

JESUS IS KING: Thrilling Hope for a Weary World
Matthew 1:1-17

*"Joy to the world, the LORD is come. Let earth receive her **KING**"*

*"Long lay the world in sin and error pining til **HE appeared** and the soul felt its worth
a **thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices...**"*

Introduction: If there was any year that we needed an extra amount of sentiment at Christmastime, this was it. Even I understood the desire to put up lights early and start listening to Christmas music in early November, given the circumstances and situation of having almost nothing feel normal. The sentimental feelings we experience during this time of year are palpable, filling us with hope that things will get better, focusing on giving gifts to others, and are acutely aware of those in need. We sing familiar songs, bring out familiar decorations, and engage in time honored traditions. Let's be honest, most everyone loves and looks forward to Christmas. But our challenge every year, and this year especially, is to **move from sentiment to celebration, to fix our gaze not on tradition but on a Person, not on good feelings alone but on timeless truth.** The problem with positive sentiment of Christmas alone is that it cannot live up the hype! Christmas day never lives up the expectation. The days and weeks after are a little depressing because pure sentiment can leave with the lights and trees. What we hold to, year round, in a determined, fixed hope is on **Jesus the King, the One who was revealed to the world to bring true hope, joy, and salvation** to be grasped in the midst of a dark, sinful, hard world, producing affections that will stay through eternity.

Jesus entered the world the first time to a world languishing in darkness, with God's people weary from a lack of new revelation, and the glories of a United Monarchy the stuff of legend past. But though God was silent for hundreds of years between the Old and New Testament, He was NOT INACTIVE. He was waiting for perfect, exact moment to break through into humanity through a young virgin to **reveal Himself to His people and all He had called.** Just like we have truth imbedded in much of our Christmas songs ("Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her KING"), Israel had prophecy imbedded into the Old Testament to await the coming of Messiah. They knew that the coming king would be great and both **human and divine.** Isaiah prophesied that He'd be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14) and be despised, pierced, crushed, and oppressed (Isa 53:2-7), but also that He'd be called **Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** His rule and the peace He brings will have no equal (Isa. 9:6-7). He would be both *Immanuel* or "God with us" (Isa. 7:14) and also would be eternal (Micah 5:2) He will be the King of Israel, the Lord (Zephaniah 3:15), bringing salvation (Zechariah 9:9) and would be worshiped as King (Zephaniah 14:17). The people of Israel were awaiting their king, were weary, needed hope, yet by and large **missed Jesus when He came the first time.**

Over the next two weeks we are going to look at Matthew's account of how Jesus revealed Himself to the world, and particularly to His covenant people of Israel. We want to deepen our understanding of **who Jesus the King is, how He came, and who He came for.** Our goal is to gain a *thrill of hope as we come to grips with the true King, not a sentimental view of Him. That we see seem Him as the giver of salvation, that He rules as a **Gracious King**, and that anyone can receive Him. In a time of weariness, we need a reason to rejoice, and that is sourced in the real Jesus, the true King and LORD.*

Now we are going to look first through the lens of Jesus **genealogy**, potentially an odd place to start yet exactly where Matthew started, and in looking at an often overlooked part of Jesus' story, we will glean new insight into the familiar, a fresh remembrance of a tale as old as time. For us, genealogies are like

reading contracts for iTunes or Apps: we easily breeze through them, scanning just enough to know how to get to the end of it (clicking "I agree" or getting back to the narrative). But for a Jewish reader (who was Matthew's target audience), genealogy held huge significance. It was the key to who was able to join worship in the Temple. In the Old Testament, it delineated the land divisions in the land of Israel (see Numbers 26, 34 -35), who was able to serve as priests (Ezra 2:61-62), and even how property was transferred (Ruth 3-4). You'll remember that even the beloved story of Christmas itself had to with lineage, as Joseph took Mary to His ancestral home of Bethlehem in Luke 2:4. And the Apostle Paul pointed to the fact that he was a **Hebrew of Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin** (Phil. 3:5) validating his credentials as a Jew AND a Pharisee. Matthew starts with a genealogy to make it abundantly clear that Jesus was, is, and will be KING, from the line of David, the rightful heir. In fact, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D, no genealogies exist to link living Jews with pre-70 A.D lineage. In other words, no person today can lay claim to the throne of David since they cannot prove their lineage back to him. Jesus could. Matthew did.

Just to set your mind at ease, we will NOT be going through every name and verse through this whole section, but summarizing the overall purpose and highlighting certain emphasis within, then drawing some principles that will help us know and worship our King.

1. **This is the origin story of Jesus Christ the King** - The opening line, "*the book of the genealogy*" means the record, the account, or story of Jesus. **Jesus** means "*Yahweh saves*", the name given by the angel to Joseph to give to his Son. **Christ** is the word "*anointed one*", a term that we are used to but that would have been an anomaly in Jesus own time, but that Matthew applies to Jesus at the very beginning.

2. **The genealogy does NOT account for every descendent, but emphasizes important ones** - Matthews account has gaps where he left out certain names. The second grouping of 14 leaves out Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, and the third grouping only has 13 to cover 500 years. Matthew's goal was not to give us information for dating purposes, but rather *legal origins*. The two names up front are: **the son of David, the son of Abraham**. To a Jewish mind, these were the epitome of being Jewish, the key forefathers, the best of the best:

- **David represented the throne and might** - David was the most well known king in Israel's history. He brought the nation from fledgling power to super power, conquering enemies on all fronts and preparing the way for his son Solomon to build the Temple since he was too much a man of war and had shed too much blood on the earth (1 Chronicles 22:8 - yep, David was pretty much a baaaaaaad man, a warrior of warriors, one that you were glad to fight with and for). David also was given a **covenant by God Himself** (conveniently called the "Davidic Covenant") which stated that his offspring would sit on the royal throne forever (2 Sam. 7:1-17). "*And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. 'Your throne shall be established forever'*" (v. 16) When you were a 'son of David', you came from a royal line, one that went directly to the Throne. This is what the people at the time of Jesus' birth were longing for, the promised One from the promised line to sit on the literal throne of David and rule in the same way David did.
- **Abraham represented the Father of Israel, the promise of land and nations** - Stretching back to Genesis 12, God promised a permanent line of faith through Abraham. He would be great along with his descendants, they would possess a land, and all the nations would be blessed by him. This was an eternal covenant and unconditional. Being a "son of Abraham" was to be a part of a chosen race, one that God Himself had made His own (Deut. 7:6-11)

3. **This traces Joseph's line which showed Jesus' *legal claim* to the throne of David** - Luke shows Mary's line through Jesus' royal claim, or bloodline to the throne. Notice a couple of problems with Joseph's line:

- Joseph was NOT the father of Jesus - Look at Matt. 1:16, where Joseph is referred to as "the *husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*" Joseph was NOT Jesus' father by blood but adopted him legally as his son
- Joseph WAS, by bloodline, a descendent of David - This lowly carpenter was from royalty ("Duke of Nazareth"?). We know this again from Luke 2 when he traveled down to Bethlehem since he could trace lineage back to the Shepherd King.
- The bloodline was spoiled - Notice the name **Jeconiah** in 1:11 and 12. He was not a good king....at all. He was so bad, that in **Jeremiah 22:30** it stated, "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah." Toward the end of the monarchy in Judah, sin and wickedness ran rampant, so much so that Jeconiah received this prophecy and the nation itself was dragged away into exile to Babylon. But this is where the glory of the virgin birth is also seen. Jesus was NOT a blood relative of Joseph, who's lineage came from David through Solomon (1:7) while Mary was a relative of David through his son Nathan (Luke 3:31) and not through Jeconiah. God preserved Jesus' legal right to the throne while also avoiding the curse of Jeconiah.

4. **Matthew's account of the genealogy is orderly, tracing 3 key epochs of history** - While Luke's account goes back all the way to Adam (Luke 3:38), Matthew starts with Abraham, moved to the forming of the United Monarchy through David, continued through the divided Monarchy with its blips of good kings, reported on the deportation and subsequent return to the land, and concluded with the family of Joseph in the land of his forefathers. Notice that **verse 17 gives three arcs of 14 generations: Abraham to David; David to Deportation; Deportation to Christ.**

But so what!? This all doesn't feel very Christmas-y to us! You're probably right, but let's look at this section a little differently, maybe not so technically. What I love about the way God gave us the Bible and the story of redemption is the fact that it comes ***unsanitized, with warts, ugly drama, and stuff that if NETFLIX brought it to the screen people would boycott.*** One might expect that the lineage of the King of kings and Lord of the universe would have a privileged upbringing, coming from the best of the best. But, at best, Jesus' genealogy is a mixed bag of ***unlikely, unruly, and unremarkable*** people. He came from that group so he could reach that group, opening His arms wide to sinners everywhere, giving them the truth and the way to true salvation, joy, and hope.

He came from the MOST UNLIKELY to reach the MOST UNLIKELY:

One of the distinctive qualities of Matthew's account that leaps off the page is **who He includes**. Most Jewish genealogies would NOT include women, and if they did, they would not include those of ill repute. But here we see the prominence of women who played vital roles, even if they came from less than clean circumstances:

- **Mary** - Mary does not get a lot of ink in this account compared to Luke's, but we should take a moment to acknowledge the incredible choice of this young, young woman to be the mother of the Savior of the world. Now we know that Mary has been idolized and even had a whole false religion built around her as co-redemptress and dispenser of grace to people who pray to her. This is a false teaching from a false gospel that condemns people to hell who believe in Mary for

salvation rather than Jesus. Remember, Mary herself knew she was a sinner in need of salvation when she uttered the words "*my spirit rejoices in God my Savior*" (Luke 1:47). She was remarkable in her depth of knowledge of Scripture, her acceptance of God's command by faith, and implicit trust and dependency on God, but she was an abject sinner who looked to her Son for salvation. And though Jesus was born when she had not known her husband or anyone physically, that changed after His birth, when she and Joseph continued a normal marriage, including having more children (Matt. 1:25)

- **Tamar** - Going back to the beginning of the chapter we see 4 women highlighted. The first was Tamar, whose story is captured in Genesis 38. This story is not for the faint of heart nor does it work well for kids Sunday School. She was married to **Judah's son Er**, but he was wicked so God killed him. So his other son **Onan** took her as a wife, but he too was wicked, and God killed him. Because Judah didn't want to lose another son, he withheld his 3rd son from marrying her, denying Tamar her right to offspring according to the Law. So she took matters into her own hands. She knew Judah, her father-in-law was in town for business, so she dressed like a prostitute (marked by covering her face --- yikes), and Judah obliged and entered into a sinful act with her, though he did not know who she was. Three months later, Judah heard Tamar was pregnant, was indignant, and called for her to be burned. She then produced his signet ring and made known to him that he was the father. It was through this immoral, incestuous relationship that two offspring were born: **Perez and Zerah**. If God wanted to sanitize Jesus' line, this is a story He would have kept out.
- **Rahab** - A few generations later, we find this name as a display of God's grace. Rahab was a professional prostitute in Canaan at the time when Joshua was leading Israel to conquer the promised land. Its interesting that Rahab is referred to as a prostitute multiple times in the Bible: James 2:25, Hebrews 11:31, and in Joshua 2. But that only enhances her exemplary faith. When she heard that Israel had entered the land, she heard stories of the greatness of God and believed in Him, hazarding her own well being and life to hide the Israelite spies in Jericho. Because of her faith, she and her family were spared when Joshua fought the battle of Jericho. But that is not the end of her story, since she caught the eye of the son of a prince, Salmon the son of Nashon (see 1 Chron. 2:10). She entered the royal line, giving birth to Boaz, and forever being etched into the eternal Word of God.
- **Ruth** - Now, Ruth was a woman of character. She was loyal, humble, and diligent in following after and caring for her mother in law Naomi. But the problem was: she was a **Moabite**. They were the worst (Deut. 23:3), and thus were unable to enter into the assembly. The Moabite nation came out of another gross engagement of incest, this time between Lot and his daughters, who got their father drunk and unbeknownst to him, became pregnant by him, producing the Ammonites and Moabites, constant enemies of Israel (Genesis 19:30-38). But because Ruth was an honorable woman, God was gracious to her, providing a kinsman redeemer in Boaz, and becoming the great-grandmother of King David.
- **Bathsheba** - You may remember this story, where Bathsheba was bathing within eyeshot of the palace, and was summoned by David the king to cohabituate with him. This produced a child that died, but also resulted in the death of her husband Uriah and miserable consequences to David based on his immoral choice. But she also had the honor of bearing **Solomon**, who would lead Israel to great prominence and become the wisest man who ever lived.

What's the point in including these women? GRACE. Heaps and heaps of grace. See, it doesn't matter where these women started, whether they were prostitutes, involved in incest, adultery, or young, they were welcomed into God's family, not as second class citizens but as relatives of the King Jesus. These were Jesus' great-great-grandma's. They did not fit the mold. They would have been unlikely. But calls and saves the unlikely. Those who don't dress, act, or talk like those who "should" be saved. Christmas reminds us of God's grace, the fact that no one deserved salvation, but God lavished grace on us through King Jesus, who traced His ancestry through the muck and mire of sinful realities.

He came from the MOST UNRULY to save the MOST UNRULY:

We've already looked at some of the names, but it's helpful to look again at the actual people. The Bible does not wash away the sinful missteps of Jesus' line:

Abraham was fearful and was willing to give his wife to adultery to save himself....TWICE! In Genesis 12:13, he compelled Sarah to say she was his sister, so Pharaoh was going to take her as his wife. Years later, fearing that Ahimelech would kill him, did the same thing, claiming she was his sister, giving his wife up to another (Gen. 20:1-11). Not only that, but instead of trusting God's promise through Sarah, he took his servant Hagar and had a son through her, producing conflict between races to this day.

David was a man after God's own heart, but was an adulterer, murderer, and liar - 2 Sam. 11 and 12 tells the unfortunate but very real story of a godly man who fell into sin....hard. To cover up his initial sin, he killed a righteous man, most likely had more military men killed at the same time by going too close to the enemies defenses, and kept it all hidden. This led to direct trouble within his house the rest of his life.

Jeconiah was the end of a long list of evil kings in Judah - We've already looked at Jeconiah, and though there WERE good, faithful kings in Judah (i.e. Hezekiah and Josiah), an overwhelming number were wicked, including Manasseh, who sacrificed his own children in fire to foreign gods (2 Chron. 33:6)

Is this all to make ourselves feel better or simply berate the men of Jesus' line? Not at all. It is a reminder that **Jesus came to save sinners**, and that no one, I mean no one, has escaped the sin trap. It does not matter what you've done, how heinous your sin has been, **God's grace is greater through Jesus the King**. Far too many think they have to get clean first, then come to Christ. Far too many think that same way of their family members, co-workers, or kids. No, God's grace extends to the lowly, weak, sinful, and wicked. Jesus came from the unruly to save the unruly, just like you and me.

He came from the UNREMARKABLE to save the UNREMARKABLE:

Finally, there are many names, particularly in the time of exile, that we just don't know much or anything about. They lived common lives. They engaged in normal things. They were remarkably unremarkable. And they were included in the line of KING JESUS.

God saves the normal, common, and unremarkable. You may think that you are nothing special or have nothing to offer, and that is exactly why God calls you His own. We bring nothing to Him in terms of righteousness, but He receives us because of the righteousness of Christ. He calls the lowly, the weak, those who have nothing. That's what Grace looks like, especially at Christmas.

What is the thrill of hope to a weary world? That God's grace has been revealed through King Jesus, who came from a sinful line yet He Himself was born of a virgin, in order to save sinful humanity. He understands our plight, our need, and our weariness. That is why we can celebrate now at Christmas and even more as the lights come down, the trees go back in the box, and the decorations return to storage. May we rejoice at the fact that our KING has been revealed, and we can receive Him.