

Logan Smith
Bread of Life Baptist Church
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Matthew 1:1-17

Intro.

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year, isn't it? There is a sense of excitement and joy in the air. Many people look forward to Christmas all year long, and especially so once the "holiday season" is in full swing; this cultural joy and excitement is true every year. But this has been *especially true and apparent* this year. Everywhere you look, from commercials, to the news, to social media, everyone is latching on to Christmas with vigor, saying that we are in desperate need of Christmas cheer this year. And the reasons for that are obvious.

It's already become a cliché at this point, but it is not an exaggeration to say that 2020 has been a rough year. It's been different for all of us, and some have definitely experienced greater hardship this year than others; nevertheless, it has been a tumultuous, difficult, and emotional year for us all. From the covid pandemic, to quarantines and economic shutdowns, from police brutality protests, to outright riots and violence, to job loss and financial hits, to an incredibly contentious political election, and all kinds of other drastic changes to our lives - *all of us have been affected by these shared experiences over the past year.*

So it is with good reason, then, that there is such a strong push for Christmas in the culture this year; after such a dark, heavy, and exhausting year, everyone is *desperate and starving* for a sense of relief and rest; we are all longing to end the year with a sense of joy, hope, and celebration. And yet, many, in their attempt to put their hope for joy in Christmas this year, are turning to a *false hope and a false joy*. For many, Christmas has become a *secular holiday*, and a celebration of the *worldly hopes and idols of consumerism, materialism, and commercialism* - for many, Christmas has turned into a celebration of the worldly goods and comforts that money can buy, holding up the false hope that having more things, new gadgets, the coolest toys, or the nicest clothes and cars will bring us true joy in life. Perhaps you, like me, feel tempted to fall into this trap, letting it shape the way we view and celebrate Christmas. No, having more, newer, and better *things* will not satisfy our hearts, deal with our true problems, or give us true joy; *it is a false hope.*

And yet, *our hearts still long for hope and joy*; our hearts long to *celebrate and rejoice!* This is why it is such a refreshing reminder, year after year at Christmas time, *that our true hope*

*and joy, our true reason for celebration, is the **good news that Jesus Christ, our savior, God, and King, has already come into the world!** As believers, what we celebrate at Christmas time, and every time of the year, is not the false hope offered by this world, *but the sure, joyful, life-giving hope found in the sure promises of God.* This is the *true reason to have joy*; this is the reason we celebrate, the reason that Christmas is such a wonderful holiday: *because the rest, relief, and rejoicing we long for has come to us in Jesus Christ! The promised savior and King has come!**

Matt. 1:1-17

And this refreshing, joyful reminder is exactly what Matt. 1:1-17 declares to us.. If you've been in church for a long time, the odds are that you have heard a lot of advent and Christmas sermons over the years; and yet, out of all those sermons, you *probably* haven't heard an Advent or Christmas sermon on *this text* before. After all, this is a **genealogy** - a list of names, a family tree. Many of us are probably tempted to glancingly skip over, or at least skim, parts of the Bible like this. "*After all,*" we might be tempted to think, "*how could a **genealogy** be significant and relevant to my Christian faith and life today?*" Once again, this is why preaching through entire books of the Bible is so good for us - it reminds us that *every passage* is God's Word; therefore, this, too, is a passage God has given us for our good. And so, instead of glancing at or skipping over this text, we must seriously ask: **why did God inspire Matthew to begin his gospel with *this text*? What is the significance of this passage, what truths does it reveal to us, and why do we need to hear its message today?**

This passage, this genealogy, is much more than just a list of names: it *summarizes the main storyline of the Old Testament.* As the first passage of the New Testament, Matt. 1:1-17 acts as a bridge, clearly showing how the main storyline, covenants, and prophetic promises of God in the Old Testament point forward to, and are now being fulfilled in, the coming of Jesus Christ. THE Bible is the cohesive Word of God; it all flows together, having one purpose, and its *center* is **Jesus Christ.** And this text beautifully shows us the summary message of the Old Testament, and how it is fulfilled in Christ.

Verse one opens the passage, telling us its purpose: to tell us the genealogy and history of **Jesus the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.** Rather than being a name originally, the word **Christ** means *the Messiah, the savior* that God promised to His people in the Old Testament. Furthermore, rather than a strict bloodline genealogy and family tree, this is

more of a *history of the line of succession of the throne, passed down from descendant to descendant*.. Each of these titles, *Messiah, Son of David, Son of Abraham*, are significant, designating Jesus as the promised savior and fulfillment of the Old Testament, which is exactly what the following verses make clear. The passage comes in three sections, taking each of these titles up, only in the reverse order; then verse 17, the last verse, makes it clear that we are supposed to see this as a summary of the Old Testament people of God, by showing the three section: Abraham to David; David to Exile; Exile to Christ. And the main point through is this: *it all builds up to the birth of Christ!!*

So first, we see that **Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham.**

I. Son of Abraham - Jesus is the Fulfillment of the Covenant Promises Made to Abraham (Matt. 1:1-6)

The first section of the genealogy begins with Abraham and traces the descendants down to King David. If we compare this passage with the genealogy of Jesus in Luke, we notice a difference right off the bat: Luke's begins with Adam, the very first man. So why does Matthew's begin with Abraham? While Adam signals the birth of the entire human race, Abraham signals the beginning of **God's special, covenant people**; throughout the Old Testament, to be a descendant of Abraham is to be born into the people of God. And this is all because of the covenant promises God made to Abraham. Beginning in Gen. 12:1, God calls Abram to leave his home country and go to a new "land" that God promised to give him; and the promise continued: ***"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... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"*** (Gen. 12:2-3). In Gen. 15, God formalizes this promise as a **covenant** - a formal, official agreement to uphold what one promises; and here's the amazing thing about this covenant: it was based *purely on God's promise!* It wasn't based on Abraham's fulfilling certain conditions; Abraham had simply to *trust God and believe; to have faith that God would fulfill His promises!* As Gen. 15:6 says, ***"And he [Abraham] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."*** Gen. 15, 17, and 22 further flesh out this covenant promise, which can basically be summarized like this: God is promising to bring from Abraham *a great nation*, that would be *God's people*, that would live in *God's promised land forever*, and that would eventually *spread to and bless all the peoples and nations of the earth!* "Circumcision" was

given a sign of this covenant, and yet the true way to be part of Abraham's family, *GOD's covenant people*, was to *believe in God's promises*, just like Abraham.

The next few verses of Matt. 1 summarize much of what follows in the Book of Genesis, and the rest of the Old Testament, showing how GOD's promise to Abraham is fulfilled. God miraculously gives Abraham a son, **Isaac, the child of the promise**. Through Isaac, the promise and blessing passes to Jacob, whose name becomes **Israel**, and whose twelve sons become the *fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel, the nation promised to Abraham*. But in the list of descendants that follows, three names stand out: *Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth*, the names of *prominent women in the Old Testament*. Ancient genealogies like this typically only included the males who passed and received the birthright of inheritance, so the inclusion of women here is very significant; Matthew is wanting us to notice something. So why are they included? *Because each of these women show us the promise of Abraham being fulfilled by spreading to the pagan nations of the world and displaying God's grace through faith*. Tamar was possibly a Canaanite, meaning she was not a Hebrew but belonged to the forbidden pagan peoples, and her story is associated with sexual immorality and injustice done to her; and yet, she *values the promised blessing of Abraham*. In the book of Joshua, *Rahab* is not only a pagan Canaanite, part of the wicked people that God was overthrowing as Israel came into the promised land, but she was also a prostitute! Her sin was apparent and obvious. And yet, *she believed in God and his promise, and wanted to join God's people*. Ruth was another pagan, of *MOab*, another nation that was an enemy to Israel and forbidden for Israelites to marry at one point; and yet, *she too believed in God and wanted to leave her pagan people to join God's people, and worship him!* All three of these women, despite their backgrounds of pagan idolatry and sin, believed in God's promises, *just like Abraham*, and were brought in the people of God, and even chosen to be *ancestors of Jesus Christ!* And in fact, there's a fourth woman mentioned in this genealogy, though not by name; in verse 6, Solomon is born "**By the wife of Uriah.**" This is a reference to *Bathsheba* and the infamous scene of David's life where he grievously sinned by stealing away another man's wife, committing adultery with her, and tried to cover it up by going so far as to have that man, Uriah, killed. And yet, the Lord chose to redeem even *this relationship*, letting the throne succession pass on through *Bathsheba*, and even more importantly, leading to the birth of Jesus Christ!

These women and these stories remind us of **God's wondrous grace**. The blessing of Abraham was always meant to spread to *all peoples of every nation in the world!* Everyone who, like Abraham, believes in the promises of God's grace, can join the family of Abraham! And this is because the promise given to Abraham culminates **in the birth of Jesus Christ!** Jesus is the true fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Abraham; Jesus brings about *the true multitude of the people of God; Jesus is the true Israel, the true nation and Kingdom of God!* Jesus brings God's people into **the true and final promised land - the everlasting New Heavens and New Earth, the heavenly Jerusalem, eternal life in the very presence of God!** And Jesus blesses all the nations of the earth *because this promise is opened up to all peoples and every nation - anyone who believes in the promise of God in the gospel of Christ, anyone who trusts in Christ alone, joins Abraham's family, God's people, and will live forever in God's true promised land!* After all, the very *last passage* of the book of Matthew shows the command that this promised one, Jesus Christ, gives to his followers: **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations!"** (Matt 28:19).

So this is good news for us today because *you and I are assured that we, too, no matter our backgrounds or sinful failures, can be a part of God's people and live in God's place, simply by believing and trusting in Jesus Christ, who fulfills God's promises on our behalf!*

But the promises of God still need some further clarification and fleshing out; next, Matthew leads us to *King David, the throne of Israel, and God's promised King.*

II. Son of David - Jesus is the Promised Davidic King over God's people (1:6-11)

The figure of King David and the succession line of his Kingdom lies directly at the center of this genealogy. Verse 17 makes this explicit, telling us that the *three sections* are divided around *Abraham to David*, then *David to the fall of his Kingdom, the exile*, and then the fall of David's throne *to the birth of Christ*. Matthew does this in order to *emphasize that Jesus Christ is the Son of David; he is the promised Davidic King!*

David is a very significant figure in the Old Testament, and plays a prominent role in the unfolding storyline of the Bible. After Israel comes into the promised land, there ensues a time where people go after false gods, descend into evil and wickedness, and fall into the hands of their enemies, time and again; we see this in the book of Judges. They reject God as their King and want a king just like the pagan nations around them; and so, God gives them Saul. But Saul

does not love the Lord, and does not lead the people to Him. But finally, God *anoints David as King* and raises him up to protect and lead His people. He strengthens David to overthrow enemy nations, such as the Philistines; we even see David function like a *priest* and a *prophet*. He fears, loves, and trusts the almighty God! And a crucial moment in David's life arises at the beginning of 2 Samuel: God has just given him victory over Israel's enemies; Israel, which was divided, has been united once more under David's kingship; and at long last, the tabernacle, the **Ark of the Covenant**, representing God's presence, is being brought into Jerusalem. And David, who loves the Lord and wants to honor Him, wants to build a house for God, a *temple*. But then, in **2 Sam. 7**, God tells David that he *doesn't want him* to build Him a house or a temple, but instead, He promises to *build a "house," a dynasty*, for David! Here we see God making *another covenant promise* with His people by making a covenant promise *to David*. Here's what God promises David, in **2 Sam. 7:11-16**:

"And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. 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 forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

So what is this covenant that God made with David, and therefore, with His people Israel? *God promised that He would turn David's family into an everlasting, never-ending Kingdom, a dynasty, that would never end, but would always and forever have a godly, righteous King on the throne! This King would be God's Son, would protect and lead God's people in God's place, and would establish the true and abiding temple of God.* This is an extraordinary promise! The promise of an everlasting Kingdom, where the human ruler is also God's son, and the Kingdom, which dwells secure in peace and righteousness, lasts forever!

Now, when the promise was first given, one way that it could have been fulfilled would have been for there to always be a *King*, from the line of David, on the throne of Israel, in an unbroken line over an undivided, secure kingdom. But, as our passage today reminds us, *this is not what happened in the history of Israel!* Verses 6 and 7 tell us of David's son, Solomon. He

indeed started off as a great king, like his father; the Kingdom grew and prospered, and knew great peace; it even blessed other nations; Solomon even built a majestic temple, a “house” for the Lord! So the Israelites would ask, “Is Solomon fulfilling God’s promise to David? Is He fulfilling the Abrahamic promises of blessing?”

But unfortunately, Solomon sinned grievously, just like David. And Solomon’s descendants were even worse. Only a generation later, the Kingdom was torn in two. There were some God-fearing, righteous kings that came after Solomon, but many of them were *severely evil and wicked*, practicing idolatry, committing gross sins and injustices. And eventually, it led to the destruction and *exile* of the nation of Israel, which is where the second section of our passage ends. The line of kings, starting from David in verse 6, ends in *destruction, demise, and deportation* in verse 11. Both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel fell into the hands of foreign enemies; Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed; there was no longer a Davidic King or a throne of Israel. The nation was defeated and the people were enslaved and oppressed, many even taken away into Exile in Assyria and Babylon.

And so, when we come to the end of this list of Kings, ending in Exile, the question is, “*What about God’s promise to David? Wasn’t this kingdom supposed to be everlasting? Where is the promised Davidic King, the true Son of David? Have God’s promises failed?*” **NO.** Matthew wants us to see very clearly here that **Jesus Christ** is the true Son of David; He is the promised Davidic King; He is the fulfillment of God’s promise! This line of succession from David culminates in the *birth of Jesus Christ, the true Davidic King!* Jesus came to fulfill God’s promises by becoming the *true King* over God’s people; and Jesus, the God-Man, reigns not only as a Man, the Son of David, but also God, the *Son of God!* Just as we saw in Isa. 9:1-7 last week, Jesus came to establish an *everlasting Kingdom of peace and righteousness!* His Kingdom never ends! And His Kingdom establishes *the true Temple of God and the true Promised land of God*, because Jesus ushered in *the Kingdom of God*, where *God’s people dwell in the very presence and house of God forever!* This is the eternal Kingdom that God promised and that Jesus came to bring - **a Kingdom far greater than any earthly kingdom could ever imagine to be!**

So Jesus was born as God’s promised King; and He came *because God’s people need a King to save and protect them.* We need a savior.

III. The Messiah - Jesus is the Promised Savior and Deliverer of God's People (1:12-17)

As we've just seen, section 2 of the genealogy ends and section 3 begins with the Kingdom broken, the throne empty, and the people of God carried away into **exile and captivity**. As we saw last week, the book of Isaiah, along with the other Old Testament prophets, make very clear that Israel's destruction and exile *was God's judgment being poured out on them because of their sin; because they broke GOD's law and turned away to false gods and things of this sinful world, God gave them over into judgment through the hands of their national enemies*. And yet, just as we saw in Isaiah 9:1-7, **God declared a message of hope in the midst of judgment**. God sent prophet after prophet to announce God's impending judgment so that Israel's Kings and all the people would *repent* and turn back to the Lord. Even after God brought judgment upon them, He continued to send prophets and declare to them that God would *surely fulfill His promises; He would surely send the Davidic King; He would surely send a Messiah, an anointed savior to deliver GOD's people from the judgment and destruction their sins brought upon them!* God promised that He would deliver His people out of *captivity and exile* and restore their land and Kingdom once more; God promised to save His people!

As the story unfolded, Israel was indeed released from exile. THE books of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah tell of God's provision, even through pagan kings, to protect Israel, bring them back to their land, and begin rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple of God. And yet, it is clear, even then, that *their deliverance and salvation is not yet complete*. Yes, they were back in the land, **but they still did not have a Kingdom or throne**. They were still oppressed by their enemies, even though it changed hands from Babylon, to Persia, and eventually to Rome. Most of all, **they were still held captive to their own sin, still oppressed by the Kingdom of Satan, and still being crushed by the last enemy, death itself**. Even though they were back in the land, *they were still exiled from the true promised place and Kingdom of God*.

After the last prophet proclaimed a message of future hope, **about four hundred years passed** without another word from the Lord; *four hundred years passed* without the *messianic King* appearing. And then, finally, *the silence is broken!* God's promise has not failed - **it is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ!** Matthew is showing us here, as Paul puts it, that **"all the promises of God find their yes" in Christ Jesus!** (2 Cor. 1:20). There are many other promises and prophecies we could point to in the Old Testament, and they all *point to and are fulfilled in Jesus Christ!* Why? *Because Christ is the savior that has been born to bring about true salvation*

and deliverance for His people! And as we have already seen, these promises are not just for Jewish people *but for all people in all the world - whoever trusts in God's promise and believes in Jesus!* Jesus blesses the nations *by bringing salvation to sinners in all the earth!* He establishes the true, everlasting throne of David **by establishing the Kingdom of God!** He brings *true deliverance and salvation* by accomplishing **eternal salvation for the people of God, saving us from our sins, from the Kingdom of Satan, from the judgment we deserve, and even from death itself!**

The glorious news Matthew is announcing here, to all people everywhere, is that **Christ has come and has ushered in a Kingdom of righteousness and peace that will never end! A kingdom where there is no more sin, sorrow, sickness, strife, or suffering! Where there is no wrath or death, even for us sinners!** Because the *everlasting King* established this Kingdom **by going to the Cross.** The wonderful news of Christmas is not just that a child has been born, but that a *savior King has been born!* Jesus came into the world to live, die, and be raised as a **sacrifice on the cross for our sins, bearing the judgment we deserve! Jesus established His kingdom through the cross! Jesus slew our every enemy through the cross! Jesus accomplished everything necessary to save us from our sins, deliver us from every enemy and evil, and bring us safely home to live with Him forever.** And we, just like Abraham, receive these wonderful promises **simply by trusting and believing in them! Simply by trusting in the gospel of Jesus Christ!**

So let us remember **the true reason we have to rejoice and celebrate, this Christmas, every Christmas, indeed every day: the promised Savior and King has come! And we are saved in Him purely by grace!** Whether it's been a hard month, a hard year, or a hard life: **rest in the glorious good news of Jesus! Let us celebrate this good news this week and every week! For the Lord has come!**

If you're not trusting in the promises of GOD in Christ for salvation, then let me close with reminding you that the true *hope and joy you long for* can only be found in Him; turn away from the false hopes of this world, hear the true message of Christmas, and turn to Christ, the King who came to save sinners like me and you! If you have any questions about this, or if you, too, believe in this gospel and have questions about baptism or joining the church, I would love to speak with you about this. YOU can come now during the last song or find me or one of the deacons after the service.