

A Legacy of Grace

Matthew 1:1-17

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This morning we begin our journey through the Gospel of Matthew. Let's begin with a brief introduction to the book. First, the word gospel means good news. This is Matthew's account of the good news of the life of Jesus Christ. Also, Matthew's gospel is one of four gospels. They all sound fairly similar in that they give the account of Jesus' life and ministry. They tell how Jesus came to earth, what He did while He was on earth, what He said, what He accomplished through His death and resurrection.

Matthew is the author of the Gospel that bears His name. Hardly any scholars dispute that. He wrote his gospel some 20-30 years after Jesus' resurrection from the dead, so somewhere between AD 50 and AD 60.

Matthew's gospel account of Jesus' life is not intended to be a comprehensive biography. He was not trying to give every detail about Jesus' life and death. He did not even give the accounts of Jesus' life in chronological order.

Matthew wrote his account of Jesus' life and ministry with a very specific purpose. He wanted to show that Jesus is the Messiah the Old Testament promised. He wanted to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of David, and the Son of Abraham, who fulfilled all of the promises of God. In other words, all of the promises we saw in Isaiah over the past year are fulfilled in Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the continuation and fulfillment of the whole biblical story of God and His people.

In Matthew's gospel, we will find some very popular accounts of Jesus' life and teaching. We will find an extensive account of Jesus' birth, His temptation in the wilderness, the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, the Lord's Prayer, His teaching on divorce and church discipline, the Great Confession by Peter and the Great Commission before He ascended back into Heaven.

The flow of the book is: Chapters 1-4 introduce Jesus' life and ministry, and chapters 26-28 give the account of His suffering, His death on the cross, His resurrection, and the Great Commission. The bulk of Matthew's Gospel, chapters 5-25, cover Jesus' teaching and ministry. Because Matthew's Gospel is "teaching and ministry" heavy, it is considered an excellent gospel for discipling Jesus' followers. Hopefully, by the time we complete Matthew, we will love Jesus more and become more faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Stacy and I went to Texas last week to check on our parents and visit with them; when we go down, we usually have a few things we need to do for them. This time Stacy's dad wanted her to help him get his driver's license renewed.

To get the license renewed, they had to drive to a town about 20 miles away. Her dad had collected all the documents he needed to get the license. He needed a birth certificate and a few other documents to show that he was really who he said he was. When they got to the courthouse, he gave the documents to the clerk; she looked at his birth certificate and told him that his birth certificate was not valid because it did not have the official state seal.

My father-in-law is 87 years old, and he told her he had been getting his license renewed with this birth certificate since he was 16 years old (that's a lot of years). So why would it not work now? She told him the driver's license law of the State of Texas had changed. It now had to be an official birth certificate with a state seal.

When we come to Matthew 1:1-17, what we are getting is the official birth certificate of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jewish genealogies worked like official birth certificates. They were the seal of approval.

However, to top it off, Jesus' genealogy is not just any old genealogy. In the first seventeen verses of Matthew, we get the official birth certificate of the true King of the Jews. It is the genealogy with the seal and certification of God Almighty. It shows us that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Let's work through these seventeen verses.

In v. 1, we learn that Jesus is given three titles by Matthew. He is called: "*Jesus Christ*," "*the Son of David*," and "*the Son of Abraham*." Each title carries massive significance for Matthew's readers. Let's examine these titles.

The first title is "*Jesus Christ*." In Christian circles, *Christ* became the second name of Jesus. *Christ* is the Greek word for the Hebrew word *Messiah*. So, these titles mean the same thing. *Christ* means *Anointed One*.

To be anointed means to be set apart and empowered by God for an appointed task. To be anointed is the seal of God's approval. We use *notary public seals* to stamp documents and make them official. There are a few of you here who are Notaries, so when you put that seal on the document, it is official from the state of Iowa. It is like the state of Iowa anointed the document. Jesus has not been notarized by the state but by God Himself. Jesus is the anointed Messiah sent from God.

The Jews believed that to be the Messiah or the Anointed One meant to be an anointed king who was tasked with military deliverance of Israel from their enemies. However, Matthew's Gospel reveals that Jesus was anointed but not in the way the Jews anticipated.

He is the *Anointed King* to defeat their greatest foes—sin and death. He is the *Anointed Priest*, anointed to offer a sacrifice to remove our guilt and sin. He is the *Anointed Prophet* who will preach the truth about himself and humanity. Jesus came as our *Anointed Prophet, Priest, and King* to offer Himself as the *Anointed Sacrifice* that would remove our sin and guilt. So, first, we see that Jesus is the promised *Messiah or Christ* of God.

The second title for Jesus in v. 1 is the *Son of David*. The significance of this title is to show that Jesus is from the house and line of King David. He was the heir of all of Israel's godly kings. In other words, He was the true King of the Jews.

God promised King David in 2 Samuel 7:16 that his line would endure forever. The Lord said:

Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever.'

Then in Isaiah 11:1, we hear the prophet say:

*Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

Jesse was David's father, and so this is a reference to King David. He was saying that after him would come One who would be the Ultimate King. He goes on to say in Isaiah 11 that He will be filled with the Spirit of the Lord and have the Lord's understanding, counsel, strength, wisdom, knowledge, and delight in Yahweh.

Matthew shows us that Jesus is the promised heir to the throne of David. He is the King who will rule eternally on David's throne. Again, Matthew doesn't give us a generic genealogy but one that proves Jesus to be the True King.

The last title in v. 1 is *Son of Abraham*. This is an unusual title for Jesus. The significance of this title shows us that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham in the book of Genesis.

By tracing Jesus' lineage through Abraham, Matthew shows us Jesus' Jewishness and that He is the fulfillment of the promises God made to Abraham. Remember what God told Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3:

The Lord said to Abram: Go from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Then later in Genesis 15:5-6, God told Abraham:

He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous." ⁶ Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Matthew's gospel shows us how Jesus is not simply the Messiah for the Jews but for the whole world. It may be a very Jewish Gospel, but it is very inclusive of reaching the nations with the good news of Jesus Christ. Hence his Gospel concludes with the Great Commission.

Matthew expects that we remember that Abraham was a Gentile. He was not just any Gentile, but he was a sinful, pagan Gentile before God called him and covenanted with him. So, when God called Abraham, and he believed in God, he became the father of all who are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus regardless of who they are, where they are from, or what they have done.

Let's keep working through Jesus' ancestry. When we look deeper, we notice some interesting characters in Jesus' genealogy. They are not all Jews. They are not all saints. The list is not all men. They are, however, all sinners.

In v. 2, we find the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These men had their own sordid stories of sin and failure. Abraham struggled with his faith, and he was a liar. Then God changed him. Isaac followed in his father's footsteps. Jacob was the worst of the lot. He was a deceiver, liar, and crook until the Lord got his attention.

When we consider the genealogy from David onward, we see a list of kings. Some of the kings were good kings, but most of them were beyond wicked.

David, Hezekiah, and Josiah were great kings, but they still committed some spectacular sins. *David* committed adultery and murder. *Uzziah* was prideful and thought he could perform the role of a priest by burning incense on the altar, so God struck him with leprosy. *Hezekiah* was also a proud king. We learned in Isaiah that he showed off the riches of Judah's treasury to Babylon, and it eventually led to their deportation. After he learned of his sin, we saw that he cared very little for future generations. And these were some of the good kings.

Among the wicked kings in Jesus' line was *Ahaz*. He worshipped pagan gods. He defiled the Lord's altar and then replaced it with a pagan altar. *Manasseh* was probably the worst king of all of them. He openly promoted the worship of the Canaanite gods. He murdered innocent people and used infants as burnt offerings to the pagan god Molech. It is hard to believe Jesus came through this line of kings.

Matthew also lists five women in Jesus' genealogy. It is unusual to find women listed in Jewish genealogies. Lineage is usually traced through the father, but Matthew wants us to see the role that women played as it led up to Jesus' birth.

Tamar is mentioned in v. 3. She was the daughter-in-law of Judah. Her husband, Judah's son, died, and so Judah promised Tamar to his younger son when he came of age. Judah never fulfilled his promise to Tamar, so she took things into her own hands. She deceptively played the role of a prostitute with Judah in order to gain an advantage over him. When Judah realized she was pregnant, he became furious. Then she revealed she was pregnant by him. Judah declared her to be more righteous than him. He married her, and she became the mother of Perez.

Next, in v. 5, we find Rahab. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute who helped the Israelite spies when they scouted out Jericho. When they came to the city, she offered them shelter and protection. When she heard of the mighty works of God, she placed her faith in Him. As a result, she was not destroyed when God destroyed Jericho. She was folded into the Jewish community, and eventually, she married Salmon and gave birth to Boaz.

Boaz was a key figure in King David's line. His birth leads us to Ruth, the woman he would eventually marry. Ruth was not a Jew. She was a Moabite who married Naomi's son while Naomi's family was living in Moab. Naomi's son, Ruth's husband, died, and then Naomi decided to move back to Judah. Ruth covenanted with Naomi and moved back with her. After she got there, she met Boaz. He was a kinsman redeemer. He showed mercy to Ruth and Naomi. Later, Ruth makes a bold move to show she was interested in Boaz by going to him one night at the grain-threshing floor. Boaz was moved by her kindness and her boldness, so he eventually married her. Ruth gave birth to King David's grandfather, whose name is Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, and Jesse was the father of King David.

The next woman we meet is in v. 6. Her name is *Bathsheba*, but her name is not mentioned in the verse. She is referred to as "*Uriah's wife*." Now, any Jew who heard her referred to as *Uriah's wife* would know the story that Matthew was referencing. He was pointing to the illicit relationship David had with Bathsheba. David lusted after, so he took her and committed adultery with her while Uriah was away at war. Bathsheba became pregnant by King David. So, in order to cover up his sin, David had Uriah murdered by sending him to the front lines of the battle.

The baby Bathsheba gave birth to died. Then David married her, and they had another child together, Solomon, who would become one of Israel's greatest kings.

The last woman mentioned is Mary, and we find her in v. 16. Later in chapter one, we learn that she was not just any woman, but she was a young girl who was a virgin. She was engaged to be married, but when she had conceived by the Holy Spirit, she was not yet married. There was no sin involved in Jesus' birth, but the situation was enough to raise eyebrows and lots of questions later.

These women had critical roles in the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, when we drill down into the lives of these men and women, what we find is that they are all sinners, and yet that did not thwart God's plan to fulfill His promise of grace.

What do we learn from Jesus' genealogy? *First, we learn that God keeps His promises.* He promised through Abraham that his children would be a blessing to the nations, and in Jesus, that promise came true. Jesus the King, in the line of David, who came and fulfilled that promise. One day Jesus will return, and He will restore all things as we saw at the end of Isaiah. Jesus will make all things new, and sin, decay, corruption, sickness, and death will be no more.

As God's people, we can take comfort that God keeps His word. Our King has come in Christ. We can trust God to do all that He has promised to do. Life may be hard on this earth, and it is through many trials and tribulations that we will enter the kingdom, but we are never alone. Jesus never leaves us or forsakes us. God will save all of His people.

Second, in Jesus' genealogy, we are reminded of the sinfulness of humanity. Jesus' lineage was filled with sinners from start to finish. Some were worse than others, but all were sinners. All needed a Savior. Except for Jesus, sin is the one inherited trait in this genealogy. We are all born sinners in need of a Savior.

Third, through Jesus' genealogy, we learn that God's promise to save the Gentiles was not an afterthought. When we see the names of these Gentile women mentioned in Jesus' lineage, we should realize Christ came for all people who will turn from their sin and trust Him no matter how bad they have been and what mistakes they have made. Jesus came to save men and women, boys and girls who will admit they are sinners and turn from their sin and trust Christ.

Fourth, we should read this list of names and be thankful for what Jesus did. Though He was God, He humbled Himself, took on human flesh, and came to earth in the form of a servant by being born into a long line of sinful humans. Because of what Jesus did, no one is beyond saving.

Conclusion: Jesus' genealogy is a legacy of grace not because the people in his lineage were saints but because of the promise of grace of God. Sin and sinners did not keep God from fulfilling His promise to save sinners.

Often, we may think we are beyond saving because of the sins we have committed. We may believe that since we did not grow up in a Christian family or attend a church that our situation is hopeless. We may look at the dysfunction and horrible sins in our families and believe that God will not love us and nor would He even consider saving us.

Friends, the sovereign saving grace of God does not come from a genealogical list that is filled with saints or from a holy bloodline. No one is ever saved because they were born into a certain family or have powerful relatives.

Sovereign saving grace comes from the heart of Almighty God, who sent His Holy Son through a long line of wicked sinners. Jesus showed up at the appointed time in order to fulfill the promise of God to save those who come to Him in faith and repentance.

This is not to say it is unimportant to have a godly family. If you are a parent, it is vital that you practice your faith and pass along a legacy of faith to your children and your children's children. You may be the only follower of Jesus in your family, and that is okay. Let a new legacy of faith begin with you. Live boldly for Christ and teach your family how to follow Jesus. Yet, remember the saving grace of God is a gift, not a right to be inherited. Train up your children to love and trust Jesus. Model your faith to your family members and share the gospel with them and then pray for them and cry out to Jesus to save them by His grace.