

The Story of Jesus

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[0 : 00] A very good morning, everybody. As Graeme said, my name's Craig, if we've not met already,! And I'm a pastor and training here at Brunnsfield. Yeah, it's a great pleasure of mine to start! This new series in Matthew. Now, we're going to do something a little bit different. We sometimes do this, but I'm going to give a bit more of an introduction, and then we'll get into the passage, just so that we don't get lost in this genealogy. So, I guess as a way of introduction, I wonder if you have ever encountered a particularly frustrating cliffhanger. I wonder what's your most frustrating cliffhanger that you've encountered, maybe in a film or in a book.

Well, I remember when I was young, I remember watching *The Italian Job* on repeat with my friend, and we were absolutely obsessed with cars. We absolutely loved this film. And if you have watched this film, you will know that it ends with a literal cliffhanger. So, the gang, they're winding their way up into the Italian mountains with the stolen gold in the back of the bus, and then suddenly they spin out of control, and the bus ends up literally hanging over the edge of a cliff.

And I remember desperately wanting to know what happened next. The bus is dangling on the edge. Are they going to get away with the gold, or are they going to lose it all down the cliff? But there is no sequel to this film. We don't get to find out what happened next. All our questions are left unanswered. Well, the Old Testament similarly ends with a bit of a cliffhanger. It ends with loads of questions left unanswered. Who will come and perfectly lead and save and purify and make righteous the people of God? Who can save them from their endless cycles of sin?

[2 : 04] Who's going to mend the rift that has been caused between them and their holy God? Who's the one that God said would come from Abraham's descendants and bless all the people of the earth?

Who's the one that would come from David's line who would rule on his throne forever? Who is the one that God said would suffer and die for his people? Who is that person?

Well, by the end of the Old Testament, we have many questions about the identity of this promised one, which are not yet answered. But unlike the Italian job, this story, the story of the Old Testament, it has a sequel.

And it's called the New Testament. And it begins with the book of Matthew. And right at the beginning of the New Testament, we encounter this story. And so this is Matthew's account of Jesus's life, Matthew's gospel.

And in this story, we find out about Jesus's birth. We find out about his life and his death and his resurrection and how he is the answer to all of these unanswered questions from the Old Testament.

[3 : 15] So, yeah, we're going to, as Graham said, we're starting a new series here today. So we're going to be looking at this in the run up to Christmas. And then the new year, we're going to carry on thinking a bit more about the beginning of Jesus's ministry.

And the unusual thing about this story is that it begins with a genealogy. That is a list of names or a sort of family tree, but without the branches.

So like one particular line from trunk all the way up to a particular branch. And you might have encountered a genealogy before.

But what they are really is an important record of names. So where has Jesus come from? And it's important to think about why Matthew has chosen to start his gospel in this way.

Well, like a very bad cards player, Matthew begins his game by laying out all his best cards right at the beginning of the game.

[4 : 17] He lays out all his aces at the beginning of his game. And what he is doing is that he is telling us who this baby is. So before he tells us what Jesus came to do, he wants us to know

exactly who Jesus is.

What is Jesus's identity? So that is what he is wanting to tell us with this genealogy. So just a little bit about the structure of where we are going today. So this genealogy, it is a story. It tells the story of God's people. It tells the story of the crown. And it is the story of grace. And by studying this story, we will hopefully see that Jesus is the long-promised and rightful heir to God's throne.

And he came in grace. And if he is the king of God's kingdom today, then our only right response then is to bow before him and give him glory and honor.

So now let's open up to Matthew's genealogy then. So it is on page 965 in the church Bibles. Matthew chapter 1.

[5 : 30] And we are going to read from 1 all the way down to verse 17. It is long. It is repetitive. After a moment or two, you are going to be thinking, oh, come on, Craig.

But I want you to look out for some names as we go through. So look out for maybe some names that are familiar to you. Look out for the royal family. And look out for the good kings and the crooked kings.

And look out for the women in this passage as well. And every name is in here for a reason. So let's read then from verse 1. This is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac, the father of Jacob. Jacob, the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah, the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.

Perez, the father of Hezron. Hezron, the father of Ram. Ram, the father of Aminadab. Aminadab, the father of Nashon. Nashon, the father of Salmon.

[6 : 41] Salmon, the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz, the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed, the father of Jesse.

And Jesse, the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. Solomon, the father of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam, the father of Abijah. Abijah, the father of Asa. Asa, the father of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat, the father of Jehoram. Jehoram, the father of Uzziah.

Uzziah, the father of Jotham. Jotham, the father of Ahaz. Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah, the father of Manasseh. Manasseh, the father of Ammon.

Ammon, the father of Josiah. And Josiah, the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. And after the exile to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel.

[7 : 44] Shealtiel, the father of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel, the father of Abahad. Abahad, the father of Eliakim. Eliakim, the father of Azor. Azor, the father of Zadok.

Zadok, the father of Achim. Achim, the father of Elihud. Elihud, the father of Eleazar. Eleazar, the father of Mathan. Mathan, the father of Jacob.

And Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. And Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called the Messiah. Thus, there were 14 generations in all, from Abraham to David.

14 from David to the exile to Babylon. And 14 from the exile to the Messiah. Take a deep breath.

Okay, we got there. We got through that. Okay, so let's begin by thinking about the story of God's people. So this genealogy of Jesus, it tells us the story of God's people over a period of about 2,000 years, from Abraham all the way down to Jesus, with David arriving somewhere in the middle.

[8 : 54] So I wonder if you noticed how Matthew divided up this genealogy. So there are a few sort of section markers, little moments that we were able to take a breath as we read through.

And these sections tell us the kind of chapter markers in the story of God, the story of God's people. So the first section, as you see on the screen, it begins with Abraham in verse 2.

Then we see David in verse 6. Then we see the deportation of God's people into exile in verse 12.

And then we see the arrival of Jesus in verse 16.

And these sections, they speak of these significant moments in the story of God's people. And we're going to have a very brief look at these chapter markers through the story of the Old Testament.

So the first chapter marker, we have Abraham. And he was the father of the Jewish nation, the covenant people of God. And he was the recipient of some amazing promises from God.

[9 : 55] So we know from Genesis chapter 12 that God gave Abraham the promise of a land. He gave Abraham the promise of countless descendants.

But he also gave Abraham the promise to send one individual from his own family who was going to come and be a blessing to all the people of the earth.

Of course, there are so many more things that we could say about Abraham and how we see his promises fulfilled through the rest of salvation history. But lock those promises away in the back of your mind, those promises that God made to Abraham.

The next we see is David in verse 6. And so David came, as I said, about a thousand years after Abraham. And after God had brought his people into the land that he'd promised them, the nation of Israel, after he'd settled them in, after he'd fought for them, after he'd appointed countless judges to rule over them, he brought along a young man called David.

And he anointed him to be the first true king over God's people. So David would be a faithful king who would not only fight for his people and lead them, but also lead them in worship as well.

[11:15] He was a spiritual leader for the people as well. But God also makes promises to David as well. And in 2 Samuel chapter 7, that might be a passage that you know, or maybe it's a passage that you don't know, you've never come across before.

But this is a really important chapter in salvation history, because it's here that God makes promises to David. He promises to establish the dynasty of David. He promises to establish David's throne forever.

And he promises to send someone from his own family, one of his own descendants, who would sit on his throne and rule forever. And more about that in a minute.

So promises to Abraham, promises to David. Then the next chapter in this story is the downward spiral of the people. So there were kings that followed after David, his sons, his grandsons, great-grandsons.

And these kings were not faithful like David. And they lead God's people into this downward spiral, into idolatry and immorality and injustice.

[12:24] And the people of God and their kings, they marry people from the surrounding nations. And they start following other gods. And they do all the things that God forbade his people to do.

And then eventually we see in verse 11, God allowed his people to be conquered by the Babylonians because of their systemic disobedience to him. And they are taken out of the land that God had given them.

And they are taken into the foreign land of Babylon. A bit of a low ebb in the story of God. A real low moment. But then the final chapter in verse 12, God calls his people back to their homeland.

And we must be thinking, hooray, they're back. They're back in the land. They've got their city back. They've got their country back. Unfortunately, this isn't the happy ever after that we think it might be.

God enables them to rebuild their city. He enables them to build its walls and rebuild the temple. But here we reach the cliffhanger. Even though they've returned back to their land, the people of God still have those same deep problems with sin.

[13:41] The people still fail to worship God properly. They are still under the occupying powers of another kingdom. What about all those promises that God made to his people?

Who is that heir to David's throne who will reign forever? But this story, it's not finished yet. The Old Testament ended in a cliffhanger, but it has the sequel.

And it begins in the book of Matthew. And in verse 1 of Matthew, Matthew tells us that this is the book of the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah.

The story of his Genesis. The story of where he came from. And by starting his gospel in this way, Matthew is declaring that this is a new beginning for the people of God.

So the genealogy of Jesus, it's the story of God's people. And in our next section, we're going to think about, we're going to see that it is the story of the crown. And I'm not talking about the popular Netflix show, The Crown, but an even more sensational royal family story.

[14:47] So let's think about that next. The story of the crown. So, I don't know if you've probably heard this. It's been in the news a few times. But it's widely accepted that virtually everybody with British ancestry is descended from this man.

King Edward III. And he reigned in the 14th century. Each one of us with British ancestry has a little bit of his DNA in us.

And this is probably because he had loads of children. And those children went on to have loads more children. And to say that Jesus was descended from David doesn't actually mean all that

much at first glance.

There were many thousands of people in Jesus' day who could claim to be descendants of David. But Matthew's purpose is not to show us that Jesus is a blood relative of David.

Even though he is. Matthew's purpose is to show the line of succession from David to Jesus. The legal right to the throne which had passed down over 1,000 years.

[15 : 59] Jesus is the legal heir to the throne of David. The seat of God's kingdom. This means that Jesus is the king over God's people today.

God's people who encompass people from every nation around the world beyond the borders of Israel who have accepted Jesus as their king.

And in any given kingdom there can only be one king. And we even know this to be true in the animal kingdom. There is only one dominant stag in the herd. There is only one queen bee in the hive.

A human king may have many sons. But only one can be the successor. And this has led to many battles of succession down through history. But Matthew tells us that there is only one legitimate heir to God's throne.

The Bible tells us that God has already chosen Jesus to be the king of his kingdom. And he has no rivals. But we're just going to look at three different ways, just very briefly, at how Matthew shows us, gives us some hints as to how Jesus is this legitimate heir.

[17 : 18] And the first hint is that he calls Jesus the Christ or the Messiah three times in this passage. We see it in verse 1. We see it in verse 16 and 17 at the end.

Now, Christ is not Jesus' second name. But it is the Greek translation of the word Messiah. And Messiah means the anointed one.

Now, there were many judges and kings and prophets who were anointed to be the leaders of God's people. But Jesus is the capital A anointed one.

He is God's chosen one to be the king over his people forever. That's the first hint. The second hint that we see in verse 6 is that Matthew calls David the king.

He calls David the king. There are many other Jewish kings listed in this genealogy. But only David is named king. It's interesting.

[18 : 21] Well, why might that be? Well, we know that David was probably the greatest king of the nation. He was a faithful king to God. But Matthew wants his readers to see this close connection between Jesus and David.

He wants us to see that Jesus has come from David's line. So when Matthew labels David as the king, this should be making our 2 Samuel chapter 7 alarm bells ringing.

That promise that God made to David. Jesus is that promise that David is the king of David who would rule forever. Now, the third hint that we see, and it's the way that David constructs his genealogy.

And you might have seen this in verse 7. But he's deliberately constructed it so that there are 14 generations between Abraham and David. There are 14 generations between David and the deportation to Babylon.

And there are 14 generations between Babylon and the birth of Jesus. Why 14? Well, this is a little bit technical. And Graham will probably pick me up on this for going a bit too technical on you this morning.

[19 : 29] But in the Hebrew language, there are certain numbers which are symbolic of certain words. So in this case, the number 14 is symbolic of the name David. So when we read verse 17 and we see Matthew say 14 generations between Abraham and David, 14 generations between David and the exile, we should be thinking, David, David, David.

Matthew is saying, he is the new David. There were 14 generations between here and here. He is the new David. He is the new David. Matthew is asking us, are we still in any doubt?

But he makes it emphatically clear that Jesus is the new David. He is the legitimate heir to David's throne, the throne of God's heavenly kingdom.

And then finally, the story of grace. So just to recap, we've seen that this genealogy, it's a story. It's the story of God's people. It's the story of the crown.

And then thirdly, it's the story of grace. And we could tell that it's a story of grace by looking at some of the names in this passage. And as we think a little bit more about their stories, let's go back to David again.

[20 : 51] We've already seen that David has been labeled as the king. But in verse 6, Matthew also labels David with his greatest ever failure.

It says, David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. Matthew reminds us that David bore his son Solomon through a woman who belonged to another man.

A man that David had murdered to cover up the adultery that he had committed with Bathsheba. Now, David's sins in this affair, they were utterly dreadful. And they were many. We might know this story. Sins of lust. Sins of adultery.

Sins of adultery. A cover up. A murder. And a complete denial. Matthew wants us to see that David was also a dreadful sinner.

[21 : 55] Then in verse 10, we see a man called Manasseh. And he was a particularly wicked king. In the book of 2 Chronicles, it tells us that Manasseh worshipped idols, other gods.

He erected altars to them in God's holy temple. And he even burned his own children as offerings to these other gods.

Scripture tells us that Manasseh led God's people astray to do more evil than the nations that he had driven out of the land before them. Even the Gentiles over the borders were gasping when they heard about Manasseh's sins.

Why would Jesus enter into such a family with such a formidable track record for sin? Why would he enter into a human race bent on serving other gods and bent on murdering and hating one another?

Why did Jesus want to save people like these? Why did he want to save people like us? Well, the good news is that Jesus did not shun his deeply flawed family heritage.

[23 : 13] He did not despise the human race that he had created. But instead, he loved it and he dignified it by entering into it.

Jesus greatly humbled himself by becoming a man, taking on human flesh, the flesh that he had created. And this is the miracle that we celebrate at Christmas.

And he did this so that he could save sinners like David and Manasseh. God has always been in the business of showing grace to undeserving sinners.

But David's sin wasn't the end of the story for him. And Manasseh's sin wasn't the end of the story for him either. Both men were convicted by God of their sin.

They were greatly humbled by God. And they both called out to God for mercy. And they were shown God's amazing grace. And they were restored. And there are many others on this list who were recipients of God's grace.

[24 : 18] Abraham was plucked out of obscurity and blessed with the promises of God. He had done nothing to deserve these promises, these blessings of God.

And then God showed his grace to Ruth and to Rahab, who were outsiders. And they were enemies of the people of God. They were from other nations.

But God grafted them into the nation and he blessed them. And then Tamar, another foreigner, was vindicated and blessed by God after being shunned by her father-in-law, Judah.

And these three foreign women were grafted into the people of God through his grace. And are included in Jesus' heritage. That's amazing.

And as Matthew writes chapter one of his gospel account, I'm sure he can't help but remember his own story. And his own experience of God's grace.

[25 : 16] Matthew had made a big mistake when he signed up to work for the Romans. And he was hated by his people for betraying them. But he found life in his king, his king Jesus, when Jesus called him to repent and to follow him.

And for us today, on the other side of Calvary, God extends his grace to us too. God demonstrated his extraordinary grace by sending his son Jesus to die on the cross for undeserving sinners like us. And because of Jesus' perfect, sinless, righteous life and his perfect sacrifice for sins, he is now seated in glory on the throne.

And he is serving us as our perfect king. And he has given us his righteousness so that we might live as his perfect and pleasing subjects if we will choose him as our king.

And his coronation has already taken place. God warns all people to get on side with his chosen king and not to rage and rebel against him.

[26 : 29] King David writes in Psalm 2, There are two options there. Embrace him or perish.

Jesus reigns today. And he has perished on the cross to purchase forgiveness and salvation for us so that we might not perish.

So just to conclude then, as we bring this to a close, Jesus' genealogy, it's a story. It's a story of God's people.

It forms a turning point in salvation history, where God begins to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament through his son Jesus. It's a story of the crown.

The legal right to the throne of God has passed down to Jesus down through the centuries. And he has taken up his throne in glory. And he rules and he reigns over all of creation today.

[27 : 30] And the genealogy is the story of grace. The genealogy is littered with names of people who experienced God's grace, despite the extremely rotten apples.

Jesus' birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection are the greatest example of God's grace. And he holds this out to us today.

People beyond the borders of Israel. All around the world. And God perches people back from the slavery to sin and death that they were under with the blood of Jesus on the cross.

And all those who look to him in faith and accept him as their king will be saved and swept up into his heavenly kingdom and reign with him in glory.

There are still promises. There are promises that we have been given that we are awaiting the fulfillment of today. But we know them to be true.

[28 : 31] Isn't it amazing how faithful God has been down through history in fulfilling these promises to his people and bringing his son 2,000 years ago, this promised king.

So we likewise can trust in the promises that we are still waiting to be fulfilled to us because we've seen God being faithful to his promises in the past.

And one of those is that we will see Jesus face to face in glory at the end of the ages. And we will reign with him if we are trusting in him. So today is the first Sunday of Advent.

And that means that Christmas is upon us. There's no denying it. Now the other day I was feeling a bit stressed when I remembered how much I still had to do over the next couple of weeks before Christmas.

Christmas, maybe you can relate. Work deadlines to complete. Christmas events to attend.

Christmas parties to take the kids along to.

[29 : 40] Christmas dinners to organize. And presents and presents and presents to buy. At this season we know that it's very easy to take our eyes off our king in this season which is all about him.

But this month, in this month, which we know goes 100 miles an hour, let's remember to slow down. And let's remember all that God has done for us through his son Jesus.

Let's remember the story of God's people. Let's remember the story of the crown. Let's remember the story of his amazing grace. And let's remember to exalt him in our hearts.

And let's keep telling everybody about him. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we just want to give you thanks this morning that you are a God who keeps his promises.

You are faithful to your people. Even though your people are so often unfaithful to you. We thank you for your grace that you have extended to so many individuals down through the ages.

[30 : 54] We think of David. We think of Abraham. We think of even Manasseh. We think of many others. We think of Matthew. All people who were shown your grace.

And we thank you so much that you have extended your grace to us as well. People who are not of the nation of Israel. Who are not Israelites. Yet we have been shown your grace as well, Lord.

We thank you that you have set up your king on the throne. And that he is sitting there today, ruling and reigning. Until all his enemies are made into a footstool for his feet.

Thank you that we are awaiting the day that we will see him face to face. We will see Jesus in all his glory, ruling and reigning. And we thank you that we will be there with him in glory, ruling with him.

Lord, we just ask that this Christmas time that you would help us to just keep our eyes fixed on our king, the Lord Jesus. And if we've not yet seen him for who he truly is, if we've not yet trusted in him, we do pray that you would encourage us to do so.

[32 : 02] And to know him as our Lord and our saviour and our king. And help us also, would you embolden us to keep telling people about him as well. And to bring them along and tell them about his birth at Christmas time.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.