

*Coming Of The King -
His Family*

Matthew 1:1 - 1:17

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We're starting our study of the Gospel of Matthew this week after getting an introduction last Sunday. The **gospel** – a unique form of literature that tells the story of Jesus, within the context of his Message.

And so the Gospels contain vignettes of action, collections of sayings and teachings, and then a great deal of energy focused on his suffering, death and resurrection.

All of this to tell a particular theological message.

In that way Gospels are like paintings.

My mother in law is a very accomplished painter.

What she produces are works very different than photos.

Paintings represent what is there **as the artist sees it**.

They interpret the scene. Each brush stroke is intentional. And all the brush strokes together give us a message.

Gospels paint the life and teaching of Jesus with careful, intentional brush strokes to give us a message.

Look for the strokes as you read.

And wonder what the message might be.

We said last week that Matthew is presenting to us the coming of the King – King Jesus. He writes for a predominantly Jewish audience, and so sets up his painting with five major sections, bracketed by an introduction and a conclusion.

Why five?

To remind the Jewish readers of the Torah's five books.

Over the next weeks we're working through the introduction.

He begins - "*An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*"

Matthew paints the ancestry of Jesus; introducing us to his family.

Jesus **THE MESSIAH** – Ah, Jewish reader. Right in the very opening sentence comes the brush stroke that this One is the fulfillment of all the promises that God's people had been hoping in.

He would save the world.

Son of David – there is royalty in Jesus. All the promises of a son of David forever on the throne of God's people..... they pointed to Jesus, says Matthew.

Son of Abraham – Abraham had received the great promises of God that through him all the world would be blessed. Jesus fills up those promises.

And all of this would be according to God's **perfect** plan.
Where do we see the perfection?

Go to the end of the genealogy.

What does Matthew say about the structure?

Fourteen generations – three times over.

Ancient Jews painted meaning with numbers.

To Jews, the number 7 or any multiple thereof symbolized perfection. That's why the Bible describes the finishing of creation as happening in seven days.

These generations are groups of 14, which is two groups of seven.

Groups of perfection, says Matthew.

And there are **three** such groups. Three is the ancient number for fullness.

One more numerical brush stroke -

Ancient Jews gave numbers to letters.

Take the letters D-V-D (consonants of David – no vowels in Hebrew)

When you add the numbers up, know what you get? (4+6+4)

Fourteen!

Jesus – son of David.

Three groups of Fourteen generations – painted for us.

Remember – this does NOT mean there weren't more generations. In fact, the Old Testament tells us of certain kings that are NOT mentioned here. Did Matthew goof?

Ancient Jews knew their kings. They could list them off. They would see immediately which ones Matthew missed. Did that matter? No. Why? Because that concern about precision of detail is a 20th century thing. Not then. They paid more attention to the **message** Matthew was sending. They focused on the **FOURTEEN**.

Three groups of Davidic family.

Three groups of perfection. The fullness of perfection.

Resulting in the coming of Jesus to earth as Messiah.

That's the *big picture message* that introduces the Gospel.

There are also sub-messages painted into this section.

Look with me at these three groups.

In the first group we see **grace** painted.

In the second group we see **judgment**.

In the third group we see **faithfulness**.

Group one, then: Abraham to David.

Know what an ancient Jew would say when reading this list?

Why'd he include the women?

Jewish genealogies **NEVER** included women.

And here there are four. Three in the first section, actually.

The fourth in the second section.

And look who they are!

Tamar.

Rahab.

Ruth,

Bathsheba.

The pigment of their lives all shares something in common.

Know what that is?

They have very messy lives. They have pain. There is much grey in their lives. And their heritage is not terribly Jewish. They seem to be from away.

Tamar -

Her origin is unclear. One of us? Or an outsider? Not sure.

Her story is told in Genesis 38, a very painful one. Her husband dies without leaving any children. The law stated that father-in-law was supposed to find her another husband. And, sure enough, he lines up a man. Who violates Tamar, and then refuses to marry her. She is abandoned by these men who had said, "You can count on me." And in desperation comes up with a plan that lands her in bed with her father-in-law, and pregnant.

The child is one of Jesus' ancestors.

Rahab (v.5). A Canaanite from Jericho. Definitely an outsider.

A hooker.

You can point quick fingers at her, if you like. But think for a moment – how many young girls do you know that will write down "Sex Trade Worker" when they're asked in a grade three writing class "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

Often there is some deep hurt, or abuse in their past that leads women to sell themselves, and to try and isolate their bodies from their minds. They become broken, disconnected people often because of broken, disconnected pasts.

Rahab - the pagan hooker.

Jesus calls her "grandma."

Also in verse 5 – Ruth.

From Moab.

There's a part in the story in the book of Ruth, chapter 3, where she sneaks up and lays down with Boaz on the threshing floor. He agrees there to marry her. Know what kind of women typically went to meet the men at harvest time on the threshing floor? Rahabs. If nothing else, what Ruth did sure **looked** rather iffy. Messy. Uncertain. Grey.

And she is gathered up in the story of the Messiah King.

Finally verse 6, where we read of Solomon "whose mother had been Uriah's wife." Here's a woman victimized by a peeping Tom who falls in lust with her, seduces her, gets her pregnant, has her husband killed and marries her. And then the baby of that union dies. And she's not even given a name!

Incredibly painful. Violated. Betrayed. Used. Grieving.

AND.....

Part of the family of Jesus.

God takes the lives of people that others have dropped in a ditch, people who may well have seen their own lives as being worthless and filled with far more pain than success.

He pours grace into them.

He surrounds their legacy with mercy.

He fills their future with eternal significance.....

Even if they couldn't see it themselves!!

Which is a HUGE part of the story of Jesus.

Pouring grace into lives that are hurting, violated, betrayed, crippled.

Giving welcome and acceptance to ones that others treat as outsiders and strangers.

Giving meaning to ones that others see as worthless and powerless.

Meaning that if you can identify with Tamar or Rahab or Ruth or Bathsheba,
take heart when you pick up the Gospel.

Because more than just a series of unpronounceable names – this story of Jesus the Messiah King is picking up **your** story. The God who carefully ordered that history is paying equally great care and power and grace towards your life.

Yes – even in the pain.

Yes – even when you can't see the good.

Yes – even when you think it's all a waste of time.

Yes – even when you think no one in the world gives a rip.

Section Two – David to the Exile, v.6-11:

Listing the kings of Israel. If you know their story, as the first readers of Matthew would, you'd immediately know it was a story of unfaithfulness. They turned their back on God and chased idols again and again, even sacrificing their own children. They twisted justice in order to line their own pockets. They committed murder. Oppression.

Awful stuff. No halos and harps here.

And YET – God continues to work.

Human unfaithfulness and sin **CANNOT** stop God's purposes from being fulfilled.

He **WILL** complete them!!

With us.

Or in spite of us.

There are a couple of special brush strokes I'd like you to see here.

End of verse 7 – if you read the Old Testament the name you expect there is **ASA**.

What you read?

ASAPH.

He was the author of Psalms 50, 73-83.

Then v.10 – the Old Testament would lead us to expect **AMON**

We read

AMOS

He was a great Old Testament prophet, warning of God's judgement.

Did Matthew miss it?

Not at all.

We see deliberate portrait hints that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Psalms and the Prophets.

And – in the midst of the unfaithfulness of these evil kings – hear also the echos of JUDGEMENT from the prophet Amos echo down the centuries.

JUDGEMENT – also part of the legacy of Jesus.

He comes not as some soft lover of humanity, but also to bear and to bring judgment.

We'll hear more about that in future chapters.

Jesus will give words of acceptance and forgiveness.

But he will **also** speak words of warning; words about a narrow way; words about eternal separation from God.

Finally, Section three – the exile to Jesus.

Know any of the names?

Me, neither.

They are faceless people. It is the dark period of Israel's history. There is ongoing foreign interference in the life of Israel. Occupation by murdering armies. And there were no prophets giving words from God. God seemed to have forgotten Israel. Or gone dumb.

It was a time of wondering whether all the great promises to Abraham and David had withered. Maybe they were stale dated.

But they hadn't.

Because God hadn't.

The first section is about GRACE.

The second section is about JUDGEMENT.

The third section is about FAITHFULNESS.

Even when we **can't** see it, God remains at work.

Even when we **don't** understand, God does.

He doesn't quit.

He doesn't forget.

He doesn't give up.

He doesn't get distracted.

Not then.

Not now.

Not ever.

I had a phone call recently from someone wanting reference info on someone I knew. All kinds of questions about whether this person would be an asset to their organization.

If so, a job would be waiting.

If not - well, don't call us but we'll call you.

That's how it goes.

We live in a tough environment. Many of you know that — the hard way.

People don't want to become your friend because they think you're boring.

People don't want you to work for them because your skill set isn't right.

People avoid you because of some mistake you've made in the past.

People laugh at you because of some peculiarity you have.

Blacklisted, avoided, condemned, ignored.

Know it?

Perhaps it's not even that others do it to you.

There are times we disqualify ourselves or get down on ourselves because we just don't feel

we make the grade; or we think we've failed once too often; or we don't think we're big enough or have enough or know enough.

Then take a good look at the portrait of the family of Jesus Christ.

"This is MY family" says Jesus!

"These are the people through whom I've done my work" says the Father.

He chooses and uses them.

The hurting people.

The people who keep messing up.

The no-name, faceless people.

God says - "I'm going to make you to be MY people!"

This is the God that comes to us in Jesus Christ.

He hasn't changed the way He works, or the sorts of people to whom He comes.

He looks for not quite altogether, sometimes stumbling, often little people and uses them to accomplish amazing things for His Kingdom.

And so.....

.....Can you see it now?

That while the names may be unpronounceable, the faces in Christ's family portrait are very familiar – for they are

well -

- our faces!