

Who Do You Think You Are?

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[0 : 00] This morning we're going to be looking at the book of Matthew and the first chapter of Matthew. Now the book of Matthew, the first book in the New Testament, is one of four books that are called Gospels. Gospels, simply the Greek word for good news, and Mark and Matthew and Luke and John all share a common theme. They want to talk about the good news of salvation, the good news obtained through Jesus Christ through his life and death and resurrection. They all have a lot in common these four Gospels, but they are also very different as well because they are written from the individual perspective and background of each of the disciples, each of these four writers. Matthew, sometimes called Levi, was a despised tax collector, hated. He had sold out to the Roman state and was collecting money for the Roman state and doing that against people that were those that he'd grown up with, fellow Jews. He's hated, but when he converts to Jesus he becomes totally committed to Jesus and talking about Jesus. Because Matthew is a Jew, he's very knowledgeable about the

Old Testament, and that's evident from the way he writes in the Gospel of Matthew. He wrote 50 direct quotations, 75 or so literary allusions, to events in the Old Testament.

One of the reasons that Matthew is fascinated and primarily interested in the Old Testament is that he's trying to convince his fellow countrymen of three things. Firstly, of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that means Jesus is certainly claimed to be the king of the Jews. Secondly, that Jesus is the son of David. And thirdly, that there are regularities in the lineage of Jesus counter objections to his birth. Now there's so much in the verses that we're going to look at today that I don't really have time to go through all of these three points. I could only really look at the last point here, and the last point, it sets out an evidential basis for the foundations that Matthew is going to build through the rest of the book. The genealogy that we're going to read together is like a potted history of God's dealings with Israel. However, the basic purpose that Matthew is writing in Matthew, so that Matthew writes his book, is to establish Israel's

Messiah, and that it's evident from the very first verse in Matthew. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of God. Christ, another word for Messiah.

That sentence constitutes the genealogy of Jesus in a nutshell. The next 16 verses that run through this opening chapter of Matthew, merely expand upon that opening verse, giving details of Jesus, is genealogy from Abraham to David, and then from David to Jesus. Let's look at these verses and let's read them together first. If you can turn in your Bible, if you're not there already, to Matthew chapter 1, and it's on page 807. Matthew chapter 1 and page 807. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah the father of Peres and Zerah by Tamar, and Peres the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amadimodad, and Amadimodad the father of Nishon, and Nishon the father of Solomon, and Solomon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and

[4 : 11] 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 Rehoabom, and Rehoabom the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Jorom, and Jorom the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh. Manasseh the father of Amos.

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 Sheltyal and Sheltyal the father of Zerubbabel and Zerubbabel the father of Abiod and Abiod the father of Elohim and Elohim the father of Azor and Azor the father of Zadok and Zadok the father of Achaem

and Achaem the father of Eliod and Eliod the father of Eleazar and Eleazar the father of Mathan and Mathan the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born who is called the 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. Reading the passage it perhaps feels a little bit like reading a Hebrew phone book or something like that where you recognize some names and you don't recognize others and it all just seems a bit confusing. What possible utility could a passage like this have for us today? What possible utility could there be in us understanding Jesus and learning about Jesus from a passage of just these names? What Matthew is trying to do here is to set out a foundation to identify to the Jews who their king is. He sets out here the royal line of Jesus in contrast to the genealogy that you see in Luke which is the legal lineage of Jesus.

So the royal line of Jesus going back to David and Israel's greatest king Jesus directly linked to David and then going back further to Abraham the father of Israel and in doing so he points out that Jesus is the son of David upon whom as Isaiah prophesied the shoulders of government would rest and the one who is the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham who would be the father of many nations. Jesus is the inheritor of all of those promises so in essence Matthew is setting out why he believes Jesus Christ to be a king. Whenever you read the book of Matthew have king in your head have the word king in your head because this book is seeking to identify the king. The book sets out at the start the identity of who the king is through these early parts of the book and then it sets out the character of what his kingdom will look like through his manifesto on the Sermon on the Mount and through the validation of that kingly authority through the miracles and then concludes with the suffering and the victory of the king as well. So at the start of the book we are trying to work out who the king is. We need to know that this king has the right credentials to assume the throne. The last prophet Malachi died 400 years ago or so and the next words we hear from heaven are words given by the angel to Elizabeth and to Mary about children that were born John the

Baptist and Jesus respectively. And so this genealogy here in Matthew acts like a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament and in setting out the genealogy over 42 generations Matthew does it in a way so that the reader can remember it. It might seem challenging to us to remember all of those names but it's in a way that one could easily start to memorize this in blocks of 14.

He skips generations here and there. It doesn't include one or two but the reason for that is so that you don't as a reader lose focus. The primary focus on who the spotlight is on, the coming of the king, the identity of the king and it kind of reaches that crescendo with Jesus at the end of the passage. At the time there are hundreds of people throughout the whole of this region who are claimed to be messiah, who are claiming to have some special insight or some special knowledge about God, who claim to be the one to be the focus to lead the fight back against the Romans. To take Israel back Matthew wants to set out why Jesus is the king, why Jesus is the messiah, why Jesus is the only one who could ever fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. So the passage set out over 17 verses, verse 1, the caption, the summary, the overture, verses 2 to 16, the content, verse 17, the conclusion. Three sections to that content. Verses 2 to 6 give the first 14 generations the patriarchal period, I Abraham and his descendants. Verse 6b to 11, the Davidic kings, the kings who came from David. And verse 12 to 16, Jecuniah the last king before going into captivity. He was king for only three years and I think 10 months or so, 10 days I think it was sorry. And before he is captured and taken into captivity in Babylon. But from that timeline you can hang the whole [10:31] Old Testament history upon. A poetic way of thinking about the division is in this chapter, is given by Matthew Henry. Not a huge fan of Matthew Henry, I think the older spiritualized he sometimes, but he is a wonderful commentator and he gives a beautiful description here, almost poetic description. He says in the first 14 generations we have the family of Abraham and the patriarch rising, looking forth as the morning, the start of the day. In the second we have the flourishing under King David and his successors. David like the midday sun, the high point, the glorious point. And then as the sun sets we have the third, we have it declining and growing less and less important. Dwindling into the family of a poor carpenter and then Christ shines forth out of it the glory of the people of Israel. So from this genealogy it's evident that this man, Jesus Christ, has his roots deeply entwined in the soil of humanity. And this lineage, it's an interesting lineage isn't it? There's a lineage that includes people who are the failed and the flawed.

The lineage includes some very notable females as well and the lineage also includes foreigners too. And I want to think about these three different elements that were within the lineage today particularly. So the failed and the flawed females and foreigners. I'd mentioned that Matthew had been selective in his writing in the genealogy and being selective he's not making an error. He's been very, very deliberate. He's trying to make a point. He's trying to use these, the way that the passage is set out as a memory device to aid the reader. But he's also trying to include some very notable failures. Some very notable failures about where things just went wrong.

Over the last five years or so I've done a lot of my own genealogy. I've tried to work out who my family is. And to the point now, perhaps inspired by TV shows like *Who Do You Think You Are*, I can give you my patronomic. Afraid it's in Gaelic but I can give you my patronomic. The list of who my fathers are going back. I have Neil McKinnach, MacDonald, MacAllan, MacAllister, MacLewy, MacDonald, MacIntalmich. That goes back to the late 17th century. I can trace my wife's line back to the early settlers who moved to America from southwest England in the 17th century. And in research, I'm not entirely confident about, I think I can make an argument for, I think I can trace myself back to Robert the Bruce and Malcolm Keanmore and even Alfred the Great. I'm happy to tell you about these ancestors. I'm delighted to tell you about these ancestors. What I'm less keen to tell you about are the scoundrels and the drunks and the gamblers and the failures in my family. But in setting out the genealogy of Jesus, Matthew tells you the whole unvarnished truth. He wants you to know that Jesus has his roots deep in the soil of humanity, deep in the sinfulness of humanity.

Jesus knows humanity like no other man knows humanity. We need to go no further than the list of kings that he mentions. He mentions adulterers and idolaters and murderers and violent persecutors.

[14:09] People who persecuted the righteous. People who persecuted those loved by God. Take just one example. Take Manasseh there. You'll see Manasseh mentioned verse 10.

Manasseh is described by the Lord in this way in the Book of Second Kings, chapter 21. Manasseh, king of Judah, has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. Therefore, this is what the Lord says, the God of Israel. I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. I will stretch out Jerusalem, the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish without wiping it and turning it upside down. That's how the Lord spoke about one in the line of the Messiah. This man was in the line of the Messiah and this is how God talks about him. By contrast, let me tell you about Peres. Don't you know much about Peres and his brother Zerah? They were sons of Judah and Peres was the father of Hezron and Hezron was the father of Ram. What do we know about Hezron and Ram? Pretty much nothing. They are utter non-entities.

They are nobodies. There is nothing of any real significance in all of scripture about them. There's nothing to make them stand out, nothing that causes us to focus upon them, nothing that we draw from them, no words recorded of them, absolutely nothing.

And so there would be perhaps no profitable reason to mention them for any reason at all. And yet we find their name in the Messianic line too, Hezron and Ram.

As Paul says, not many mighty, not many noble, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. Friends, this morning God takes the light in the zeros. He takes the light in working through people who are perhaps nobodies and who the world hears nothing about.

[16:32] There is something here to encourage us as well. Secondly, his line also includes some very notable females as well. Now, the fact that women are mentioned in this passage is frankly a bit weird.

During the Roman times, women were not considered to be reliable witnesses. You couldn't have a woman come to court and to give evidence in court. They're simply not reliable, was the thought of the time. So why make reference to them? Why make reference to these women? Indeed, in the genealogies, normally in formal genealogies, women aren't really mentioned at all. You go through the male line as the line of succession, not the female line. However, Matthew mentions five women here and amazingly, three of them are women of their repute as well, making it even more amazing that they're mentioned perhaps. I want to suggest to you that Matthew had a very special purpose in mentioning these ladies. You recall that Jesus, through his earthly ministry, had to endure some very notable slurs upon him from his enemies to the effect that he was an illegitimate child.

In the book of John in chapter 8, his accusers say, we are not illegitimate children, implying to Jesus, you are. It was apparently common knowledge that Jesus was not Joseph's son. So perhaps leading his energies to conclude that Jesus must have been the father by being fathered by another man. In a way, Matthew is trying to counter these objections to the circumstances of Jesus' birth, which reference to women like Tamar and Rahab and Bathsheba in the genealogies.

All adulteracies, but all clearly part of the messianic plan, the messianic line that would ultimately come to Jesus. In effect, what Matthew is saying to the Gossips is, you want to eliminate Jesus as Messiah because you don't know who his father was. Yet King David was descended from women like Tamar and Rahab, and in fact King David himself had an affair with Bathsheba.

[18:50] Extraordinary that this would all be mentioned in this genealogy. And thirdly, the line includes foreigners as well. Sometimes the Jewish people had a real, not just sometimes, almost always the Jewish people had a strong sense of their independence, of their difference, of how they were different from the other nations around them. Sometimes they had that for the right reasons, and sometimes they had it for the wrong reasons. God had commanded them not to intermarry in order to protect them from being influenced by foreign gods or by being tempted to go down the line of idolatry. But Israel always took things too far. Israel always went just a little bit too far and became exclusionary towards Gentiles. Instead of sharing their knowledge of God with outsiders, they sought to keep the truth to themselves, to wrap it up, and it was their personal possession.

It's instructed therefore that Matthew uses this lineage to show how foreigners have come in and influenced and changed the genealogy. Rahab was a Canaanite who came in and was very helpful when the city of Jericho was to be attacked. Ruth was a Moab, a country descended from what? You can read about their foundations in Genesis. These nations were long-standing enemies of Israel, and yet God includes them in the ancestry of Jesus Christ. Why does Matthew mention the failures of the Jews and the females and the foreigners? Why does he have these different groups in the lineage of Jesus Christ? If Jesus is going to be the Messiah, not just of the Jewish nation, but the Savior of the world, then the inclusion of people, righteous and unrighteous, men and women, Jews and Gentiles is critical. Jesus is roots deep in the soil of humanity. He has no advances over us in terms of ancestry. He has no advances over us in terms of status. He has no advances over us in terms of wealth or education or anything else. Jesus was just like us. He was one of us, but Matthew is intent on showing and communicating that more than that, Jesus was more than just a man.

He starts this genealogy with a supernatural birth, and it ends with a supernatural birth. At the start, the first entry, verse 2, Abraham was the father of Isaac.

You go over that and you miss all the rich texture that is there. The simplicity of that fantastic statement hides a miracle. For Abraham and his wife, Sarah were 190 years or so, respectively. Sarah wasn't able to get pregnant. People lived much longer at those times. Her time for childbearing was long past, but if the birth of Isaac was supernatural, then it is nothing compared to the birth of Jesus. It is one thing to activate once reproductive organs of a no couple.

[22:28] It is an entirely different thing to be able to conceive where there is no father involved at all. All through the text, in those difficult parts, Matthew is very clear of setting out who the parents of children are. For example, Tamar and Judah are the parents of Perez and Zerah. David and Bathsheba are the parents of Solomon. However, at the end, in verse 16, you simply see Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ.

My Greek isn't up to much. I go by commentators. But what the commentators tell me is that the word whom here, in verse 16, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, is in the feminine singular.

All the rest is in terms of male and female involvement. This is the only part of the passage where it talks about a feminine singular. That points to Mary being the mother, but means that Joseph is not the father. The version of birth, of course, is confirmed later in the chapter. As you look at verse 18, just a little bit further on, you can see that it says that this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

A few verses later, the angel speaks to Joseph and says, do not be afraid, take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. A few verses later in verse 23, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. One simply cannot maintain the authority of the

scripture and at the same time deny the virgin birth. Matthew is clear at the beginning of the passage as he is at the end of the passage of who the king is, of the miraculous circumstances of the king, of who the lineage of this king is. Caption one, as I said earlier, is like an overture, setting out all that is to come. That Jesus Christ has come into the world.

Jesus simply means, Jehovah is salvation. In the present, is salvation. Messiah simply means one who is anointed. The Messiah is anointed by the Holy Spirit. He alone has power to save his people.

[25 : 07] He alone is anointed as prophet to preach the gospel. He is anointed as priest to make atonement for his people. He is anointed as king to rule. Just as David in the passage at Colin Redd for me was anointed as king. But this is the king of kings that we have here. This is the one who is prophet, priest and king together. So we see in this first verse that Jesus is the central subject.

The whole passage leads to Jesus at the end of it as well. He is the subject matter of all of human history around which it revolves. Jesus is the highest aim of the entire Bible. Jesus is the anointed one, the divine saviour. He is the expected one, the promised one, the fulfilment of the promises of Abraham and David, the one who is the mighty counsellor, the prince of peace, the king of kings. And through all of that, 2,000 years sit out here from Abraham to David, from David to Joseph and to ultimately to Jesus, the Lord has been preparing humanity for the entrance of Christ into the world. And to miss that Christ, to be out of step with that Christ, is to be out of step with the whole of what God has planned. If you are not a Christian today, you are out of step, my friend. The whole of history is focused on Christ and if you are an outsider, you are an orphan of God. You are an orphan out with the family of God. To know Christ is to be in step with him, to be in sync with him, to be in sync with the whole central thrust of Scripture. Sometimes you might feel, sometimes I might feel that nobody sees me. My presence isn't noted.

But if you are in alignment with Christ, if you are walking with the Lord, then God has his eye upon you. Jesus walks beside you and has his company with you. If you are distant from Christ, you are a long way outside the kingdom. And that's all in the first verse, in the first name of the New Testament. And whose name is the last name mentioned in the New Testament? In Revelation 22 and verse 21, the last name in the Bible is Jesus as well. Jesus is at the beginning and at the end of Scripture. He is the Alpha and the Omega. What is central through the whole of Scripture is the magnification of Jesus Christ. This genealogy includes slaves and kings. It includes men and women, the homeless like Abraham and the settled like David. There are people who are free, there are people who are imprisoned like Jekinhiah. It has the flawed and the failed and the faulty. It has foreigners. It has people needing second chances like Rahab. It has people who are simply nobodies like Ram and Hezron. I would like to suggest to you that this is a picture of the church. We all come from diverse backgrounds. Sometimes in our history we have things we would rather forget. Sometimes we have a little bit of shadiness in our background. We often come knowing brokenness.

[28 : 47] We are always conscious of our need for saving grace. And once in receipt of that saving grace, the Lord grafts you into this family tree of His, His own family tree, obtained through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Given that I am a new parent, arguably called an old parent as well, it has given me a different perspective and I see this passage in a slightly different way as well. If you are concerned that your child has no place in the kingdom, don't despair. Jesus uses those He called to repentance. If you have never done anything great, don't despair. Jesus uses nobodies. Men may think they are controlling events, but it is the King who always works things out in the way that He intends them to be.

Let me finish it with a story. This story was told to me by an old man who was a minister. His name was Moshe. He was a Jew who converted to become a follower of Jesus. He was the man who had fled Nazi Austria as a child. He had fled border and aircraft just as the Nazis were coming into his town, flew to Britain. He talked when he was a pastor of visiting an old man, an old man who was just overwhelmed by his sense of sin, his sense of his failure and lostness and distance from God. How could the likes of him ever be acceptable to the Lord? How could he confess that Jesus is his Lord and Savior? That's not the likes of me. That's too much. I can't do that.

Said the old man. That night after Moshe had visited, the old man dreamed a dream. In that dream, he saw all the greats of scripture walking into heaven, starting with the patriarchs, with the early patriarchs of Adam, Moses, people like that walking in. Then he starts to see some of the people of his family line walking in. He sees people like Isaac and Jacob and Abraham and Joseph all walking

into heaven. Even in his dream, he is convicted of his sin. He's so conscious of it. These men were giants of the faith and yet, nothing. How can I be part of that lineage? How can I be part of that parade? The parade continues in front of him as more and more people that he recognizes from scripture walking. There's David walking in. There's Isaiah and the prophets walking in. Then he starts to see some of the people from the New Testament that he recognizes as well. He sees a tax collector like Matthew walking in, someone who had been despised but yet given his life to Jesus. He sees someone like Peter, a man with a fearsome temper, so quick to rush to judgment and yet humbled by the Lord Jesus coming in. He sees Paul who had done abominable things to the early church walking in. Then so many others coming in as well. The man is so conscious that he could never, never measure up. Though she says that the old man told him this story, he told him the last person he saw walking in. The last person he saw was a man who was bent and twisted. A man who was, whose sin had so disheveled him and changed him. He was dressed in rags and he was old and he was walking in last. The old man said that he was conscious of who that man was. That was the king Manasseh. Manasseh who had done abominable things. He was an idolater.

He had spilt innocent blood. He had killed and murdered. He had done it all for profit to try and maximize the revenues of the state and to forget the commands given to him by the Lord.

[33 : 25] In 2 Chronicles in chapter 33 we read about what happened to Manasseh. The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people but they paid no attention. So the Lord brought against them the army of the commanders of the king of Assyria who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose and bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord God and humbled himself greatly for the God of his ancestors. When he prayed to him the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea. So he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Amen. Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.

My friend today, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Anointed Messiah, offers you forgiveness. He calls you by name. He loves you and desires you to be part of his family.

He calls you by name. No longer to wonder who you think you might be, who you might be descended from, who your people might be. None of that matters because in Christ you know your identity through his forgiveness, through his acceptance and through his love into the family of God. Let's pray. Gracious Lord, forgive me I'm a sinner. I have fallen short of your standard. I have fallen short, Gracious Lord, and I seek your forgiveness. Gracious Lord challenge us and convict us of our sin and how far we fall, how far we short. How far it is Lord, how far we fall.

Lord, we are conscious of your love and of your healing forgiveness that you give, that gospel grace Lord that you give to reach out to men and women like us. Who have our own idolatrous practices and our own things that we place central in life. Lord, that we would destroy these idols and have you as our central theme, as the one to whom we worship, as the one that we glorify, as the one who is ahead over us. Accept us into your family Lord we pray. Accept us Lord and forgive us. If we're not Christians Lord we pray Lord that you would make us Christians.

[36 : 20] If we are Christians Lord draw closer and closer to us and change us so we'd be more and more like Jesus. Lord that we would radiate that name of Jesus, that we would be conscious of his name, the power of forgiveness and the power to heal and the power to change. So Gracious Lord forgive us, watch over us and that we would worship you as our King and as our Father. In Jesus name, amen.