling was not theoretical or philosophical or rhetorical; it was practical and actual. He took on human flesh. He was descended from sinners, men and women both. Some of His ancestors are the most famous men in the Old Testament. Others are utterly unknown outside this genealogy.

But the Bible says that

For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, (Hebrews 2:11, ESV)

There is a beautiful moment that comes right after the Sermon On The Mount.

And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. (Matthew 8:2–3, NASB95)

At that time no one touched lepers, at the risk of becoming leprous themselves. Lepers could expect others to throw rocks at them if they got too close. But this man was desperate, and he came asking for help in spite of the crowd. The question wasn't whether Jesus had the power to heal, but whether He was willing to heal. Jesus was unashamed of this man, and touched him, and healed him.

Jesus' genealogy is filled with men and women who were spiritually leprous, polluted by wickedness, and infected with sin. He never recoiled in horror from His ancestry. Instead, His task on earth was to seek out and save men and women just like them; men and women just like us.

Let's be reminded this morning that God always keeps His promises, and trust Him when our so-called “friends” try to convince us that He is not trustworthy.

Let's remember that salvation is by grace alone; it doesn't run in the family; no one is saved because of who their ancestors are, or who their descendants are. Because of this let's keep evangelizing our children and grandchildren until they show that the grace of God has transformed their hearts and their behavior.

And let's remember the mercy and kindness of our God. Jesus didn't arrive on the scene only to be horrified at how bad people are. The Holy One of Israel came from a long line of sinners, going back to Adam. He came for a single purpose: to save sinners. To save me. To save you.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we praise Your name for the gift of the Savior. Even in these early verses of Matthew we see Your faithfulness, Your love, Your grace and mercy, Your judgment and Your holiness. We submit ourselves to the working of Your grace, to continue to transform our hearts and actions. If there are any here who do not know You, please have mercy on them and save them! In the precious name of Jesus, and for His eternal glory we pray – Amen!