

**The Genealogy of a King**

Matthew 1:1-17

Pastor Tom

November 30, 2014

Well the news came out a few weeks ago. Did you hear about it? William and Kate are expecting their second child. The royal watchers are buzzing with the news and how Kate is doing with this pregnancy. But who are William and Kate and why are they in the news? They are part of the royal family in the United Kingdom. William is Queen Elizabeth's grandson. Kate is his wife. Lots of people like them because they are young and stylish and probably look good to many.

But what impact do the royal have on your day to day life? What impact do they have on our country? Well, the monarchy still has a ceremonial role to play in our country. I believe that MP's still have to swear allegiance to the queen. The Governor General serves as the queen's representative in Canada, who formally signs all bills into law. But those laws are drawn up by elected officials. The royals have not really exercised direct authority over the individual citizens of Canada for decades.

In fact, less and less of us have any experience living under the reign of a king or queen who actually influences our day to day life. Most of us grew up in a democracy. We get to vote our leaders in. And if we don't like them, we vote them out. Political leaders last for 7-10 years before people get tired of them or the leader is not doing what they want. Then they get someone new.

So for many of us, it's weird to think of a queen or king ruling over us and actually making demands on our lives. This is not necessarily bad. Many past kings were too authoritarian. The nation functioned based on the threat of the king's power. So people stayed in line. Anyone even expressing different ideas could get arrested or imprisoned for daring to question the king. The royals often became disconnected from the everyday lives of their subjects. Yet in the revolution against that kind of rule, the pendulum has swung far to the other side. Now, people generally think there is something wrong with you if you give anyone else authority over your life. We might grudgingly submit to the authority of the law. But in areas of personal decisions, morality and choices, we're pretty used to ruling our own lives.

Now I raise all this because we begin something new today: a study on Jesus as our King. If we approach this study with the same attitude we have to the royals in Britain, we're going to struggle. We will not only struggle in relating to the study. We will struggle in our relationship with Christ Himself. Why? Because there can only be one king in our relationship with Christ. We have a choice to make. We can continue to act like we are the king over our

lives and Jesus is an app we turn on when we need his help. Or we can recognize that Jesus is our king and then figure out what that looks like in our lives today.

The book we begin today aims to prove that Jesus is the ultimate king. But if we aren't aware of our own biases and lack of experience with living under a king, we might subtly, unconsciously push away much of this study to the detriment of our walk with Jesus. It also might be to the detriment of this church.

This journey has the potential to dramatically affect our church collectively and individually. It continues a journey that began 38 years ago with the birth of this church. It continues the journey we reaffirmed 9 months ago on March 2. It is the continuation of the journey to grow as disciples and disciple makers of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the fall, we went through the book of Job. That study contributed to our discipleship by helping us cultivate a Christian worldview especially in the area of suffering. But as I surveyed the history of preaching at SVBC at least in the past 9 years, I noticed that we have not gone through one of the Gospels in its entirety. If we are going to grow as disciples and disciple makers of Jesus Christ, then we must know Christ and his teaching. It begins with Christ as our King. So are you ready to meet Christ the King?

We turn to the Gospel of Matthew. He begins with a very exciting introduction of Christ our King.

### **Matthew 1:1-17 English Standard Version (ESV)**

**1** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

<sup>2</sup>Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,<sup>1</sup><sup>4</sup> and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,<sup>5</sup> and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup>and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, <sup>7</sup>and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, <sup>8</sup>and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup>and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup>and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup>and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup>And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, <sup>13</sup>and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, <sup>14</sup>and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, <sup>15</sup>and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, <sup>16</sup>and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

<sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Are you excited now? Wasn't that a fabulous introduction to Christ the king? A genealogy! A genealogy? Come on Matthew! Why would you start a biography of Jesus with a genealogy? Well let's think for a moment about the people he wrote to. Matthew was a Jew living in the first century. He was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Consider his countrymen's situation.

The Jews came from Abraham. God promised Abraham that he would bless all the families of the earth through his descendants. Genesis 12:2-3 – To Abram – **And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, so that you will be a blessing. . . . and In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.** Cool – be part of a family that's going to belss all the families of the earth.

So Abraham goes on and eventually has son named Isaac who has a son named Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. He had 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel. They went down to Egypt to escape a famine. Yet they were protected there by Joseph, one of the 12 sons. But he eventually died. An Egyptian king rises up and feels threatened by these 12 tribes. So he enslaves them.

God raised up Moses. He led Israel out of Egyptian slavery in THE salvation event of the Old Testament – the Exodus. Then God gave them the 10 commandments and law at Mount Sinai. Eventually, God gave them the Promised Land under Joshua. Then God gave them a king to rule over them. A young man named David became Israel's greatest king. Under David, Israel became strong and won many victories. But David also walked closely with God. So God promised David that one of his descendants would rule forever. 2 Samuel 7:16 – **And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.** Cool – have a kingly line that will reign forever. Then David's son Solomon took over. Israel grows in its power. Under Solomon, Israel reaches her highest point in wealth, land ownership, strength and influence.

But Solomon's heart turned away from the Lord. He began to worship other gods. . This led to continual and gradual decline of Israel. More kings followed. Most turned away from God. So God commissioned prophets to call His people back to Himself. The prophets longed for the day when another in David's line would rule with justice and righteousness. "Isaiah 9:6-7 – For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his

shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom,** to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

So God promises a restoration of a Godly King who will bring peace. But God also revealed to the prophets that a greater work was coming. The kings and people failed to keep God’s law. So He was going to do something dramatic and supernatural. He would somehow write the law on their hearts. He would change hearts of stone to soft hearts towards him. He would even forgive sinners and declare them righteous because of the sacrifice of another. Isaiah 53:11 – Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; **by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.** So God promises that some servant would bear their sins so they could be accounted righteous.

Yet Israel continued to decline until the kingdom split apart in civil war. The Assyrians came and conquered the northern kingdom in 722 BC. So Israel lost more than half her territory. The southern kingdom fell in 586 BC to the Babylonians. Israel ceased to exist as a country. Their best and brightest were killed off or carried off into captivity. The Persians came along and conquered the Babylonians. They allowed some Jews to return to the homeland. But it was shattered and humbled.

Yet the prophets continued to look forward to a time of hope. Isaiah 61:1-2 – Of this same servant: **The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;** he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn. So **God has these tremendous salvation purposes that he has unveiled over time to His people.** He promised to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham and his descendants. He promised to provide that Royal Godly Leadership from David’s line for eternity. He promised to forgive sinners and declare them righteous because of the sacrifice of a suffering servant. He commissioned his prophet to look forward to a time of good news. .

But the people still lived under oppression. The Persians continued to rule over the Jewish rump province. Then the Greeks conquered the Persians. For a while there was independence for the Jews under the Maccabean revolt. This

created a huge expectation for a Messiah and permanent deliverer. But finally, the Romans came along. They conquered the Promised Land and brutally suppressed any opposition. They put in place a brutal vassal king named Herod. So in Jesus and Matthew's time, there was no Jewish king. They had no territory. They were occupied by a foreign military power.

These are the people Matthew writes to. The Jews of that time must have wondered, "Is God at work? What is God doing? Has he forgotten us? We were supposed to be a people through whom all the world would be blessed. We were supposed to live under a descendent of King David who would rule forever. Now look at us – We were conquered and exiled. We are a small nation with greatly reduced territory. We live under a brutal and repressive occupation enforced by Herod's and Rome's soldiers. What happened to God's promises? Where is God at work?"

We can begin to think in similar ways when something goes sideways in our lives. We struggle finding work or at work. One of our children has turned away from God and shows no signs of turning back. We struggle at home with difficult relationships. Bad stuff keeps happening in our lives. There seems to be no resolution to that past event or situation or challenge. There seems to be no progress. Or we face something that seems to be getting worse. Where is God? What is He doing? Is anything moving forward?

What does God say to these questions? How can Matthew answer these questions from his countrymen? He could just say – God has not forgotten you. His answer comes through a genealogy. He shows his countrymen and everyone that God is constantly advancing His salvation purposes. This list reminds readers about God's salvation purposes and shows how God continued to advance them through history. But Matthew will go one step farther. He will show that **God advances His salvation purposes through Jesus Christ.**

So he begins "the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Immediately, Jewish readers are reminded of their great king David and the promise of an eternal reign by a son of David. Both Jewish and Gentile readers are reminded of God's promise to bless all nations through the descendants of Abraham. But Matthew does something else with this opening verse. Listen to Genesis 2:4 – "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created." Genesis 5:1. "This is the book of the generations of Adam." Matthew 1:1 – "The book of the genealogy or generations of Jesus Christ." Matthew draws the reader back to the first chapters of the Bible. In Genesis, a significant character was introduced by a name and the descendants who followed that name.

But there is one major difference between Matthew's genealogy and the ones of Genesis. The Genesis generations start with a name and then list all that came *from* that name – like Adam and then his descendants. Matthew starts with a name and then lists all who come *to* that name. Jesus' ancestors depend on him for their meaning. That's how Jesus is the focal point of history according to Matthew.

But original readers and especially skeptics may not see that point. They want proof that Jesus has the right credentials to claim the title Messiah and King. So Matthew walks them through. In verses 2-6, he starts the line from Abraham; Isaac; Jacob who became Israel; Judah one of the 12. But then why do we have Perez and Zerah by Tamar? Well, Perez and Zerah were twins. Tamar was their mother. What are you doing bringing a woman into this genealogy Matthew? But Tamar was Judah's daughter in law. If you want to read the story later, it's found in Genesis 38. Her husband, Judah's son, dies. Judah is responsible to find her a new husband. He fails and she is condemned to a childless, poverty stricken widow's existence. So she dresses up as a prostitute and tricks Judah into sleeping with her. Perez and Zerah are the product of their union. Why would Matthew include that detail? Why even bring her into it? If Matthew wanted to mention women, surely he could have picked some good examples like Sarah and Rebekkah and Leah and Rachel. Why does he do this? We'll find out.

The genealogy continues; Hezron; Ram; Amminadab; Nahshon; Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab. There's another woman. What's Rahab doing here? She was a prostitute in the city of Jericho. She hid the spies back in Joshua. She was saved from destruction and became a believer. But she was a Gentile. You don't include a Gentile in a Jewish genealogy. You try to hide those awkward facts. Why does he include her? We'll find out. And Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth. Okay Matthew, 3 women in 2 verses. What is going on? Ruth was a Moabite – another non-Jew. You can read about her story in the book of Ruth. What's she doing here? We'll find out. Obed the father of Jesse and Jesse the father of David the king. So Matthew has drawn this line from Abraham, through whom all nations would be blessed to David the King whose descendants would rule forever.

At least we got through those awkward mentions of those women. Now we can get on with a normal genealogy and the good part of kingly line. "And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah." Who was Uriah? He was a Hittite – another non-Jew who served in David's army. Oh so did he die and then David marry his widow from whom came Solomon. Well yes. But there's more to the story than that. David saw Uriah's wife Bath Sheba bathing on her

roof. He sent for her and they slept together. She was pregnant. “So David had Uriah killed and then married Bath Sheba. The Lord confronted David with his sin. The child from that union died. But the next child was Solomon”. Matthew, why did you have to bring up that episode in this genealogy? You’re trying to prove that Jesus has a good lineage. You don’t bring up the shameful parts. Why did you have to bring another woman into it? We’ll find out.

The genealogy continues with the royal line of kings until Babylon conquered the nation and sent the people into exile. There were no more kings. But there were those who continued the line. Somehow Matthew gains access to sources that recorded this genealogy right to Jesus’ earthly father Joseph. And so in verse 16 we read “and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, or whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. Another woman! Mary. And look at what Matthew says about Mary. “Mary, of whom Jesus was born.” Why does he only tie Jesus’ birth to Mary? You’d think that Joseph wasn’t his real father or something.

Then Matthew concludes with his summary statement in verse 17 “So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, fourteen generations. Why are you highlighting the number 14 Matthew? And why did you divide them into 3 groups? And by the way Matthew, if we look really close, there’s only 41 names here. Three times fourteen is 42. What’s are you up to Matthew? We’ll find out Now.

Why are there only 41 names in this genealogy? Did Matthew make a mistake? Well, it was pretty common to arrange genealogies to tell a story. They didn’t apply the same standard of preciseness that we do today. Approximations were acceptable. The story was more important. It could be that Matthew left out a name deliberately to show that there were no more generations needed. The promised one had arrived.

Why does he highlight the number 14? Many scholars point out that each Hebrew letter had a numerical value. The Hebrew letter that equates with what we’ll call D was worth 4. The letter kind of near our W was worth 6. In Hebrew, you spell David DWD. Add up the value of those letters and you get 14. So maybe Matthew points out the David emphasis. Or maybe he was simply saying that the time was right for Jesus to come. 3 14’s were completed and the time was perfect.

But what about all these women? It seems they serve at least 2 purposes. Most if not all were Gentiles. We know for sure that Rahab and Ruth were foreigners. Bath Sheba was the wife of a Hittite so it’s possible she was a

Hittite. Maybe Tamar had foreigner blood too. But if his point was to include Gentiles, Matthew reminds his readers of the promise to Abraham. “From your descendants will come a blessing for all nations.” God has already blessed these women in history even though they weren’t Jews.

But there could be another purpose. Most of these women had some sort of sin in their background (as does everyone). But including them in the genealogy, Matthew may be preparing us for Jesus’ mission – to save his people from their sins. He’s about to say that in Matthew 1:21. But the way Matthew has done this will certainly draw attention to those women, their heritage and the stories behind them.

So what does Matthew accomplish through this genealogy. He shows Jesus is a son of Abraham - so through Jesus all the families of the earth shall be blessed. He shows Jesus is a son of David – so in Jesus God provides royal Godly leadership through all eternity. In Jesus’ genealogy there are many sinners who God declared righteous because of their faith in Him. Jesus will become the suffering servant who will sacrifice his life so they can be declared righteous. Matthew brings the genealogy through the exile – a time of shame and humiliation for the Jews to their present day. Yet he announces a deliverer who was born in their time. So through Jesus’ life and teaching He brings good news to the poor, healing for the broken hearted, liberty for the captives, opening to those in prison, justice upon the unjust and comfort for those who mourn.

Matthew has just shown that God continues to advance His saving purposes through Jesus Christ. That could be greatly encouraging to a first century reader. And it can encourage us. I could think of four ways God encourages me through this genealogy. I hope some of these will encourage you especially if you’re not sure about God’s saving purposes moving forward in your life.

**I gain assurance that God continues to work on His salvation purposes even when it seems like nothing is happening.** Look at how long people had to wait in this genealogy for God’s plans to move forward. Abraham had to wait 25 years for Isaac’s birth. The Israelites endured 430 years of slavery in Egypt. The Israelites wandered for 40 years in the desert. They endured 55 years of brutal reign under King Manasseh. They lived 70 years in exile in Babylon. They lived for 400 years without a prophet until John the Baptist showed up in the first century. God’s plans continue to advance even when we don’t see it moving ahead.



**I gain confidence in God's ability to work all things together for good** in my own life when I see how God works all things together in history for His purposes. We learned this lesson in Job. Don't think you can do it better than God. But we sometimes still believe that. I need to remember God is the master at working all things together for good way better than I can.

When things don't make sense, **I can take comfort that God still works even through scandalous and irregular events** to accomplish His purposes. God's ways don't unfold neatly according to our plans. He works through the complexities and apparent disasters of life to move His purposes forward.

**I can celebrate that in spite of my and other's unfaithfulness, God remains faithful.** Every name in this genealogy represents at least one moment of unfaithfulness to God. Abraham lied about Sarah's identity. Isaac repeated the same sin. Jacob deceived his brother. David committed spectacular sins. Some of the women carried great sin with them. Yet God declared them righteous because of what Christ would do and their faith in God. He continues to do that same with us today.

And this is just the genealogy of the Jesus the King. Wait until you meet the real person as this Gospel unfolds.

But today, how might respond to this testimony of God's advancing salvation purposes through Jesus Christ? **We need to remain connected to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the church to discover His purposes and ways.** You can be a Christian and wander from Jesus. We can get so wrapped up in our lives and things happening around us that we forget to regularly connect with Him. Then we lose perspective and when things go wrong, we conclude God has stopped advancing His purposes. Get reconnected to Jesus or continue to connect to keep that perspective.

Maybe you have been searching for salvation. You didn't actually know what to call it – but you need saving from, the unrest in your soul; the emptiness of life; your sins; your alienation from God. God advances His salvation purposes through Jesus Christ. You need to explore Jesus Christ. You need to discover more about Him. We have begun a journey today that will take a long look at Jesus and His teaching. Join us for this quest – but if you sense Jesus calling you to Himself today, don't wait. It's never too early to come to the Lord.