

The Promised King

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[0 : 0 0] Let's move to our Bible reading for this morning and Phil Copeland is going to be leading us as we look at Matthew's gospel, the very beginning of Matthew's gospel. You'll find that in the church Bibles, I think on page 807.

And here's the very beginning of the first words of what we call the New Testament. But of course, which just continue the story of the Bible from the very beginning.

And this first section of Matthew's gospel summarizes an extraordinary length of history of the people of God.

It takes us all the way back to Genesis chapter 12 and brings us all the way to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it does so by listing all this great genealogy of family tree of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So let's see if we can make sense of this together. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[1 : 0 6] Abraham was the father of Isaac. And Isaac, the father of Jacob. And Jacob, the father of Judah and his brothers. You all know those ones, don't you?

I wonder if you know the rest of them. 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 Nashon. And Nashon, the father of Salmon. 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. Abijah, the father of Asaph. And Asaph, the father of Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat, the father of Joram.

[2 : 0 6] And Joram, the father of Uzziah. And Uzziah, the father of Jotham. And Jotham, the father of Ahaz. And Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah 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 Matan, and Matan 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 14 generations, and from

David to the deportation to Babylon, 14 generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, 14 generations. Amen. May God bless to us this his word.

Well, good morning, and please do have your Bibles open to Matthew chapter 1, which is really all about God's promised king. Matthew chapter 1. Well, it's been a significant couple of months for our royal family in Britain. Prince William and his wife Kate announced that they were expecting baby number three, and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth herself and Prince William celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. And of course, this week, the palace announced the engagement of Prince Harry to Meghan Markle. You couldn't escape the news. It's like Meghan mania was all over the media. Upon hearing the news, most of the women in my life have been voicing their excitement at the prospect of seeing a royal wedding dress, whereas most of the blokes in my life were excited about the prospect of a day off work. But sadly, that's not going to happen, so hard lines. But the news of the engagement was everywhere. Everywhere you looked on the news. And I came across one interesting article online that contained the entire family tree of the royals, showing where the bride-to-be will fit into the grand scheme of things. And I could also see from this article that the line of legal succession to the throne clearly marked out. And I could see that our queen, Elizabeth II, is the rightful monarch. I could also see who's next in line after her. And Matthew begins his gospel with the royal family tree, of the Bible. That's what we have here in this list of names. But why? Why start a book like this?

To modern readers, it seems to be just a boring list of old names. Some of them are almost unpronounceable. Well done, Willie, for getting through them all. If you did an evangelistic course and you were training people, I hardly think this is a passage you would say, well, begin with this, when you're introducing a non-Christian to the good news of Jesus. And I must confess that in the past, I have quickly skipped over these to get onto the action in verse 18. Well, you'd be pleased to know that I've since changed my ways because that is a useless way of reading the Bible, isn't it?

If you skip over bits of scripture as though they weren't important, then you will never unearth the Bible's treasure. And so having changed my ways and gone back to these verses, I've actually discovered that these verses are far from a list of names that are obscure. Actually, these names are the Word of God and they're life-changing. I'd like to focus on just two truths this morning that this genealogy declares to us. The truth about God's Christ and the truth about God's character.

[6 : 20] The truth about God's Christ and God's character. Let's firstly then look at what the genealogy declares to us about the truths of God's Christ. And it's all there in the title. Please look at verse 1.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. And as you'll know, Christ isn't Jesus' second name, but it is his title. It's like Mr. President or Prime Minister. It means that Jesus is God's King, the Anointed One, the Messiah. And his coming to earth hasn't happened in some sort of an isolated time vacuum. In fact, Jesus' arrival is the continuation of and the great climax of the Old Testament. And you've probably heard this many times at the Tron, but let me tell you again, that middle bit of paper in your Bible that separates the Old Testament from the New Testament needs to be ripped out. Don't do it to the ones in the pew in case you rip out a bit more than you're meant to. But it's true. The whole Bible is one long gospel account, one long historical account of God working to establish his kingdom, his visible rule throughout his world. And what Matthew 1 is declaring to us is that this Jesus, this Christ, is utterly central to that establishment of God's kingdom. For here at last is the King through whom God will bring about all of his salvation purposes to their final fruition. Here at last is the one whom the great covenant promises, the promises

God made to the forefathers of the faith in the past, find their yes and their amen in him. That's what the rest of verse one stresses. The beginning of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. And really in the verses that follow, Matthew clearly lays out the ancestry that links Jesus to both of these men. There's three sets of 14. In verse 2 to 6, the family line runs from Abraham to David. Verse 7 to 11, from David to the exile. And from verse 12 to 16, from the exile to Jesus. Let me just say that the reason why this genealogy differs from the one in Luke's gospel is because both Luke and Matthew are writing with specific intentions in mind.

They were writing to emphasize something different about Jesus' identity. And so here Matthew only chooses to focus upon the legal line of succession to the throne of David. And so therefore his genealogy is going to be shorter than Luke's. Also notice that the Greek that's translated here as father of, father of, father of, father of, really should be translated as ancestor of.

That accounts for some of the large gaps in time between certain figures. And Matthew seems to assume that his readers will understand this. It won't be a problem to them.

[9 : 20] But friends, to spend time looking at this list of names in order to figure out specific dates and timings is to miss the whole point of what Matthew is doing here. He wants his readers to clearly see the family line that Jesus is legally a part of. He is the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Well, what was so significant about these two men, David and Abraham? The answer, they are significant because of the covenant promises that God made with them. Let's just remind ourselves of the big picture, shall we? You'll know that back in the beginning, at the very beginning of Genesis, we're told that the Lord created everything out of nothing just by the power of his word. He spoke and things come into existence. Creation moved from chaos to order and the pinnacle of his very good creation was mankind. Male and female who alone enjoyed the privilege of being created in God's image and having that maximum responsibility of ruling over God's very good creation. Never as a rival to God, but always under God's loving rule. And out of sheer undeserved kindness and amazing grace, God said to the man and woman, be fruitful, multiply, fill this earth and subdue it. Enjoy it all, be my stewards. And it was all beautiful.

Mankind living in perfect relationship with one another, with the created order and with the God who'd given them everything. But as we all know, it didn't last very long, did it? Just a short time after this, through an act of disgusting treason, mankind chose to reject its loving maker. They willingly chose to spurn God's grace and they spat his love back in his face. What a disaster that was.

Their sin trashed everything. Suffering, shame, dysfunctional relationships and death all entered history. And worst of all, mankind was cast off from God and his kingdom. And as a result of the evil in the heart of mankind, the whole world was placed under curse. It's been the way ever since Genesis 3, isn't it? We live in a world that has been conditioned to house rebels. Rebels like you and rebels like me.

Those who by nature refuse to bow down to our maker, our life giver and sustainer. But despite this disgusting rebellion, God graciously promised a savior, even in Genesis 3, stating that one day a descendant of the woman, an offspring, would destroy Satan and all of his works. A human being will be born who will save humanity from the evil of their hearts and the world from its carnage. And you read on in Genesis to see how this promise is going to be fulfilled.

[12 : 22] And it's not a very good reading. As humanity spreads, so too does sin. In fact, sin seems to intensify and permeate everything. As you read this, you think, how's God's promise going to work out? How's this going to come about? Especially after Genesis chapter 11, where all the people who were made to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, unite together as one to try and build a tower to reach up to heaven and dethrone God. What utter folly that was. The Lord comes down and He scatters the people. He mixes up all of their languages so that they will not be able to unite again in such a way as to rebel against Him as a corporate body. And again, your heart sinks. You think, is there any hope? And then the Lord calls Abraham. In Genesis 12, the Lord says to Abraham that the salvation promise that was made to the woman back in Genesis 3 will be carried on through his family line. God said, Abraham, I will make you into a great nation and through your offspring, I will bless all the nations of the earth. The answer to all the world's problems and the answers to the evil heart of mankind will be dealt with through your descendants. And so as Matthew lists in verse 2 onwards, Abraham has Isaac, Isaac has Jacob, Jacob has 12 sons. And at the end of Genesis, we're told that a mighty king will come from the descendants of one of these 12 sons called Judah. Genesis 49 verse 10 says this, the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. And you fast forward to hundreds of years until you come to the beginning of 1 Samuel and you meet David. And David is a direct descendant of Abraham and Judah. He's in the kingly line. And you remember that in 2 Samuel 7, the Lord makes a covenant with David. It's what we've sung about in Psalm 89 and Psalm 72. And the Lord said to David this, when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring. Same word used to the woman, same word used to Abraham. Here it is again, your offspring. I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son. In other words, the Lord promised to establish David's dynasty.

David's offspring will sit on the throne ruling over the people of God forever. We'll never come to an end this reign. I hope that you can clearly see the development of the salvation promise all the way through the Bible. The promised one to the woman comes through Abraham, through David.

But as you read through the history of the kings in David's line, it's painfully obvious that none of them are what they should be. In fact, they're all deeply flawed spiritual failures, just like us.

The house of David that Matthew lists from verse 7 to 11 is, on the whole, just like an ugly downward spiral of spiritual decline. And as you'll know, heartbreakingly so, David's line becomes so corrupt, that in the end, his descendants and the people of God are stripped of the promised land, as Matthew highlights for us, deported into exile by the war machine of Babylon, under the judgment of God to face the discipline that they deserve. And again, you read this and you think, is it all over? Is it all over for the covenant promises of God? They look like they're dead in the water. Looks like David's progeny is dead in the water. And yet again, even in this bleakest moment of Old Testament history, again, the Lord is faithful and triumphant. And he sent his messengers, the prophets, to declare that he wouldn't destroy the house of David and that the royal line would carry on even through these harrowing years of darkness. And more than that, the prophets actually declared that a final and ultimate son of David, a Davidic king, was coming. Listen to the prophet Isaiah, speaking six centuries before the events recorded in Matthew's gospel. Isaiah declared,

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, of the greatness of his kingdom, and peace there will be no end. And he will reign on David's throne over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. And so at that time, the people of faith, as they heard Isaiah say these words, they would have gone, Aha! It's not over.

[17 : 38] God has been faithful to his promises, to Abraham and to David. He's not forgotten or shelved his covenant plans. Another Davidic king is coming, one who will be greater than great David himself.

And what Matthew wants us to see from verse 12 to 16 is that at last, in the person of Jesus, we have this ultimate king of God. At last, after all of the failures of the kings of the past, here is the king, the Christ that we've all been waiting for, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The great time of fulfillment is here. Now you might be sitting there thinking, well, that's all very interesting. But what on earth has that got to do with me and my life? And let me be blunt with you. Everything. This has got everything to do with your life and my life today.

Jesus has been appointed by God. He is the one whom God has handed over all authority to reign over this earth. He is the only way to enter into the kingdom of God. And he's the only way for you and I to receive these wonderful blessings of salvation that were promised in the garden and then to Abraham and then to David.

To refuse this Christ is to refuse everlasting life in the perfect world. To shun God's king is to assign yourself to an eternity of ultimate curses.

[19 : 11] But the opposite is true. To bow the knee to this king is to come into sweet fellowship with the living God and to come under his rule. Back for the purpose for which you were created.

So through this genealogy, Matthew is giving us all a massive wake-up call. Take Jesus seriously. Surrender your life to him. Build your life upon his teaching, please. Because he really is the promised one of God. There is no other.

So the genealogy declares to us the truth about God's Christ. And secondly, the genealogy also declares the truth about God's character. I'd like to flesh out this point under three subheadings.

The genealogy teaches us that God's character, or God is trustworthy, God is triumphant, and God is tender towards sinners and outsiders. Let's look at these three subheadings then.

Firstly, it teaches us that God is trustworthy. Isn't the fact that as you look back through history and see God's total faithfulness to his word, doesn't that fill you with great confidence that he is trustworthy? I remember a few years ago, a few Christmases ago in my household, one of my mum's sons made a promise to my mum. And my mum actually learnt that really you can't trust anyone. For about September time that year, one of her sons declared, Mum, this year, I'm going to buy you those really nice shoes that you've been waiting for.

[20 : 51] And he kept repeating this promise again and again and again until Christmas Day arrived, and she got the parcel. She unwrapped. It was a shoebox. She opened up the shoebox, and there was that fluffy paper that they put to cover the shoes. But when she opened the paper, she found a check for two pence. It's a true story. It's a true story.

Now, on that day, my mum, for a split second, thought, can I even trust my own children? Can I even trust my own prodigy? You'd be glad to know that, and by the way, it wasn't me. The son... I would never do such things. Well... But she, for a second there, she thought, goodness me, can I even trust my own family? You'll be glad to know my brother did eventually give her the shoes, but there you go. But in all seriousness, and you'll know this because you live in the real world, it is really hard to trust other human beings, isn't it? People aren't trustworthy.

It's hard to trust them. I'm sure you've all known what it's like to be seriously crushed because somebody has failed to make good on what they've promised you. I think it's especially true of our politicians, is it not? They promise us the world, and then when they get our vote, when they come into power, they never deliver on what they've said. Well, when we look at Matthew chapter 1, just see how wonderfully different the living God is. His word is unshakable and certain.

He's always faithful to his promises. This means that all those who surrender to his king, all those who build their lives upon his teachings, they will never be let down.

That's true. So if you bow the knee to Jesus, if you spend your whole life by the power of the Holy Spirit, waging war against the sin in your life, if you spend many hours pouring your time and your talents into the church and the advance of the gospel, in the end, God's not going to turn around to you and say, oh, I'm really sorry. I know what I did say in the past, but actually now I've changed my mind. You can leave my kingdom. God's not like that. God will be faithful to his promises.

[23 : 09] You can trust him. He is trustworthy. Let me just say, if you're not a Christian here this morning, then why would you ever reject such a God as this? I think that's all what we're looking for, a solid foundation. Well, in the God of the Bible, here is the solid foundation that we're all looking for. The genealogy teaches us that God is trustworthy and it also teaches us that God is triumphant.

God is triumphant. The fact that throughout history, God has always been able to bring his plans and purposes to fruition, despite so many obstacles and opposition, should show us that his kingdom will always triumph in the end. You just think back over the genealogy we spent time unpacking there.

Just think about some of the obstacles that God had to overcome in order to bring his Christ to the earth. Think, for example, of the barrenness of Abraham and his wife when the Lord called them.

And yet it was no problem for the Lord, such is his power. Or just think about the weakness and the sinfulness of the people on this list. A good friend of mine was once on an airplane and he was sitting next to a woman.

And a friend of mine had a copy of Matthew's gospel and he was reading this genealogy. And the wee woman clocked what he was reading and she leant over to his face and went, they were all rascals.

[24 : 31] Well, I think rascals is putting it mildly, is it not? They were just downright rebellious. Just think again of King David, his adultery, murder. He was a man after God's own heart. Goodness knows what he would have been like if he wasn't a man after God's own heart.

I think it's fair to say that pretty much on every page of Old Testament narrative, some sort of sordid detail about the wickedness of God's people has been recorded. The descendants of Abraham, those who'd been set apart to bring about God's mighty act of salvation to the earth. They actually seem to do everything they can to hinder that promise.

And yet, this genealogy tells us that God triumphed time and time again. Surely this should give us heart as we eagerly await the final consummation of his kingdom.

We are waiting for God's king, aren't we? His second coming. And the past assures us of the future. God really will triumph and establish his rule over the earth through his Christ.

Because that is what history has taught us time and time again. Nothing could thwart God's king coming to inaugurate the kingdom. And therefore, nothing can thwart his return to fully consummate the kingdom.

[25 : 50] Friends, if you ever find yourself struggling, maybe you look around the world and you see all of the carnage and the chaos. Maybe you look at the church and you see the sin and the decline.

And if you ever think, Oh, is God going to come good in his promises? Well, this genealogy says, Yes, he will. God is trustworthy.

God is triumphant. But the genealogy also teaches us that God is tender towards sinners and outsiders. I wonder if you noticed the four women mentioned by Matthew in this list.

And the surprise is that the four women who are mentioned are not the wives of the patriarchs. There's no mention of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel or Leah. No. Instead, look who Matthew includes.

Verse 3, Tamar. Verse 5a, Rahab. Verse 5b, Ruth. And Bathsheba, Verse 6, mentions her as the wife of Uriah.

[26 : 50] There is a fifth lady mentioned. And that is Mary. But we'll come on to her next week. But just the very fact that these four women are in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ declares to us that he is a God who is so tender towards sinners and outsiders.

All four of these women are Gentiles. I take it that Matthew is affirming that the promise made to Abraham has also come true. Because that's going to be not just for one select group of people, but for all nations.

Everyone who bows the knee in submission to this king. Jew and Gentile. The kingdom of the Lord Jesus is for everyone who repents. So all four of these women are Gentiles.

But also all four of them are linked to some sort of suspicious or dodgy sexual behavior. Think of Tamar. You remember back in Genesis 38.

She seduced Judah, her father-in-law, into having sex with her while she was disguised as a cult temple prostitute. And as a result of this incest, she bore twin boys.

[27 : 58] Matthew also mentions them in the genealogy. Perez and Zerah. She was a dodgy woman, and yet she's in the people of God.

And the Lord used her for his purposes. Then there's Rahab, who most commentators are certain is the same Rahab from the book of Joshua. Again, she was a Canaanite prostitute.

Another dodgy woman. And yet she's here. She's in the kingdom. And the Lord used her to bring about his purposes. Then there's also Ruth.

And Ruth, you remember, was a Moabite. And the whole nation of Moab really was born out of another relationship of incest. You can read about that in Genesis 19. And Ruth herself was hardly above reproach, was she, in the way that she came and quietly offered herself to the man Boaz in that barn in the middle of the night in Ruth chapter 3.

Again, another dodgy woman. And yet here she is, amongst God's people, being used for his kingdom. And then Bathsheba.

[29 : 04] Although she was the daughter of an Israelite, her marriage to Uriah would have meant that she was classed as a Hittite. And as Matthew again highlights here, she was part of an idolatrous union with David, who went on to murder her husband.

Again, here is another dodgy woman. And yet she's here. God used her. The fact that these women are in the family tree of the Bible declares to us a beautiful truth.

That God is a God who shows tenderness and grace towards sinners and outsiders. He forgave these women and used them for his purposes. And he's willing to do the same for everyone in this building today.

Maybe you're here this morning and you're wondering if you could ever have a place amongst the people of God. God couldn't possibly want me in his kingdom.

I look back into my past and I see nothing but stuff that I'm ashamed of. I'm full of resentment. I don't belong here amongst God's church. Well, if you think that way, then this genealogy says that you do belong here.

[30 : 12] For our God is a God who is tender towards sinners and outsiders. He invites you to come to him this morning with all of your mess, all of your baggage, all of your sin. And to seek forgiveness and pardon through his great king.

For as we'll see next week, his king has come to deal with that sin of your past. Just look on to next week's passage, verse 21 of chapter 1.

The angel announcing the birth of the Lord Jesus says, Mary, she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins.

And I hope and pray that this morning, if you haven't already bowed in submission and faith to this trustworthy, triumphant and tender God, then I pray that you will do so immediately.

And I pray that if you are already trusting him, then this genealogy will have greatly encouraged you to live for him. And to eagerly, confidently wait for his second coming.

[31 : 16] Well, let's be quiet for a moment and then I'll pray for us. Amen. Amen. Our loving Lord and heavenly Father, we marvel at what this genealogy teaches us about you and about your son, the Lord Jesus.

We praise you, almighty God, that you are trustworthy. We praise you that you are triumphant. And that you are tender towards sinners, people who have messed up like us.

Father, would you help us to trust you and trust your son more and more. Help us, in light of this beautiful piece of scripture, to crown him with many crowns in our hearts and in our lives.

We pray all of this in his precious name. Amen. Amen.