



MT. ROSE REFORMED
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Birth of a King

Reverend Scott Johnson | December 7, 2025 | Matthew 1:1-17

Old Testament Reading

The Old Testament reading is 2 Samuel chapter seven, verses four through 17. I'll start reading at verse one. So 2 Samuel chapter seven, verse one through 17. And this is God's infallible and inerrant word.

Now, when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent."

And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."

But the same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, thus says the Lord, 'Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'

Now therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture from following the sheep that I should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them so that they may dwell in their own place and be

disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.

Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 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. He shall build a house for my name, 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. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men. But my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

New Testament Reading

And now let's turn to Matthew chapter one for our New Testament reading. And this is our sermon text as well this morning. Matthew chapter one, verses one through 17. Matthew 1, 1 through 17.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac, the father of Jacob and Jacob, the father of Judah and his brothers and Judah, the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez, the father of Hezron, and Hezron, the father of Ram, and Ram, the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab, the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon, the father of Salmon, and Salmon, the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz, the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed, the father of Jesse, and Jesse, the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.

And Solomon, the father of Rehoboam. And Rehoboam, the father of Abijah. And Abijah, the father of Asaph. And Asaph, the father of Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat, the father of Joram. And Joram, the father of Uzziah. And Uzziah, the father of Jotham. And Jotham, the father of Ahaz. And Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah, the father of Manasseh. And Manasseh, the father of Amos. And Amos, the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok, the father of Achim, and Achim, the father of Eliud, and Eliud, the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar, the father of Matthan, and Matthan, the father of Jacob, and Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who was called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon, 14 generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, 14 generations.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

The Overarching Message: God Fulfills His Promises

Since we have entered the Advent season, we'll take a break from Exodus for this month, and we'll focus on the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and what it tells us about the incarnation and the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking further ahead, once we're finished with going through Exodus sometime next year, we'll pick up again with the Gospel of Matthew, and so that will be the next book of the Bible that we work through at the morning services. So after we're finished with Exodus, we'll pick up with the Gospel of Matthew.

And so for now, as we consider today and the next couple of weeks, the first chapter of Matthew and what it tells us about the coming of the Lord Jesus, basically we're getting a head start on the gospel of Matthew. So we'll look at the first chapter this month, and then once we finish Exodus, we'll come back to Matthew.

But as we consider this first chapter in Matthew, the overarching lesson or message that I want us to take from it is this, is that God fulfills His promises. God fulfills His word. And as we think about the coming of Christ this Advent season, as we consider the incarnation of the Son of God, the birth of Jesus, may that be the truth that God impresses upon our hearts. May we be again brought to that place where we acknowledge and recognize that God is faithful, He is faithful to us. He keeps his word. He cannot deny himself, but he must be faithful to all that he has promised. And this is a message that we need to hear again and again and again.

We live in a world of broken promises, of empty promises. We've all been hurt by others who have failed to keep their word to us, who have failed to keep their promises. And we have hurt others by our failure to keep our promises to them. And so for this reason, it's good to be reminded that God is faithful. He is not like us, but he keeps his word always. And that is the message that is communicated here in this very first part of Matthew's gospel. When Matthew begins his gospel with this genealogy, this is at least one of the messages that we take from it is that God keeps his word.

I know some of you are interested in genealogy, or perhaps you have done a little bit of research into your own family background and have explored the family tree, trying to take it as far as you can. And in the process, you've gained a better understanding of who you are, your roots, where you have come from, and so on. When Robin and I got married, my aunts gave us a family album that included a fairly detailed family history going back a couple of hundred years. I wish that I could tell you that I have descended from royalty or nobility, but that is not the case. It's a pretty ordinary boring family tree in that sense. But being a Presbyterian, I am glad to know that at least part of my family comes from Scotland, the birthplace of Presbyterianism. That has absolutely nothing to do with why I'm a Presbyterian, but to me at least, it's interesting to know that history. Just as it is for you, it's interesting, it's meaningful for you to know the people in your background, your family tree, where you have come from, what your ancestors were like.

Two Main Lessons

As for the genealogy of Jesus, Matthew had a far greater purpose in tracing out the ancestors of Jesus than mere historical interest or to satisfy our curiosity about who were the human ancestors of our Lord. Rather, Matthew's purpose, or at least one of his purposes in this genealogy, was to make a theological point, to tell us something very true about God, and that is the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of God's longstanding promise to the people of Israel that he would one day raise up for them the Messiah, the Christ, the coming one who would be their Lord and Savior. And this is the message that Matthew communicates to us through this long list of names as he gives us this genealogy of our Lord Jesus.

And as we look at this genealogy, there are two main lessons that I want to draw from it concerning the fulfillment of God's promise to raise up for his people the Messiah, the Christ. And those two lessons are these. First of all, the fulfillment of God's promise shows his faithfulness. The fulfillment of God's promise shows us how faithful he is. And secondly, the

fulfillment of God's promise shows us his sovereignty. And so those are the two lessons that we'll take from this genealogy that begins the gospel of Matthew.

Lesson One: God's Faithfulness Demonstrated

So Matthew begins his gospel this way. And this is our first lesson. The faithfulness of God is demonstrated in this genealogy. But Matthew begins his gospel in verse one with these words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." And so because Matthew, at the very beginning, tells us of two of the ancestors of Jesus, we can infer from that that these must be the two most important ancestors of our Lord. One is King David, and the other is Abraham. And each of these figures represents a specific promise that God had made to his covenant people.

There is first the promise of a king. God had promised his people that he would raise up a king, particularly a king from the royal line of David to rule over his people forever and ever. We heard that promise from 2 Samuel chapter seven. In that passage, the Lord promises through Nathan to David that one day he will raise up an offspring or a son of David who will sit on the throne of David and his reign, his kingdom will last forever. And with that promise and view, as the history of Israel went on, after David, after his descendants held onto the kingdom and then lost it, and after the restoration from Babylon, this promise of a coming Davidic king, the son of David, who would be raised up to rule over the people of Israel, to even bring them salvation, this began to grow in the hearts and the minds of the people of Israel. They began to long for, to wait, for this future king, this future son of David who would reign over them.

And in this genealogy then, the very first words of the New Testament, Matthew is declaring that this long hoped for king, this long awaited king, that he has arrived, he has come, and he has come in the person of Jesus. And he does that, Matthew announces that, not only by announcing in verse one at the very beginning that Christ is the son of David, but he also confirms this truth that he is the Davidic king that God had promised to the people of Israel because he lists all the kings in this genealogy. And as you know, when you read Matthew's genealogy, you compare it with Luke's genealogy, a lot of the names are different. Luke is tracing the biological ancestry of Jesus. That is to say, the biological ancestry up until the point of Joseph, because Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph. He was of Mary, but not Joseph. And so Luke is tracing that ancestry. Matthew is tracing the royal ancestry, the kingly line, the fact that Jesus is descended from the kings of Israel, the kings of Judah, from David.

And in doing this, Matthew is making his point that Jesus is the last and the final king to come from the line of David. Therefore, he is the one that was promised to David by the Lord. He is the true son of David, the offspring of David, who would rule over the people of Israel. As our hymn puts it, he is great David's greater son. And when you read on in the gospel of Matthew, which Lord willing we will do in the months to come, you see how in different ways Matthew declares this truth over and over again, that Jesus was the king of Israel. In fact, even at his birth, he was known as a king. This little baby born to this obscure teenage girl from Galilee, he was known by the wise men as the king. They say, as they're looking for Jesus in chapter two, verse two, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?"

Jesus himself testified that he is king when he declared that something greater than Solomon is here. And as Jesus hung on the cross, the signboard that was put above his head declared the truth about him. "This is Jesus, king of the Jews." And then after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus proclaimed his sovereign authority as king and over his sovereign authority over all creation, when he said to his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

And so Matthew here at the very beginning of his gospel, he is declaring to us that in the birth of Jesus Christ, God has raised up this king. The kingdom of God has come with the birth of this child, just as he had promised David. And so we read here then that the King of kings, the Lord of lords has arrived and his name is Jesus.

But the coming of Christ was also the fulfillment of another ancient promise that God had made, and that was the promise that God had made to his people through the patriarch Abraham. God said to Abraham back in Genesis 12 verse three, "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." So the Lord said to Abraham, "In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This was God's promise to Abraham that of his offspring, one would be raised up who would bring the hope of salvation, the gift of salvation, not only to the descendants of Abraham, which would be the people of Israel, of course, but that salvation would be extended to the ends of the earth, that that salvation would extend even to the Gentiles, the nations, the peoples of the world.

And so when Matthew here in verse one, again, the very beginning of his gospel, when he calls Christ the son of Abraham, he is saying that Jesus is not only the promised son of David to

reign over the people of Israel, but he is the promised offspring of Abraham. He is the one who will bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

When you compare this at the beginning of the gospel with what we read at the very end of Matthew's gospel, it's very striking. At the end of Matthew's gospel, we hear Jesus telling his apostles in the Great Commission, he says that they are to make disciples of all nations, not just the people of Israel, but make disciples of all nations. And so this purpose of God to bring salvation through the Christ, not just to the descendants of Abraham, but to the nations of the world, this promise is like two bookends that come at the beginning and the end of the gospel of Matthew. He is the son of Abraham, verse 1.1. He is the one who calls his apostles, commands them to make disciples of all nations, chapter 28.19.

And there's also details in this genealogy that point to this truth as well, that Jesus came to bring salvation to the world. One detail would be the fact that the four women who are listed in this genealogy, of those four women, three were Gentiles and one was married to a Gentile. And so Matthew is telling us here that this Jesus, who was born of Joseph and Mary, that he is the one who was promised to Abraham to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And not only that, but he is the one who was promised to reign over the people of Israel as their king.

And so God is faithful. He's kept his promises. The people of Israel, they waited. They waited for centuries, for so many years for this promise to be fulfilled. And it has been fulfilled with the birth of Christ.

Now, you and me, as believers in Christ, as those who live after the coming of Jesus, we live after the cross, after the empty tomb, we live in the ages, or the age of promises fulfilled. We enjoy the fullness of the benefits and blessings of the death and resurrection of Christ. We enjoy a greater fullness of the presence of the Holy Spirit whom Christ poured out upon his church, a greater presence of the Spirit than the people of the old covenant that they enjoyed before the coming of Christ. And so we are not living in the Old Testament days as shadows and types, but we are living in the light of the revelation of the person of Jesus Christ himself. And so we enjoy these promises fulfilled, but even so, we still live in the hope of the fulfillment of God's promises. We still live in a world that is under the curse of sin. We still struggle with sin. We still live in these mortal bodies. We live in the shadow of death. We live in a world that is burdened, straddled with hardship, suffering, affliction, pain, sorrow, and all the other consequences of sin.

And for some of you, the hard reality of the brokenness of this world is something that you face day to day in a very intense way. You may be painfully aware that that final deliverance that the Bible promises you, deliverance from this present evil age, that that is still yet to come, that you feel very much living in this world that we are still waiting, waiting for the promises of God to reach their full fulfillment. But your hope is in a God who is faithful to keep his promises. If he was faithful to keep his word, to raise up Christ, to send forth his son into the world, will he not be faithful to you to fulfill every promise that he makes to you? He promises to be with you in this life. He promises to walk with you even through the valley of the shadow of death. He promises that one day he will bring you home to be with him and his son forever in glory. And you can know that God will fulfill those promises because he has demonstrated his faithfulness in giving us his son, Jesus. And so the fulfillment of the promise shows the faithfulness of God.

Lesson Two: God's Sovereignty Demonstrated

The fulfillment of God's promises in sending Christ into the world also shows the sovereignty of God. That is his absolute rule, his absolute control over all things in this creation. And you see that sovereignty of God in the structure of the genealogy itself, in the way that Matthew orders this genealogy. There are three sets of 14 names. And those three sets are set apart by two major events in the history of Israel. The first is the establishment of the Davidic kingdom. And second, the second major event is the exile or deportation of people of Judah into Babylon.

Now there are no obvious reasons why this genealogy is structured this way. Matthew doesn't tell us why exactly he ordered it that way. So there were 14 or three sets of 14 generations. We can, as we look at this genealogy, we can trace the general arc of biblical history. You know, from Abraham to David, there is the promise of descendants, the promise of life in the promised land. And we see that being brought to fulfillment, at least partial fulfillment, with the reign of David. The people of Israel are in the land of Canaan. And then the Davidic kingship is the story of the unbelief, the unfaithfulness of the part of Israel that ultimately led them to exile. And then after the Israelites are restored from exile back into the promised land, they were waiting and waiting for the coming of the kingdom of God, for the promised son of David to arise to reestablish his reign over the people of Israel. Of course, that's where the genealogy ends with the birth of Jesus Christ, that coming king that the people were waiting for.

And so Matthew, he surveys for his Christian Jewish audience this whole sweep of the history of Israel, and it all culminates. It all comes to a point, to a head, in this one event, the birth of Jesus

to Mary in Bethlehem. But why specifically are there 14 generations in each division that Matthew gives to us? Nobody really knows. There have been some educated guesses, but nobody knows for sure. Matthew doesn't tell us why he chose the number 14.

One possibility is that if you take the numerical value of the three letters that make up David's name in Hebrew, and you add those three letters up, the numerical value, it comes up to 14. And we don't know if that's what was in David's mind. One commentator said, if Matthew didn't intend for that, he certainly would have been delighted to find that out. But we just don't know.

But we can say this, that there is no question that Matthew intended in this highly structured genealogy to express this truth. And that is that the Lord is the Lord of history. That God is the one who reigns over a human history. He is the one who exercised his sovereign rule over the people of Israel throughout their history. And so what Matthew was saying is this, is all this history that led up to the birth of Christ, this all unfolded according to the perfect plan of God. There was a rhyme and a reason for the history of Israel. When you read through the Old Testament, there is so much messiness there. There's so much that goes awry. So many things that seem to go wrong and the whole nation seems to go off the rails at times. But through all the twists and turns, through all the good and the bad of the history of the people of God, it was the Lord who was directing all things to this one culminating event, the fulfillment of His promise, the birth of the true King of Israel, the Messiah.

Matthew's telling us the very same thing that the Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians, Galatians 4.4, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of woman, born under the law." And so Matthew is saying the same thing. The time had fully come. The history of Israel had reached its climax. The time had come for the Christ to be born. And that time, with all the messiness of the history of Israel involved in it, it was brought about under the sovereign rule, the sovereign directing hand of God.

One of the striking features of this genealogy is how when you look at the kings of Judah that are listed in verses 6 through 11, there's a pattern that essentially, there's an alternating pattern of good king, followed by bad king, followed by good king, and so on. It's as though the scripture is saying here, no matter who was the king over Israel, no matter how unfaithful he may have been, no matter how wicked he may have been, nevertheless, God was still the true king. He was still carrying forward his purpose, his plan. He was directing the history of the people of Israel to bring it to that day that Matthew ends with in this genealogy, the birth of Jesus. And so

the very structure of the genealogy testifies to the sovereignty of God in accomplishing His plan of salvation.

The names as well in the genealogy, they bear witness to this same truth. The names that are given to us, they show us that God is sovereign when it comes to our salvation. Again, think of, or put yourself in the shoes of the original readers of this gospel. They were most likely Jewish Christians. And so these were not just names to them that were hard to pronounce, some of them, not for them, but for us, but these were not just names, but these names would have brought to their minds the remembrance of all the history of God's dealings with the ones who bore those names, especially the way in which the Lord worked out his salvation for them.

Take Isaac, for example. He was saved from the knife of his father who was ready to sacrifice him when the Lord intervened and provided a ram instead of Isaac to be sacrificed. There's Jacob. The Lord delivered him from a life of servitude to his uncle Laban. He brought him back home to the promised land. There is Judah and his brothers, and we know how God delivered them from famine and death by the hand of their brother Joseph. Even though his brothers had sold Joseph into slavery and the sovereign rule of God, God used that wicked deed to bring it about, that through Joseph, his brothers would be saved. And so they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

And then there's David. Time and time again, the Lord delivered him from enemy after enemy. He delivered him from Goliath, he saved him from Saul's murderous designs. He gave him victory over the Philistines and all the enemies of Israel time and time again. And it was from his own personal experience that David wrote in Psalm 3, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." David could say that of himself, but he applied it to the nation of Israel. "Salvation belongs to the Lord," and that is the banner that flies over the entire history of Israel. Salvation is God's doing. He is the one who saves and the only one who saves. And that is what Matthew is declaring with the names in this genealogy. That it is God alone who brings salvation. It is God alone who works redemption for his people. "Salvation belongs to the Lord."

And it is fitting that the name of Jesus should be connected to these names and their testimonies of God's grace and redemption because above all else, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that reveals to us that salvation belongs to the Lord. Above all else, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ in which we see that our salvation is by the sovereign work of God alone and not by us. Because the gospel does not say to you and me, "If you live uprightly, if you are a good

person, if you do your best to keep my commandments, then you will be saved." But the gospel says to us this, "You cannot keep my commandments. You cannot make yourself good. You have not lived a righteous life, but Jesus Christ has done for you what you cannot do." Jesus Christ has lived a life of perfect obedience and righteousness that you have failed to live. Jesus Christ died upon the cross and took your sin and your guilt and bore the judgment of God that you could not endure apart from suffering an eternity in hell. The gospel says to you that God has given you an all sufficient, a perfect savior in his son, Jesus Christ, and he has done it all. And if your trust is in the son of God and Jesus Christ, then you know that you have been saved by the grace of God and not by your own works, not by your own contribution, but by the grace of God, "Salvation belongs to the Lord."

And so the name of Jesus Christ, it comes at the beginning of this genealogy. It comes at the very end of this genealogy. It is a reminder that God alone is the author of our salvation. In fact, the name Jesus itself, as we'll see next week, the name Jesus itself says, or it means the Lord of salvation, the Lord saves.

But these names show us something else about God's sovereignty. And that is the grace of God is greater than the sin of man. They say that every family has skeletons in the closet. There's so many skeletons in this closet that if you begin to open the door, the bones will start piling up at your feet as they come tumbling out. A lot of these names we don't know much about, but the ones we do know something about, we know from the scriptures that these people, to put it mildly, they were not always the model of faith and virtue and morality. Even the great patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, they sinned. We might say they were honesty challenged. As for Jacob, his very name meant he cheats. And of course, Jacob lived up to his name, or we should say he lived down to his name, on more than one occasion. He could be a cheater, a deceiver. As for Judah, he is a man who visited a prostitute, who actually turned out to be his daughter-in-law, Tamar, and that's how his sons, Perez and Zerah, were born. If there was something like that in your own family tree, I doubt that that's something that you would gladly share with your friends at a party. But let me tell you about my great-great-grandfather. But here it is. Here is the family history of Jesus with all of its scandal and sin and shame, but this is the family into which the sinless, the Holy Son of God was born.

We could go on. There is Rahab. She was a prostitute. There is David who was said to be the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. That is, he committed adultery with Uriah's wife Bathsheba, and then he conspired to have Uriah killed in battle.

Matthew, if he had chosen, he could have given us a much more sanitized version of the genealogy of Jesus, or he could have skipped it altogether, but it was the Holy Spirit who inspired this passage, and he wants us to teach us this lesson, that the grace of God is greater than the sin of man. Romans 4.20 puts it this way, Romans 5.20, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."

You consider the people that belong to the family tree of Jesus. These are not a group of people who were worthy to be the ancestors of the incarnate son of God. But these are the ones whom God chose, and he magnified his grace in choosing these flawed and sinful people to be those through whom the Savior would come. And the last thing that you and I are worthy of is to receive the favor, the blessing, the grace of God. That God shows his love, his mercy to us by pouring out his grace upon the undeserving, the unworthy, the sinful. "Where sin increased, grace abounds," or "grace abounded all the more." That is the way that God works. And that is one lesson that we learn from this genealogy.

Charles Spurgeon summed it up this way. He said, "Jesus is heir of a line in which flows the blood of the harlot Rahab and of the rustic Ruth. He is akin, that is he is related, to the fallen and to the lowly. And he will show his love even to the poorest and most obscure. I too may have a part and lot in him."

Conclusion and Prayer

And so the second lesson then of the genealogy is that it shows us the sovereignty of God and keeping his promises to his people. And so here is the beginning of Matthew's gospel. It's a list full of names, but it's a list of names that proclaim loud and clear that God has fulfilled his promise. He has sent a savior into the world. The birth of Jesus meant that God has kept his word, that Christ has come, that Jesus was born, and he was born to bring salvation to sinners such as you and me.

Let's pray.