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Bloodlines: The Genealogy of Jesus / Genealogy; Genealogy of Jesus Christ; Messiah; Christ; Mission / Matthew 1:1-17

Matthew 1:1-17 teaches us that Jesus is the Christ the people of God were anticipating.

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## Introduction

Perhaps you enjoy watching a series of shows on television. There are all kinds of different series.

My preference is for murder mysteries. Ordinarily, each episode is self-contained; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. But, once in a while, the television producers decide to stretch one story over two episodes. So, in the first episode, you will see the beginning and the build-up of the drama. Then, when time runs out, you are left on a cliffhanger. The next episode begins with a recap of the storyline so that viewers can remember where they are in the story. Then, once they have done a review, the second episode will continue to its conclusion.

It seems to me that this is exactly what we have with the opening of Matthew's Gospel. When modern readers see the opening sentences of Matthew's Gospel, they think that it is just a list of names. But to the ancient reader when Matthew wrote his Gospel, it was a review of the two-episode drama. By beginning with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Matthew reviewed for the people of God what had taken place before because it was essential for what was about to follow.

## Scripture

Let us read [Matthew 1:1-17](#):

<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> and Judah the father of Perez and

Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,<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.

## Lesson

One commentator begins his commentary on Matthew's Gospel with these words:

What an amazing way to start a Gospel—with a great long list of names! But, to Jews, that was not surprising at all, as we shall see. It sets Jesus of Nazareth in the context of what God had been doing for his people from the earliest days. It ushers in the theme of fulfillment, which is so prominent in this Gospel. The climax of God's work for humankind throughout the centuries is—Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

It is very unlikely that we would start a story about someone with a genealogy. But that is exactly what Matthew did. Matthew wanted God's people to see right from the start that Jesus was the fulfillment of the expectations of God's people for millennia. Jesus was the one for whom they had been waiting.

Today, I am starting a new series of sermons that I am calling, "Bloodlines: The Genealogy of Jesus." We will spend the next six weeks on this genealogy of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. You will be amazed at what you will learn in the coming six weeks from this portion of God's word.

[Matthew 1:1-17](#) teaches us that Jesus is the Christ the people of God were anticipating.

Let's use the following outline:

1. God Takes His Time
2. God Breaks into History

## I. God Takes His Time

The first thing I want you to see today is that God takes his time.

Matthew began his Gospel with these words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" ([Matthew 1:1](#)). If you knew nothing at all about Jesus or the Bible or Christianity or Judaism, you might think that Jesus' father was David and that David's father was Abraham.

But then, as you continue reading Matthew's genealogy, you discover that Abraham had many descendants before David was born. Moreover, there were even more descendants from David to Jesus. So what is going on here?

As you read and study the Bible which contains the accounts of Abraham and David, you discover that Jesus' ancestors go back about two millennia. Abraham lived around 2,000 BC and David reigned as king over Israel from 1010 to 970 BC.

So, you wonder, *what is so significant about David and Abraham?*

You decide to start your study from the very beginning.

You discover that God created Adam and placed him in a beautiful garden that was known as the garden of Eden. We learn from [Genesis 2:15-17](#):

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

After God created Adam, he said that “it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” ([Genesis 2:18](#)). So God created Eve, who was Adam’s wife.

Adam and Eve were to work in the garden of Eden by taking care of it and all the creatures that God had created. Moreover, they enjoyed a wonderful personal interaction with God. God used to meet with them regularly and talk with them. It was a beautiful time in which they undoubtedly reported to God what they had done and how things were going with their work in the garden.

But one dreadful day, everything changed. We read in [Genesis 3:1](#):

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

The serpent persuaded Eve to distrust the goodness and beauty and kindness of God. God had not said that Adam and Eve could not eat of *any* tree in the garden. God had actually said that they could eat of *all* the trees in the garden, except one—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam, who was likely with Eve when the serpent addressed Eve, did not stop the conversation and walk away. He, together with Eve, ate of the tree. Immediately, they knew that they had disobeyed God’s word. They tried to hide from God but could not do so.

Adam and Eve had fallen into sin.

God banished Adam and Eve from his presence. The personal relationship that they had enjoyed was broken. They were now cut off from the presence of God and a relationship with him.

But even in their banishment from the presence of God, God promised a deliverer when he cursed the serpent in [Genesis 3:14-15](#):

14 The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Right from the beginning, God promised that one of Eve’s offspring would bruise the head of the serpent.

The early chapters of Genesis show us the terrible effects of sin. Things got so bad that we read in [Genesis 6:5](#), “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Things were so bad that God sent a flood that destroyed every living creature on the earth except Noah, his wife, his three sons, each of their wives, and pairs of all the creatures that God had created.

God began again with Noah and his family.

But as the years turned into decades, and the decades turned into centuries, sin was still present among the people who were scattered all over the world.

God then called a pagan named Abram to leave his country and his people and go to a land that God would show him. We read about it in [Genesis 12:1-3](#):

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Abram did leave his country and went to what we know as the Promised Land, the land that God had promised to show him.

But God had not yet given Abraham a son. So, when Abraham was still wondering what God was doing, God brought Abraham outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he

said to him, “So shall your offspring be” ([Genesis 15:5](#)). That was 2,000 years before the birth of Jesus.

Twenty-five years after God first promised Abraham a son, Isaac was born. We read in [Matthew 1:2](#), “Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.” Twelve sons were born to Jacob, whose name was also changed by God to Israel.

Because of a famine, Israel and his sons went to Egypt where Joseph, one of Israel’s sons, was Prime Minister and oversaw the distribution of grain.

Hundreds of years later, the Pharaoh of Egypt forced the people of Israel into forced labor. God raised Moses to deliver the people of God from Pharaoh and they returned to the Promised Land.

God eventually raised David to become king on the throne of Israel. David defeated all the enemies of God’s people. He brought peace and prosperity to the land of Israel. He wanted to build a house for God in which God could be properly worshiped. But instead of David building a house for God, God said that he would build a house for David. God said to David in [2 Samuel 7:12-13](#):

“12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

That was 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus.

The people of God longed for God to act. For thousands of years, God had promised that he was going to send a deliverer. In fact, after the Prophet Malachi, the people of God did not hear from God for 400 years. Four hundred years!

It seemed as if God had forgotten his promise to send a deliverer.

But, we should know that God never forgets his promise. He may take a long time to bring his promise to fruition, but he always fulfills his promises.

So, the first thing we need to learn from the genealogy of Jesus is that God takes his time.

For example, Jesus has promised that he will come back again. I don't know the date for his return but it has already been 2,000 years since he made that promise. But I believe with all my heart that Jesus is coming back again. Why? Because God always keeps his promises.

Every single promise of God will be fulfilled—to the jot and tittle.

So, let us learn to trust God in every situation knowing that he takes his time.

## II. God Breaks Into History

And second, I want you to notice that God breaks into history.

Have you noticed that whenever the Christmas story is read, it rarely begins in [Matthew 1:1](#). The Christmas story almost always begins at [Matthew 1:18](#), where we read, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way...” Why is that?

It may be because people think that the list of names is boring. Or perhaps people think that the real story only begins in verse 18 and not in verse 1.

But Matthew began his Gospel the way he did because he insisted that God has done something in history. He did not begin the story of Jesus' birth with the words, “Once upon a time.” Matthew wanted his readers to know that Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection were not a story. It was not a fable. It was not a fairy tale.

Matthew wanted his readers to understand that God had done something in history. Matthew was about to write about an historical event.

Christianity is not some make-believe story that makes you feel better if you believe it. No. Christianity declares, “God has done something in history. God has broken into history. He has done so in the person of Jesus, and how you respond to Jesus will determine your future and your destiny.”

This is not what people like to hear at Christmas. The mantra one hears at Christmas is that it is all about love and joy and peace. But if one does not understand what God was doing when he broke into history in Jesus, all of that is meaningless.

Skeptics have trouble accepting that God broke into history in Jesus. They are okay with love and joy and peace. But once you insist that Jesus is an historical

figure who lived and died and rose again, and that he demands a response to his claims, then they want to have nothing to do with you—or your Jesus.

Pastor Tim Keller points out that there is an important implication that comes from this point that God breaks into history. He tells the story of J. R. R. Tolkien, the author of the *Lord of the Rings*, who once talked with C. S. Lewis, who was an atheist at the time. They were talking about the great old legends and fairy stories and ancient myths. They were noting how different they were from realistic fiction.

Those ancient stories would depict wonderful things like stepping out of time, escaping from death (and even resurrection), communicating with non-human personal beings, loving without parting, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

The point is that those stories are not factual. You can't step out of time. You can't escape death. You can't keep your love forever. You can't talk with non-human personal beings.

And yet, we read about these things in the world of the fairy tale and myth and legend. Think about Superman, Peter Pan, Beauty and the Beast, Sleeping Beauty, Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, and so on. We read these stories or watch the movies that tell us about stepping out of time, escaping from death, communicating with non-human personal beings, loving without parting, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

Even though we know that these stories are not factually true, we want to believe that they are real. It feels like these are realities that, even though they aren't factually true, we wish that they were true.

At one point, Lewis said, "I love the old myths, legends, and stories..." Then he said something like this (Tolkien wrote it down later), "But myths are lies, though breathed through silver."

Tolkien said, "No, they are all not. Think about this story. A man from an obscure village, a nobody, is found to have a power that no one has ever seen before to resist evil. He's raising children from the dead, stilling the storm, feeding the multitude, casting out demons, and loving the poor and marginalized. He's really making a difference, and then he's betrayed. He's put to death, and all



hope is over. But wait! He's miraculously raised from the dead! What does that sound like?"

Lewis said, "That sounds like another one of those great stories that aren't factually true, but it's so moving and so wonderful."

The point is that this story is different. It doesn't start with, "Once upon a time." It starts with, "This is the genealogy, the historical record. This really happened."

Then Keller points out something really important that Tolkien essentially said, "Jesus is not one more story pointing to this underlying reality. Jesus Christ *is* that ultimate reality to which all the stories point."<sup>2</sup>

Friends, that is profoundly true. Every story points somehow to Jesus. He is the ultimate reality to which all stories point.

It was in Jesus that God broke into and changed history forever.

## Conclusion

Therefore, since Jesus is the Christ, we can put all our hope in him because he is the only one who can save us from sin and hell.

The word "Christ" simply means "anointed one."

Jesus is the one God anointed and sent to be that deliverer he promised to Adam and Eve.

Jesus the one God anointed and sent to be the one through whom all the nations on earth would be blessed.

Jesus is the one God anointed and sent to sit on David's throne for all eternity.

Jesus is the one God anointed and sent to the cross to die for all of my sins.

So, if you have never done so, put all your hope in Jesus because he is the only one who can save you from sin and hell. Amen.

- 1 Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 57.

- 2 Timothy J. Keller, “The Mothers of Jesus,” in *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive, 2014–2015* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2014), [Mt 1:1–17](#).