

Session 1

GENEALOGY OF THE KING

Matthew 1:1-17

Memory Verse

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, fourteen generations.

– MATTHEW 1:17, CSB



Genealogy of the King

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus is the Messiah the Old Testament prophesied would come.

CALL TO ACTION: During the holiday season, commit to praying for Jesus to heal broken relationships. Ask for and seek opportunities to share the gospel with family members and friends in need of the saving King.

As our society has placed more emphasis on identity and heritage, researching one's personal ancestry has become incredibly popular. Using sites like Ancestry.com, with their 60 billion records, you can build your own personal family tree, tracing back for generations. You can even test your DNA to discover more of your ancestral history!

We even have TV shows dedicated to this pursuit! On “Finding Your Roots” on PBS, the host (Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr.) dives into the ancestry of his guests, including celebrities like Laurence Fishburne and Debra Messing.¹

Perhaps the most important ancestry to ever be recorded, though, is that of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. We're going to dig into this family line today in the first chapter of the New Testament, Matthew 1.



Have you ever looked into your own genealogy?

Did you find anything interesting or surprising?

Session Summary

Matthew's genealogy boldly affirmed Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. In a surprising departure from tradition, Matthew included Gentile women in Jesus's lineage, signaling that both women and Gentiles were included in God's redemptive plan (and would continue to play important roles in it).

Matthew emphasized Jesus as the "Son of David" to show He fulfilled the prophecy that the Messiah would come from David's royal line.

1. From Abraham to David (Matthew 1:1-6)

 Why might Matthew have begun his gospel account with a genealogy? What does this tell us about God?

 What names stand out to you from this list? What significant women are mentioned here?

So . . . why genealogy? While modern readers are sometimes tempted to skip over passages of genealogy, this trail of historical figures builds a foundation that points to Jesus as the Jewish Messiah whose arrival was prophesied in the Old Testament.

The gospel of Matthew is distinctively Jewish.² Matthew was a Jew himself and the words he used, the way he wrote them, and his many references to the Old Testament (more than any other Gospel writer) draw important lines that offer proof to a Jewish audience, especially that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Beginning in verse one, Matthew called Jesus Christ (meaning the Messiah or “anointed one”³) and connected him to two important figures in Jewish history: King David and Abraham. Interestingly, most genealogical accounts name the earliest ancestor first (everyone else came after them, so they were considered most important), but Matthew did something different. He called this “an account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ” (v. 1), making clear that Jesus is the most significant figure of this line.⁴

There are many names listed here, but let’s consider a few critical ones.

Matthew started at Abraham (v. 2), the father of God’s chosen people. Abraham was a critical figure for the Jews. Back in Genesis 12, God called Abram (God would later change his name to Abraham) to leave his own land and go to the land God would show him. When he issued this call, he made Abram a promise of generations that would come from Him.

At the time, Abram and his wife, Sarai (God would later change her name to Sarah), had no children. But God promised Abraham and Sarah a son (Genesis 15:4-5; 17:15-19; Genesis 18:10-14), and even though many years passed, the son came. Isaac was the son of the promise. (Notice his name is next in Matthew’s genealogy!)

God promised Abraham in Genesis 12:3: “All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” God fulfilled His promise of a son by sending Isaac, and God fulfilled this promised blessing by sending Jesus.

Note the women mentioned here.⁵ The usual practice in the ancient Near East was to trace lineage through men, but God included women. And not just any women, Gentiles and sinners.

Tamar was a Canaanite (Genesis 38). The widow of Judah’s sons, when Judah denied her right to marry his youngest son, she dressed in disguise and slept with Judah (who mistook her for a prostitute), getting pregnant and bearing Perez and Zerah.

Rahab was a prostitute from Jericho (Joshua 2, 6; Hebrews 11:31). Rahab, a foreigner, feared the Lord and, at great personal risk, hid the Israelite spies scoping out Jericho for destruction. Her bravery saved not only her but her entire family.

Ruth was also a foreigner. When her husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law died, in a risky move, she accompanied her mother-in-law Naomi back to Naomi's homeland, where she married Boaz.

Why does this matter? Jesus established a new kingdom where both men and women, Jews and Gentiles would play an important role. They are all part of God's redemptive plan. This idea might not seem surprising to us, but it certainly would to a first-century Jew, who did not associate with Gentiles. Many Jewish men, thanks to cultural tradition (not God's design), also held a low view of women.

 **Application: God uses unexpected people for His purposes. How has He used you unexpectedly?**

2. From David to the Babylonian Exile (Matthew 1:7-11)

 **What names do you recognize in this section of genealogy? What do you know about this portion of Israel's history?**

 **Why would David have been an important figure to mention here?**

The most prominent figure in this section of genealogy is King David. David was the second king of Israel and is a very significant figure in Israelite history.

David wasn't perfect. In fact, he made some colossal mistakes that had devastating consequences, but he was known for being faithful. In scary situations, when his back was against the wall, when time was of the essence and it would have been easier to do his own thing, when he was treated unfairly, when things were going wrong, when he failed . . . David trusted and turned to God. Scripture calls David

a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), and he became the benchmark of faithfulness and obedience by which future kings of Israel would be measured.

God made and fulfilled a promise for David too: "Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever" (1 Samuel 7:16) David's house and kingdom and throne endure forever through the King of Kings, Jesus.

Uriah's wife (Bathsheba) is mentioned in this section. David's heartbreaking choice to take her, sleep with her, and then, when she became pregnant, ultimately have her husband murdered in an attempt to cover up what he had done was condemned by God as sinful and evil. David faced very serious consequences for this sin but did turn to God in repentance. God hates sin, but the story He tells over and over again in His Word (and in the family line of Jesus) is that He can work to bring good out of our sinful messes.

The Messiah was also prophesied to come from David's line. As a result, Jews descending from David were very careful to preserve their genealogies because they believed the Messiah was coming.⁶ This familiar passage in Isaiah 9 points to this:

For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
The dominion will be vast,
and its prosperity will never end.
He will reign on the throne of David
and over his kingdom,
to establish and sustain it
with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD of Armies will accomplish this.

—Isaiah 9:6-7 (emphasis added)

Scripture identified that the Messiah would come from David's line, and Matthew called Jesus the "Son of David" to drive this point home.⁷ This fact would not be lost on a first-century Jewish reader!

 **Application:** God used David despite his famous sin against Bathsheba. What does that tell you about how God can use you, no matter your past?

3. From the Exile to the Messiah (Matthew 1:12-17)

 What stands out to you in this portion of genealogy?

 Who are some of the names you don't recognize? What does the fact that they are included here tell you about God?

This final group of genealogy traces Jesus's lineage through the exile to Jesus's birth. Jesus's ancestors were exiled to Babylon because of their choice to sin and turn their hearts away from God. Yet, still their hope was not lost. God would use even this to bring about the promised one. Matthew clearly named Jesus as the Messiah in this section.

Matthew concluded by summarizing and reemphasizing Jesus's heritage. Through this lineage, we see that God's promise was fulfilled to Abraham throughout the generations. Despite sin, failure, and rebellion against God, God remained completely faithful to His people and His word.

 **Application:** How has God been faithful in your life? How can looking back on your past remind you of this truth?

Conclusion

Matthew's detailed genealogy is a powerful statement, especially to a first-century Jewish audience (to whom he hoped to prove that Jesus was the Messiah). By tracing Jesus's lineage through Abraham and David, Matthew provided evidence that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Matthew's choice to begin with Jesus rather than the earliest ancestor flipped the traditional format, emphasizing Jesus's importance over even the most revered figures in Jewish history.

While ancient Near East genealogies typically focused on tracing lineage through men, Matthew included women—specifically Gentile women with colorful stories: a Canaanite (Tamar), a prostitute from Jericho (Rahab), and a Moabitess (Ruth). Their inclusion here reveals something important: Gentiles and women were included in God's redemptive plan (and would, and still do, play important roles in it).

The prophesied Messiah was to come from David's line, Matthew made sure to spell this out by calling Jesus the "Son of David." David was an important figure in Israelite history. Though David was far from perfect, he was known for being obedient and faithful to God (making him unique among the kings of Israel). God's promise to David, promising that his throne would endure forever, was fulfilled through Jesus, the eternal King.

God chose for Jesus to come from David's line by way of Bathsheba, against whom David sinned. This choice to sin (and keep sinning) was one of the lowest moments of David's life. God condemned David's actions as evil. And yet . . . God worked through it, reminding us that even though God grieves sin and hates it, He can still work powerfully through it.

Matthew ended this section of genealogy by emphasizing Jesus's lineage. This is all in support of Matthew's claim that Jesus is the Messiah.



What does this passage teach us about God's promises?

 What does this genealogy reveal about God's heart for inclusion and redemption?

 What does this passage tell us about who God can use to accomplish His good plans? What does that mean in your life?

Memorize

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, fourteen generations.

- Matthew 1:17, CSB

References

¹<https://www.pbs.org/show/finding-your-roots/>

²<https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/html/matthew/matthew.htm>

³Ibid.

⁴Charles L. Quarles, "Matthew," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1497.

⁵Kyle G. Anderson, "Jesus, Genealogy of," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁶Charles L. Quarles, "Matthew," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1497.

⁷Ibid.