

## The Lineage of Jesus – Mt 1:1-17

Mt 1. This is the start of a 5-part Christmas series focusing on the Christmas story. The account of how and why Jesus was born. The record of his birth and why it matters. Most of which is lost on people these days. They couldn't tell the Christmas story to save their life.

Or maybe you're on the other end of the spectrum where you're well-versed in it, but it's become passe. Old news. You're so familiar with the advent of Jesus that you've lost interest in it. You've heard it, you know it, and you're tired of it.

Either way, clueless or calloused, I hope this series enlightens and refreshes you. I hope you learn some new things and see some old ones in a whole new light. And I hope it leads to a renewed sense of joy in your heart, with a child-like wonder to go with it.

➤ But it starts with a genealogy. A family tree. Not particularly gripping for most of us. In fact, it's flyover country in most people's Bible reading. But on *closer* inspection, it's a list of Jesus' ancestors that speaks *volumes* about who he is. A list that connects him to a host of key people, and establishes him as the rightful heir of all the promises made to them.

Don't miss that. The lineage of Jesus here in Matthew 1 not only connects him to his *ancestors*, but the *prophecies* God made to them. Prophecies that he fulfills as the Promised One of God. The Messiah. The Christ. Like it says in v16 – *Jacob [was] the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ*. The Messiah. The one God anointed to save his people from their sins.

That's the point here. Jesus is the one.

### Jesus is the fulfillment of God's prophecy:

And Matthew lays it out, starting in 1:1, because if Jesus is *not* the one, if he *isn't* the rightful heir and fulfillment of prophecy, if he *doesn't* have the required connections, the rest doesn't matter. The rest of the story is moot. It's just another of the billions of birth stories in this world with some interesting twists.

➤ So let's start there. Mt 1:1 – *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*. Matthew starts with a great big summary to make a great big point. That Jesus is connected to Abraham and David, and therefore the rightful heir of all that God promised them. The heir and fulfillment of all God prophesied to them.

Then he starts at the beginning. [2] *Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers*. (ESV) Let's stop there, because there's a gold mine of information and implication in those two verses.

Starting with this. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's prophecy:

### To bless the world through the lineage of Abraham. (v1-2; Gen 22:18)

When Matthew says in v1 that Jesus is *the son of Abraham*, he's not just saying he's related to him, but that he's the fulfillment of God's *promises* to Abraham. Otherwise the genealogy is meaningless. Just another family tree in the forest of history. He makes the connection to convey the fulfillment.

Like it says in **Gen 22:18**. Speaking to Abraham, God says – “*In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.*” It's a prophecy that someone from his lineage would bless the world. *All the nations*. And the Apostle Paul says in Gal 3:16, that *someone* is Christ. He's the fulfillment. He's the offspring. The one who would bless the world with salvation.

It's part of the Christmas story. That Jesus is the fulfillment of one of the greatest prophecies in all the Bible for all the world. So important that it's reiterated to Isaac and then to Jacob (Gen 26:3-5; 27:29). With whom Jesus is also connected.

But that's not even the half of it. Jesus is also the fulfillment of God's prophecy . . .

### To rule the world through the lineage of Judah (v2; Gen 49:10)

V2 again. *Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers*.

Remember the 12 sons of Jacob? Who went on to represent the 12 tribes of Israel? That's *Judah and his brothers*. And it just so happens that God made a promise to Judah through the mouth of Jacob just before he died.

It's found in **Gen 49:10** – *The scepter [Jacob said] shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples* [the nations]. The *scepter* and *ruler's staff* are symbols of kingship or rulership, while *tribute* is honor and praise. So Jacob is saying that Judah's lineage will be one of royalty, and someone from his tribe will lead and rule *the peoples*. The world once again.

And once again, that *someone* is Jesus. By virtue of his *connection* with Judah, Matthew is saying Jesus is the one. He's the fulfillment of that prophecy. The one who rules in the hearts of those who believe in him, and someday will rule over all.

Third, Jesus is the fulfillment of God's prophecy . . .

### To multiply his people through the lineage of unlikely women. (v3-6; Ruth 4:11b-12)

This one is such an encouragement I think it's my favorite.

[3] *and Judah [was] the father of Perez and Zerah [twin boys] by Tamar [the 1<sup>st</sup> woman], and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, [4] and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5] and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab [the 2<sup>nd</sup> woman], and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth [the 3<sup>rd</sup> woman], and Obed the father of Jesse, [6] and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah [the 4<sup>th</sup> woman]*.

We don't know a lot about Hezron, Amminadab, Nahshon, or Salmon, but we do know that the mention of women in first century genealogies was highly unusual. And the inclusion of *these* four women is even more remarkable. And I think they're included to point out the grace and power of God to use the most unlikely people to accomplish his work. Grace, because nobody in their right mind would choose *them*, and power because nobody other than God *could*.

➤ First of all, they were foreigners. Non-Jews. Outsiders. And sinful ones at that. *Tamar*, in v3, was not only a Canaanite, but she disguised herself as a prostitute to seduce her

father-in-law. None other than *Judah*. Who took it hook, line, and sinker because he was full of lust. And when her pregnancy began to show, he condemned her to death and denied his involvement.

Fortunately, for her sake, she had thought ahead and proved by some trickery that he was indeed the father. You'll find it in Gen 38 and it reads like a soap opera. It's unbelievable. And yet she's part of the genealogy of Jesus.

And then there's *Rahab*. In v5. Another Canaanite and *actual* prostitute. Living in Jericho until she helped the Israelite spies, and thereby escaped the destruction. *She* went on to marry Salmon and conceive Boaz. An unlikely woman to carry on the line.

Third, is *Ruth*, also in v5. Another outsider and unlikely participant. Because she was a Moabite. The people who got their start from the incestuous union of Lot and his daughters. Gen 19 (30-38). And who were later banned from *the assembly of the LORD* to *the tenth generation* (Dt 23:3-6) because of how they treated the Israelites on their way out of Egypt. Ruth wasn't sinful herself, but she was a foreigner with a sketchy background.

And yet, God used her to build up and multiply his people to eventually give birth to Jesus. Fulfilling the prophecy and blessing in **Ruth 4:11b-12**. Speaking to Boaz, when he took Ruth to be his wife, the people said – “*May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah [the wives of Jacob], who together built up [or multiplied] the house of Israel. . . . and may your house be like the house of Perez [strong and glorious], whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the LORD will give you by this young woman.*”

A thousand years before Christ, God promised to build up and multiply his people through the offspring of Ruth. Even though she was an outsider from a nation with a checkered past.

And need I remind you of Uriah's wife in v6? Uriah the *Hittite*, another foreigner? Whose wife Bathsheba was probably a Hittite as well? Bathsheba, with whom David committed adultery and went on to father Solomon?

➤ You couldn't have chosen any more unlikely ancestors to preserve the lineage. Women with checkered pasts to multiply God's people and connect them to Jesus, and *through* him fulfill all the prophecies.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord he works this way. Because we *all* have checkered pasts. We're all outsiders. We're all unlikely recipients of his grace and power. And yet he still pours it out. Demonstrating his love for *us* just like he did with them. Using *us* just like he did them.

Fourth, Jesus is the fulfillment of God's prophecy . . .

**To establish his kingdom through the lineage of David (v6; 2 Sam 7:11-14a)**

Along with Abraham, it's the most important connection here. [6] *Jesse* [was] *the father of David the king*. The same David who wrote many of the Psalms. The same David who established a kingdom of old. And most importantly, the same David with whom God

made a covenant. An everlasting agreement that someone from his lineage would rule and reign over his kingdom, forever and ever.

It's found in **2 Sam 7:12-14a**. God is speaking to David and says – [12] *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers [when you die], 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 [a place of worship], and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*

It's one of the clearest fulfillments in all of Scripture. That Jesus is the Son, who's building a kingdom, that will last forever. A kingdom in our hearts and fellowship right now, and a kingdom over all when he returns. He's the one.

5<sup>th</sup>, Jesus is the fulfillment of God's prophecy . . .

**To renew his kingdom despite a lineage of failure (v7-11; Jer 23:5)**

[6b] *And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, [7] and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, [8] and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, [9] and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, [10] and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, [11] and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.*

This part of the lineage spans about 400 years and ends in 586BC. When Jerusalem was conquered, the temple was destroyed, and the people were forced to Babylon. All because too many of the leaders were too sinful, and too many people followed. Too many kings turned their back on the Lord. It was a lineage of failure and the end of David's kingdom.

Fortunately, it wasn't the end of the story. And God promised as much in **Jer 23:5** toward the end of this stretch. “*Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.*”

God prophesied a renewed kingdom despite a lineage of failure. And Matthew is saying Jesus is the one who's doing it. He's the righteous branch from the stump of David, who's building his church from the ashes of history.

And last, Jesus is the fulfillment of God's prophecy . . .

**To preserve his people through a lineage of faithfulness (v12-16; Hag 1:12)**

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

Other than the first three names in this section, we know nothing about the rest. They lived during the 400 silent years between the testaments, and the record of their lives is lost to history.

What's not lost, is the example of Zerubbabel, v12. Heir to the Davidic throne around 500BC, Zerubbabel led the first group of Israelites to return from exile (Ezra 2:1-2), and served as a faithful leader when they arrived. Like it says in **Haggai 1:12** – *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.* Zerubbabel was faithful.

And presumably, so were those who followed in the genealogy. People who waited patiently and kept hope alive, so that when the time came Joseph and Mary were ready. *Joseph the husband of Mary* [v16], *of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.* Messiah. Fulfilment of God's prophecy to preserve his people through a lineage of faithfulness. He's the one.

*[17] So all the generations from Abraham to David [v17] were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.* It's a brief commentary to point out God's sovereign *control* of Jesus' lineage, and offer a mnemonic, a memory aid. 3 sets of 14. To keep *track* of such an important lineage. A lineage, to point out that Jesus is the fulfillment. Jesus is the Messiah. The Christ.

And . . .

### **That changes everything**

The lineage of Jesus, and his fulfillment of prophecy, changes everything. If he's the Christ, the Messiah, he's God's Son. If he's the Christ, he's Lord. If he's the Christ, he's our Savior.

Which changes everything. From the present to the future. The present, because his kingdom has come and his will is being done. It's here and it's unstoppable. And it changes the future because he's going to make all things new. Our bodies, our desires, our planet, everything. The fulfillment of Jesus changes everything.

Even your *life* if you'll let him. He'll forgive your sin, cleanse your heart, save your soul, transform your mind, and guarantee your future. Top to bottom and inside out, he'll change your life.

Instead of spinning in doubt, he'll give you assurance. Instead of living in fear, he'll bring security. Instead of futility, hope. Instead of depression, joy. Instead of weakness, strength. Instead of hate, love. Instead of death, life.

Jesus will change your life and everything about it. If you believe it. If you *believe* he's the Christ. If you *believe* the genealogy. If you *believe* the fulfillment. If you believe the *Christmas* story.

Prayer – Father, who would have thought a genealogy is so important? So rich. So encouraging. Capture our hearts, and renew our minds, and restore our joy in the Christmas story. The story of your Son. Hope of the ages, promised salvation, God with us.

**You Are Loved**