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A1252 – December 23, 2012
The Legal Decent Of The King

I'm going to take you to one of the most interesting sections of Scripture, the first seventeen verses of Matthew. I know you probably never read this section of Matthew because when you looked at it you saw a long list of unpronounceable names and so you just skipped down to where the story got interesting in verse 18. Verse 18 is interesting but I'm convinced that every section of Scripture is interesting once you dig in. And so every year at this time I pour over various incarnation passages and come across something new. This year I got interested in Matthew's genealogy of the King. There are actually three genealogies of the King. Matthew records his *legal genealogy* being that Joseph was "the husband of Mary; Luke records his *physical genealogy* through Mary, being "supposedly the son of Joseph;" and finally John records his *heavenly genealogy*, being in pre-existence, "in the beginning was the Word and the Word became flesh...and dwelt among us." So there are three genealogies of the King; legal, physical and heavenly and today I just want to work with Matthew's, the legal descent requirements.

Now you've got to admit that it's shocking for Matthew to start his book with a genealogy; I don't think that generates too much interest among readers of the Bible today. Imagine if you wrote a book and you started with three or four pages of long unpronounceable names. How would your publisher respond to that? He'd probably axe it. And if somehow you convinced him not to axe it and it was sitting in the bookstores on the shelves and people picked up your book up and thumbed through the first few pages how many copies do you think you would sell? Probably a big fat zero. Genealogies are not New York Times Bestseller list material. And yet Matthew is not ashamed to start his gospel that way.

So why did Matthew begin his gospel with this long genealogy of unpronounceable names? The main reason is verse 1, to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. Then you see lots of other names, mostly unpronounceable, name after name, many of whom you're not too familiar with. I want to demonstrate how important this list of names is and how much is packed in these verses by drawing your attention to several observations.

First, when you look at the genealogy itself what are some things you observe about it? Verse 17, "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the Exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations." There are three groups of fourteen. Fourteen generations? Why fourteen? It's obvious Matthew's writing according to a structure. And it's obvious he's not referring to each generation as a set period of time because how long was it from Abraham to David? 1,000 years. And how long was it from David to the Exile? Only 400 years. And from Exile to Messiah? 600 years. So the fourteen is a structure Matthew is interested in maintaining, not a time period. Why fourteen? Because the Jews thought in heptads or sevens like we think in decades or tens. And fourteen is two sevens. So they often organized things into groups of sevens and that was helpful to them as a memory device. So Matthew divided the genealogy of Jesus into three groups of seven so it could be easily memorized by Jews, Jewish believers by the way. Unbelieving Jews wouldn't be too interested in memorizing Jesus' genealogy, but believing Jews would and there's an important reason why. Now people think "Memorize a genealogy? Why would I want to memorize a genealogy? I thought those were there so the pastor could put everybody to sleep." Well, this is a section designed by Matthew to help you memorize it. Fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the Exile and fourteen generations from the Exile to Messiah.

Second observation, what do you observe about those three divisions? What was the form of government during those three periods? Think about it, from Abraham to David what was the dominant form of government? It was a *Theocracy*. God gave the law at Mt Sinai, God was the Lawgiver and the King, they didn't have a human king, God was the King, a theocracy. Then from David to the Exile what was the form of government? It was a *Monarchy*. The nation asked for a king like all the other nations, God gave

them a king. That first king was Saul but Saul displeased the Lord so it came to David. It was a monarchy. Then from the Exile to the Messiah what was the form of government? Well, it was a hierarchy. Israel was not in charge; Israel was underneath the Gentile powers of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, a *Hierarchy*. So if you think about it Matthew's done us all a huge favor here in giving us three stages of Israel's history. From Abraham to David, the Theocracy, God was the King; from David to Babylon, the Monarchy, God elected a human king; and from Babylon to Messiah, the Hierarchy, God selected Gentile nations to be kings over Israel as divine discipline. So Matthew has divided Israel's history into three groups of fourteens as a memory device for the Jews. And he has related the three periods to the three forms of government the nation has lived under.

A third observation, does Matthew record every name in Jesus' genealogy? No, we already observed that he's keeping a structure of 14-14-14. And in the OT you can go through some of the genealogies and find out that there a number of names skipped here. Does that nullify the validity of Matthew's genealogy? No. Why not? Because a genealogy does not have to be complete in order to be a true genealogy. You may not mention one name but if you know the name before that name then the genealogy is intact. And as long as the names mentioned in Jewish genealogies are correct and in their proper order, there is no requirement that every name in the chain be mentioned, so it's obvious he's not trying to do that, he's trying to prove a point. What point? That Jesus has the right lineage. So names are skipped but it's fine to skip names, as long as you are going from father to grandson, or father to great grandson, something like that, it just has to stay in the same line and it does not destroy the lineage to leave out names since there's no question that the one was a lineal descendant of another.

A fourth observation, we already said there were three groups of fourteen, so how many names is that in all? What's three times fourteen? 42. But if you go through the names there are only 41 different names. Why is that? Alright because David is mentioned in two different lists in verse 6; first as the fourteenth in the first group and second as the first in the second group. What's the significance of mentioning David twice? To emphasize David. David is the stress point and this starts to point us to the main idea of Matthew's genealogy. David is a key figure in Jesus' lineage. And if you're a student of the Bible you know it's the Davidic Covenant.

Alright, a fifth observation, what's another peculiar thing about this genealogy? There are four women mentioned. Verse 3, Tamar, verse 5, Rahab, verse 5, Ruth and verse 6, Bathsheba. Uh oh, girls in a genealogy? This is not typical at all for a Jewish genealogy. And these aren't very good girls either, are they, maybe Ruth but not the other three. Who was Rahab? She was a Canaanite, not even a Jew. So here we have a Gentile Canaanite in the line of the Messiah? An impure bloodline. What is this all about? Further she was a prostitute. An impure profession. Jesus is really racking up the points here, great heritage. Then we have Tamar and who was she? She was Judah's daughter-in-law, married one of his sons, he was evil, God killed him, married another one of his sons, he wouldn't raise up offspring for his brother so God killed him too, so Judah promised her his third son when he grew up but didn't give him to her. So she got bent, she was going to have some offspring, so she posed as a harlot and when her father-in-law saw her standing on the corner he paid her off and went and slept with her. Great gal and here she is in Jesus' lineage! This is turning out like an all-time greatest sinners list here in Jesus' genealogy. Why would Matthew put these girls in here? Several of the guys were on the all-time greatest sinners list too. Then you've got Ruth. Who was she? Not a Jew. She's a Moabite. So more impurity in the bloodline. But what was Ruth's confession? Your God shall be my God. So she worshipped the God of Israel. Did that give her full acceptance in the Jewish community? No. What did the law say? Not until the fourth generation; four generations would have to pass before the community would look back and in retrospect recognize Ruth. Until then, which is long after her death, she would be considered a proselyte and a proselyte was a second class citizen, just like the son of a Jew and a proselyte was a second class citizen. It was not until the fourth generation that the son was accepted as having full rights as a descendant of Abraham. Very interesting genealogy. And finally Bathsheba, who was she? She took a bath on the rooftop in full view of the king's palace. What was going on there? Not too faithful to her husband if you ask me. Not a very good girl, a very provocative girl, her character is not so high if you read the record. So we have four girls in a Jewish genealogy, very odd, two of them aren't even Jews so they corrupted the bloodlines, and one of them was a prostitute, the other two are Jews and one of them seduced her father-in-law and the other seduced the king. What do you think Matthew threw them in for? It's very unusual for a Jewish genealogy. What's he saying? He's certainly not trying to show off the

beautiful genealogy? He's saying that Christ came for all, for Jews like Tamar, Jews who sinned. and non-Jews, like Ruth, even outcasts and sinners like Rahab. So Jesus is going to provide redemption for those inside the Covenant, like Bathsheba and those outside the Covenant, like Rahab. That's who Jesus Christ came to die for, all men, all sinners, and it all goes back to the original promise to Abraham, "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." So the inclusion of women in the genealogy is significant.

A sixth observation, there's a name in verse 12 that has a bad reputation in the OT. Who is it? Jeconiah, also known as Coniah. Why does he have a bad reputation? He was a descendant of David and therefore had throne rights, except that in Jer 22:30 God cursed him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David Or ruling again in Judah.'" Now the curse is not that he would not have a son, when he says "childless" he doesn't mean he won't have any sons. Clearly verse 12 shows you he had a son Shealtiel, so what it means is he won't have a son sitting on the throne of David. But that introduces a problem then doesn't it. If that's the case then it seems to exclude Jesus from having throne rights since Joseph was in the line of Coniah. But that's why verses 18ff are so interesting because Jesus wasn't the biological son of Joseph was he; he was born of a virgin. And that virgin happens to also be of the line of David. Mary's genealogy is given in Luke 3 and interestingly she's not of the line of Coniah, she's of another line that came from David through a son named Nathan, so she maintains throne rights and Jesus gets his throne rights through his mother.

Could that be done? Could legal inheritance rights come through the mother and not the father? I know it may seem trivial, all these details, but they are monumental. The Messiah had to meet very stringent qualifications and Matthew's genealogy was written to be memorized because only Jesus met those qualifications. So could Jesus get his throne rights from his mother? Typically they were from the father. Well, according to Numbers 27 and 36 he could. The problem again is that if Jesus is in the cursed line of Coniah then where does Jesus get his throne rights from? It has to come from his mother but can that occur under God's law? The answer is yes, if and only if the mother married within the same tribe. Since Mary was of the tribe of Judah and even the family of David and she married Joseph who was also of the

tribe of Judah and the family of David, then she could pass on the throne rights of David to her son, Jesus. Now, all this is coming out of this genealogy and I hope you are impressed with how much is going on here. There is much more here than the people think who skip to verse 18 where the story gets interesting. The story is really already interesting because Matthew is telling us a lot. He's giving us a memory device by the three groups of fourteen; he's dividing Israel's history into three stages; theocracy, monarchy and hierarchy, he's clearly emphasizing David and how Jesus got His throne rights through his mother Mary and not Joseph and the fact that He's come to pay the redemption price for Jews and non-Jews, the covenanted and the non-covenanted, all the outcasts and sinners. Now that's some genealogy.

But that's not all, there is one last observation and I want to spend the rest of the time on this one. There are two key names in this genealogy; David I've already mentioned, what's the other one? Abraham. And I think you can make the case by looking at verse 1 where David and Abraham are mentioned, verse 6 where David is mentioned again, and uniquely as being "the king," and in verse 17 when he's closing out the genealogy he comes back to Abraham and David again. Those two men serve as sort of an inclusio to the section, like bookends. Now the question is why are these two men so important? What is it about Abraham and David? Well it has something to do with the covenants. God made a covenant with Abraham and a covenant with David.

Where does Matthew start the genealogy in verse 2? He starts it with Abraham. Why didn't he start it before Abraham, say like Luke does, who started it with Adam. Luke went all the way back to the beginning of the human race. Why doesn't Matthew do that? The basic reason is Luke and Matthew have different concerns. Matthew's concern is to trace the genealogy of the Messiah back to the Jews, and to do that you'd trace Him back to the father of the Jews, Abraham. But Luke is emphasizing the standpoint that Jesus was the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles, of the entire human race and so to do that you'd trace Him back to the father of the human race, Adam. So that's the difference between Matthew and Luke.

Follow along by turning to Scriptures.

Briefly let's go back to Adam. How does Jesus get tied in to Adam? Adam sinned in the garden and God gave the promise of a redeemer in Genesis 3:15. What was the promise? Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman will defeat the seed of Satan. God promised that a woman would have a seed or offspring that would be victorious over Satan. And what's fascinating about that little Hebrew word there for "seed" is that it's masculine, a female would have a masculine seed, actually the Greek translates it as sperm, a woman would have a sperm. And if you don't think that's strange I don't know what is. And so you have an intimation of a virgin birth, something that looking ahead would be setting up the expectancy of a virgin birth, something very strange since women do not naturally have sperm. Another thing we get out of Genesis 3 that is crucial is simply that the Messiah would be a true human being; he's the seed of the woman. And actually Eve thought that Cain was the answer to that promise because the name Cain means, "*I have received a man-child, the Lord,*" so Eve named that boy Cain thinking that he was the answer to the promise of Genesis 3:15, that he was the true human who God sent to solve the problem. But she found out that her son Cain was not the solution to the problem, he was part of the problem because he was born with a sin nature too and out of it came the first murder, a murder within the family, he murdered his own brother Abel. So there are two things we can take out of Genesis 3:15 related to the Messiah's lineage; first, he would be born of a virgin and second, he would be a true human.

Then you have the lineage over in Genesis 5 and that traces Adam to Noah and Matthew doesn't record any of that either. It doesn't add anything to the story of the Messiah's lineage except to limit the lineage down to one family. What family? Noah's family. Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and they were the only human beings saved in the ark to cross over the waters of the flood and re-populate the earth afterwards. So the Messiah's gene pool got limited down to those four men. Where would we go next? We'd go where Matthew goes. To Abraham. Now this is the starting point for Matthew because he's trying to show the genealogy of the Messiah as coming forth from the Jews, and meeting the Jewish criteria given in the OT. The Messiah would be from the Jews. And so the place to start building that ancestry would be with Abraham.

In Genesis 12, the Abrahamic promise, verse 2, "I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be

a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” Basically it’s the promise of a land, a seed and worldwide blessing. But the One who blesses through Abraham is not identified in Genesis 12 as the Messiah, the Anointed one, which comes later. So what we see in retrospect is that Abraham is the beginning of the lineage of the Messiah. The Messiah must be of the family of Abraham. And ultimately this covenant looks to and sets up the expectation of a kingdom.

So if it begins with Abraham then where does it go from there? It goes to Isaac. Genesis 26:3, “Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.” So he’s re-confirming the promises made to Abraham to Isaac, Abraham’s son. Those promises and the ultimate one who Blesses will come through Isaac and not his half-brother Ishmael. Ishmael is the Arab problem.

And then where does it go? Abraham to Isaac, and Isaac to Jacob, not Esau his brother, Esau sold his birthright, it came to Jacob. Genesis 35:12, “The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you.” Another reconfirmation of the Abrahamic promises but through the line of Jacob. The Messiah must come from Jacob.

Then who’s next? Jacob had twelve sons so which of the twelve sons does the Messianic lineage get limited down to? This one’s very important, not well-known but it’s in Genesis 49:10, the tribe of Judah, not Reuben, not Gad, Judah. Genesis 49:9, “Judah is a lion’s whelp;” a lion throughout Scripture is used as a symbol of what? Of royalty, of kingly power. “From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?” Judah will have great power and then he makes this Messianic prophecy in verse 10, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples.” Now what is a scepter or rod a symbol of? It’s a symbol of authority. So a lion with a scepter, the Messiah will be a king who has absolute authority and all nations will obey Him. Now just from that what form of government is the Messiah going to run? A democracy where everyone has his own say? No, a monarchy. And what was the function

of the monarch? To make the laws and enforce the laws so that the right to make and enforce laws was inherent in the scepter. Or in the One who held the scepter. So the office of the Messiah in His government will be a King and the function of the Messianic King will be to make and enforce laws. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah," Judah's line narrows the Messiah's lineage; He's not going to come from Levi, He's not going to come from Benjamin, He's going to come from Judah, so here things really start to narrow down as far as the genealogical qualifications one would have to have to be the Messiah.

"The staff from between his feet, Until" it says, "Until Shiloh comes." Maybe your translation differs, mine says Shiloh, that's the NASB, the KJV says "Shiloh" too. But the NIV says "until he to whom it belongs shall come" and the NET Bible says the same kind of thing, "until he comes to whom it belongs." Alright, why the difference? It's the Hebrew word "Shiloh" and some translators decided this was a proper name so they capitalized it making it a proper name, "Shiloh," so Shiloh is a transliteration of the original Hebrew word. Other translators said it's not a proper name but a word that should be translated which means "he whose it is," or "he to whom it belongs." I take it this it's not a name of the Messiah; it's nowhere else used in the Bible as a name for the Messiah and it makes good sense that it should be translated, "Until he whose right it is comes" or "Until he whose right it is shall come." Shall come to do what? Shall come to bear the scepter and rule in lion-like authority. So "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until He whose right it is to exercise that authority comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." It's viewing a nation or nations that come under the authority of this King who comes to rule. And so in Genesis 49:10 we have the lineage of the Messiah further narrowed, He must come from the tribe of Judah.

Okay, let's go further, where would you go after Genesis 49:10? 2 Samuel 7:12-16. You see that the Bible has an intense interest in tracing the lineage of the Messiah so when the Messiah comes his qualifications can be checked and re-checked. He can't just be born of any virgin girl, he can't just be the legal son of any guy, it has to meet a requirements of high specificity; Mary and Joseph meet certain genealogical qualifications that uniquely fit them for being the parents of the Messiah. So we're looking at the lineage of the Messiah. He would be a king, a monarch. The first king in the monarchy was

Saul. Saul hoped to gain an everlasting dynasty and God promised him an eternal dynasty on condition that he obey. But he didn't obey, so the kingdom was torn from him. He had hoped that his sons and grandsons would succeed him. But think about it, how do you know even from the start of the story that Saul will not receive an everlasting dynasty? Because he was a Benjaminite, wrong tribe! Messiah has to come from the tribe of what? The tribe of Judah, Gen 49:10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah. So when Saul failed who did God elect as the next king of Israel? David. What tribe? Judah. Right tribe. Look at the end of verse 11, "The LORD also declares to you [David] that the LORD will make a house for you." In the context David had just built a cedar house for himself, it was a nice house overlooking the city, great location, you could even see Bathsheba's hot tub, so the kind of house God is referring to here isn't the same kind of house David just built. What kind of house is God promising to build for David? A dynasty, a succession of rulers from his family. Verse 12, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom." Now just imagine how David must have responded to that one promise? Actually we don't have to guess because he wrote Ps 89 in response to it. He was jumping for joy. He knows for a fact that one of his sons will succeed him. Saul had wanted that but Saul didn't get that, in fact one of Saul's sons Jonathan defected to David. So now David knows that one of his sons will sit on the throne. Think of all that is included in that promise. David must have been overjoyed. Verse 13, "He shall build a house for My name," David had wanted to do that. David wanted to build a Temple for God. But David was a bloody man, a man of war so God says in verse 13 your son, a man of peace, shall build the Temple for Me to dwell in, it was Solomon meaning "peace," Shalom. So David would have rejoiced even more. He had acquired billions of dollars worth of gold and silver and all the stones and everything else for the Temple, but it was an unfulfilled dream, and so David was comforted that his dream was going to be fulfilled.

Let's go on. "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men," God would discipline him, but, verse 15, "but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you." A descendant of David would always occupy the throne as long as there was a throne. And then we come to this three-fold

promise, “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” “Your house” has to do with David’s dynasty, “your kingdom” has to do with the sphere of rule, “and your throne” has to do with the rule involving the scepter that we saw in Genesis 49. These three “shall be established forever.” This is the Davidic Covenant and there are three key terms to the covenant, an eternal house, an eternal kingdom and an eternal throne will be established and ruled by a descendant of David. Forever!

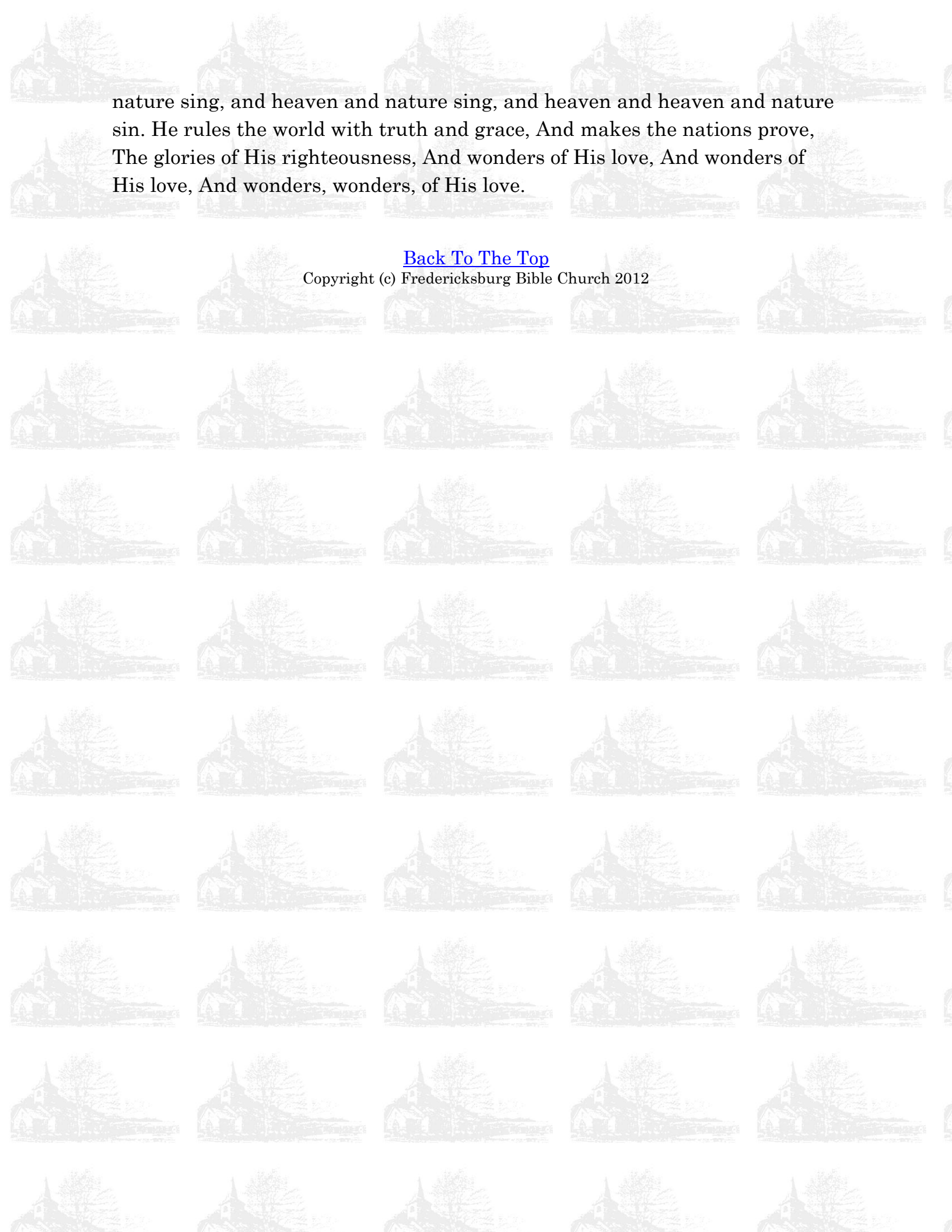
So we have the seed of the woman, we have the seed of Noah, we have the seed of Abraham, we have Isaac, we have Jacob, we have Judah and now the family of David, as the line from which Messiah would come. Now come all the way to Matthew 1. What do you see in that verse? Matthew says, I’m writing about one named Jesus who is the descendant of David and the descendant of Abraham. What’s he trying to say in that first sentence? That Jesus is the Messiah, that He meets the strict qualifications of being genealogically related to David and Abraham. Did those who read this have to take Matthew’s word for it? No they could go check it out. Where would they go check it out? The Jews were very careful to keep genealogical records. Where did they keep them? In the Temple in Jerusalem. Remember when Jesus was eight days old Mary and Joseph took him up to the Temple to circumcise and dedicate Him. He would have been entered into the official court records right then and there as Jesus, son of Mary, legal son of Joseph. How interesting would it have been to have been the official court recorder of this genealogy, because you have Mary, her genealogy is in Luke 3 and she traces her lineage back to David through his son Nathan and here’s Joseph and his genealogy is here in Matthew 1 and his lineage traces back to the same David but through a different son Solomon. So here we have a son born who qualifies to sit on the Davidic throne. It would have been interesting to see the eyeballs of this court recorder popping out of his head as he entered this one. So if you wanted to check out Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah then all you had to do was go down to the Temple and thumb through the genealogical records. It was all readily available. Like reading the books of your ancestors at Ellis Island. Just go check it out, find the name.

Now how long were these records available? Until the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. See Titus came in with the Roman armies and they killed a million Jews and burned the Temple. Actually Titus told the soldiers

not to burn the Temple but they did anyway and these genealogical records were destroyed. Before that they could be consulted and traced. After that they can't be traced. This is one of the arguments against Judaism today. If someone came today claiming to be the Messiah how could you trace his genealogy back to David and Abraham? He has to meet these criteria. So the argument is that since the records have been destroyed then He has already come!

And I suspect that when Jesus came in Matt 4 presenting himself as the Messiah, that the first thing the religious leaders did was run down to the temple and check it out. Because what one thing would have nullified Jesus' claims immediately. That he was not of the tribe of Judah and the family of David. It would have been that easy to put Jesus' claims to rest. But there was incontrovertible evidence when they checked. And that's why you never hear them arguing the point. It was an incontrovertible fact that Jesus met the genealogical criteria. And that's why this genealogy is of utmost importance. And in Matt 1 the point of this genealogy is to show He meets the legal criteria. And his focus is on the relationship of the Messiah to the two principal covenants that form the kingdom concept, the covenant with Abraham and the covenant with David.

Jesus is the King. When God sent His Son into the world, when the child was born into the world He was the King of the world. He came to His own, the Jews, and they received Him not, they crucified Him, He rose again and departed to the right hand of the Father, the gospel went out to the Gentiles, the outcasts, the dogs, that's us, we are sons of the kingdom, citizens of the kingdom but His kingdom has yet to come. The nation Israel must receive Him as their king. And when they do the two key covenants of this genealogy will be fulfilled. The Abrahamic Covenant stressing the land, the seed and the worldwide blessing and the Davidic Covenant stressing the everlasting kingdom, everlasting throne and everlasting dynasty centering on the everlasting person of Jesus Christ. That's the covenants, the covenants, the covenants must be fulfilled to the nth detail; God's kingdom program realized through fulfillment of the covenants. God is faithful, the King has come, has died, has risen again, He awaits His reception by the Jews when the whole world will sing what Isaac Watt's wrote a few centuries ago in the hymn "Joy to the World," He writes of that time, "Joy to the World, the Lord has come, let earth receive her king, let every heart, prepare Him room, and heaven and



nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature
sin. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove,
The glories of His righteousness, And wonders of His love, And wonders of
His love, And wonders, wonders, of His love.

[Back To The Top](#)

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