

The Long-Awaited Messiah

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 October 2023

Preacher: Donald Smith

[0 : 00] Amen. I'm not much of a cinema goer, so I'm usually a year or two behind when it comes with films. I'm probably a year or two late with most things. But I remember a number of years ago finally watching Inception. I'm trusting that's far enough in the past that I'm not about to ruin it for everyone. But I finally got around to watching it, okay? And when it had appeared, it was when it had appeared on Netflix or some other streaming platform.

And I'd heard before, right, that it was a little mind-bending. But when I started watching it, I was really confused. That there was Leonardo DiCaprio waking up on a plane, and right from the get-go, there was this really kind of intense and dramatic music. And the camera was slowly panning around the plane to various other people, arousing in states of deep contemplation.

A few moments later, there was a slow motion of him picking up his bags from the airport. And he arrived home to his family, and the camera zoomed in onto this little spinning top.

And I had absolutely no idea what was going on. I was waiting for someone, anyone, to say something to make sense of it all. When all of a sudden, right, the credits started rolling.

Someone in the house had obviously watched the film before me, and I was just picking up where they had left off. And it was about three minutes before the end of the film. I was baffled because I'd missed most of the story. I'd arrived for the end, and the end was quite moving, but I didn't really understand why or what was going on. I mean, what would you think, right, if you walked into a cinema, got your popcorn, the adverts finally ended, the lights go dark, the screen lights up, and Frodo is hanging off a cliff in the middle of a volcano with some scraggly creature falling into the lab of Balom, or Thanos is clicking his fingers, and half the people start evaporating into thin air. Balboa and Creed are both on the floor trying to get up as the ref counts to ten. What would you think?

[2 : 33] You'd think, wouldn't you, I must have missed something. There's a part of the story that's obviously quite important, but I don't know what it is.

If you jump into your Bible on page 1000, let me tell you, you've missed part of the story, and you're arriving at the climax of it all.

But do not fear, right? This is still a good place to begin. It is a very good place to begin. And we can help find our way because Matthew, right, really helpfully gives us a recap of what's come before. When you read Matthew 1, as we've just done, it can be easy to think, kind of, what a very long, quite dull list of names. But Matthew is actually catching us up on the story so far.

Okay, it's like when you watch a later episode of a TV show, and you get a little clip of what was on last week's episodes. The genealogy in Matthew 1 is sort of a previously in redemptive history.

[3 : 49] Right, last time in God's story of salvation, he's catching us up to where we need to be if we want to make sense of what is to come. Because what is to come, what has come, if you look there at verse 1, is Jesus, the Messiah.

The Messiah has come. Who's that? Well, that's exactly what Matthew is going to show us this morning. If you want to know why we should be excited about the arrival of the Messiah, it will help if we know what's happened before we got here.

So what does Matthew want us to know about the Messiah who has come? Well, first of all, right, he wants us to know, I think it comes across pretty clearly, doesn't it? He wants us to know that Jesus is from the right line.

Jesus has come from the right line. The genealogy, this genealogy, is a stamp of authenticity on the person of Jesus. He's going to make some pretty big claims in this gospel.

He's going to claim to have all authority on heaven and on earth. Right? Right? He's claiming to be a king above every other king. If I walked into the high court with a claim to King Charles' throne, let's pretend they were going to take me seriously for even a second.

[5 : 27] Well, what's the first thing they would check? What would my claim have to be based on? It wouldn't be my character or my good deeds or how many people followed me.

Jesus had all those things, didn't he? And most people are happy to accept that Jesus is all those things. But it doesn't help you be king, does it? It wouldn't help me be king, and it wouldn't have helped anyone believe Jesus was king.

If I showed up with my claims to be the rightful king of the United Kingdom, the first thing they're going to check is my family history, my ancestry, isn't it? Where has this guy come from?

The only way to be king is to be from the line of kings. No matter what other virtues you have, no matter how much money you have in the bank account, no matter how many friends in powerful places you have, if your family history doesn't check out, you're getting booted straight out the door. So Matthew shows us, doesn't he, on page one of his gospel, this is a man with a lineage worth paying attention to. And I think it says something, doesn't it?

[6 : 41] That nobody in any of the gospels at any point, despite all the attempts to bring Jesus down, nobody ever doubts the fact that he is a son of David. This was clearly a well-established fact.

They would have known their family histories. Genealogy has meant a lot more to them than it does now. That's why there's so many of them through the Old Testament. So if there was any doubt about Jesus' claims to be Messiah, this is where the first attacks would have come from.

But there wasn't a shadow of a doubt. There isn't. Jesus is going to be claimed to be king, and he's from the right line to be king. He is the son of King David in the royal line of Israel.

Matthew makes that clear beyond question. But this isn't just a line of kings. Okay? More than that, it is a line of promises.

Matthew wants us to know, doesn't he, in verse 1, to be assured that not only was Jesus the son of David, but also that Jesus was the son of Abraham.

[7 : 50] Right? Both these men were given great promises by God. I've read from us earlier, from that portion of 2 Samuel chapter 7, where some of these great promises were made to King David.

Just listen again to what God says to David. When your days are over, and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you.

Your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

I will be his father, and he will be my son. From the line of David, a king was promised who would have the throne of his kingdom established forever.

The story that Matthew is catching us up on, it is one of searching, right, in the kings of the Old Testament, the kings of Israel, for the one who would fulfill this promise.

[9 : 05] Every king in the Old Testament, every king you read about in Matthew's genealogy, is held up against David. And the question is always, is this the one? But the answer is always, no, the wait goes on and on.

But it's not only the promises made to David that are waiting to be fulfilled, but to Abraham too.

Right, here's what God promised Abraham all the way back in Genesis 12, right, in the very earliest chapters of the Bible.

God says to Abraham, I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Put those two promises together, right?

[10 : 10] See in Matthew 1, don't we, that the line of Abraham runs through the line of David. What do you get? An eternal king to bless the whole world.

An eternal king to bless the whole world. That is a big promise, isn't it? And it is what the whole of the Old Testament has been looking for, longing for.

Peter tells us in his letter that the saints of old were searching, right, searching desperately. They longed to see this day, to see the day of the Messiah.

But we see it still in people in Jesus' day. Right? In chapter 12 of Matthew, after Jesus heals a deaf and a mute man, the crowd turn and ask one another, could this be the son of David?

Is he finally here? They had been waiting and waiting and waiting, right, for the best part of 2,000 years. God's people have been waiting for the nations to be blessed through the offspring of

Abraham.

[11 : 27] For 1,000 years, they've been waiting for the son of David to come, 1,000 years. And they're still on the lookout. That is how long they've been waiting for the anointed one, the Messiah, that you see there in verse 1, in verse 17.

It's the same word as Christ, if you're looking at a slightly different translation. The whole Old Testament, right, has been a series of false starts, people anointed by God, messiahs who had kept on failing, falling into sin, falling short of the mark.

And so the whole of God's people were waiting desperately, desperately for this moment. And Matthew is saying, here he is.

Right? Here he is. The Messiah has come. It can be so easy, kind of 2,000 years on, to think it has always been this way.

But there was a time, a long, long time, when faithful saints didn't understand the fullness of God's plan. When they had no idea who the Messiah would be or what exactly he would do.

[12 : 51] How those saints longed to see our day. Right? How privileged and blessed we are to be able to sit here this morning and praise King Jesus.

How they would look at us with a righteous covetousness to have been able to hear and read and rejoice and remember that the Messiah has come.

And so Matthew sets the scene, doesn't he? He catches us up with the story so far. All these great promises of old are going to find their yes and amen in this Jesus Christ.

Here is the forever king who will bless all the nations. All the promises of God are going to come to fruition in him. Every wonderful promise that God utters.

This is the moment that the yes arrives because Jesus is the son of the king and the son of the promise. The Messiah has come and he has come from the right line but that's not all that we learn from this genealogy.

[14 : 07] We learn where Jesus came from but we also get a glimpse of who Jesus came for. Indeed, we learn who Jesus came for by looking a little more closely at who he came from.

And from it we learn that Jesus came for the lost. The Messiah came for the lost and each subsection of this genealogy gives us various hints at the kind of lost people Jesus came for. So, if you look there with me just for verse 2 to 6 between Abraham and David you might have noticed that there were a few breaks in the pattern. I don't know if you noticed them but we've got a list of fathers and sons don't we?

Abraham was the father of Isaac Isaac was the father of Jacob and so on. But then in verse 3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah whose mother was Tamar.

And the start of verse 5 Salmon the father of Boaz whose mother was Rahab. Straight after Boaz the father of Obed whose mother was Ruth.

[15 : 27] Now there is so much we could say about these women and there is so much we will say about these women. In a couple of months time in the run up to Christmas we're going to do a series going through each of the women in this genealogy because there is so much to say about them.

So we'll come back to them in a little more detail in a couple of months. But what unites them all in this little section here? I don't even remember those verses I read from Genesis 12 the end of the promise to Abraham.

Through him all the peoples of the earth will be blessed. All the peoples of the earth will be blessed. Every people. There are no bounds or limits on who is welcomed in to Abraham's family. Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth were all Gentiles.

They didn't belong in this genealogy by their birth. But they are welcomed in. Indeed, they are key parts of it, aren't they? Not only were they Gentiles, they were all in different ways sort of social outcasts.

[16 : 47] There was a widow, a prostitute, a Moabite. but they are all brought into the family. That is the people that Jesus is from and so that is the people that Jesus is for.

Yes, this is a family, right? We are a family. That's what genealogies are all about, but it is a family that is open to everyone.

Every family, all nations will be blessed by the Messiah's family because every family from every nation will be beckoned into the Messiah's family.

Listen to what Jesus says again later on in Matthew. This is the end of Matthew 12. While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to speak to you. He replied to them, who is my mother and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples, pointing to the people who follow him, he said, here are my mother and my brothers.

[18:01] For whoever does the will of my father is my brother and sister and mother. Whoever does the will of my father is my brother and sister and mother.

What is Jesus saying there? He's saying, isn't he, the family is open, the gates are open wide. Jesus didn't just come for the physical descendants of Abraham.

Jesus didn't just come for people who grew up in church. If this is your first time in church here this morning and you're feeling a bit awkward and you don't really know what you're doing here, let me tell you this morning that Jesus came for you.

Jesus came for you. There is no condition on entry except that you repent and believe in him. When we do that, we are all taken in as brothers and sisters of the Messiah.

We become part of this family line. and so all the promises that he has come to fulfill become yours in him.

[19:10] You are now the ones through whom all the nations will be blessed. Jesus came for the outsiders and welcomes them all in because he is from a family of outsiders who have been welcomed in.

Secondly, Jesus came for sinners. because he is from a family of sinners. Part one of the genealogy shows us that Jesus' family history is one of outsiders being welcomed in.

Part two emphasizes that Jesus' family history was one full of sinful people. David was the great king of Israel.

He was the king after God's own heart who established a united kingdom. He won great wars. He built great cities. He was the one to whom every other king in Israel would later be compared.

But look at verse six there. What is it that Matthew wants us to remember about David? David was the father of Solomon whose mother had been Uriah's wife.

[20:35] That's not him avoiding Bathsheba's name. He's happy to speak about Tamar and Rahab and Ruth earlier, isn't he? But reading David fathered Solomon whose mother was Bathsheba, that sounds okay, doesn't it?

That sounds fine. Bathsheba was a Gentile too, so you'd be forgiven for thinking Matthew would just be making the same point he'd made earlier. But that's not what Matthew's doing, is it?

David fathered Solomon, whose mother was another man's wife. That's not okay, is it? 2 Samuel 11, where we read about David and Bathsheba, is a painful read.

There was no innocent mistake on David's part here. Bathsheba is introduced to him as Uriah's wife. Uriah being one of David's commanders in his army who's off fighting his battles for him.

That doesn't stop him sleeping with her. And then when she falls pregnant, David tries to cover up his sin. He calls Uriah back from the army, but Uriah, in faithfulness to his soldiers, refuses to go near his wife.

[21:58] If they can't enjoy the company of their wives, I'm not going to enjoy the company of mine. It is a noble act, but it means that David's plan to cover his sin is thwarted.

But David doesn't stop there. Instead, he sends Uriah back to the front lines with special instructions to his general. saying, send Uriah forward with a group of men, and when the enemy are about to engage, call everyone but Uriah back.

And so Uriah is left there alone to die at the hands of David's enemies, who Uriah was fighting for. It is an awful account, isn't it, of adultery, of deception, of murder.

And so within verse 6 of Matthew 1, David goes from David the king to David the adulterer and murderer. That's what Matthew wants you to remember about David's great life.

And the list of kings that come after him there in Matthew 1 are a list of kings whose failures are very well catalogued through Old Testament history.

[23:24] They were all worse than David. This isn't a line of pure-blooded Israelites, and it's not a line of pure-living Israelites.

Jesus came from a line of sinners, and so he came for sinners. sinners. There is no sin too great to be excluded from this family other than rejecting the kingship of Jesus.

But under his just rule, every transgression can and will be forgiven. David is forgiven because of the blood of the Messiah.

David, the murderer and adulterer, is cleansed so that he is whiter than snow. That is who Jesus came for. He came for sinners like David and like you and me.

We all have dark things in our past, don't we? Perhaps in our present that we hope never see the light of day. That is the real you, but it is also the you that Jesus came for.

[24 : 36] He came for people who were lost, right? That's the point of this genealogy. He ends on. The exile begins in verse 12, but in Matthew's eyes, the exile never ends, at least not until Jesus arrives.

We are all lost, aren't we? A wandering people, sinners, people who don't belong, but that is exactly who Jesus came for.

The only people Jesus didn't come for, are those who don't think they're lost. Again, he'll say later, Matthew, I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners.

If you're sitting here this morning thinking you're doing all right for yourself on your own, you are in a bad place. God's but if you are sitting here this morning feeling lost in your sin, lost in life, wandering aimlessly, looking for an answer, then come to Jesus.

Right? Look to Jesus, believe in Jesus, because Jesus, the Messiah, the King of Kings, the Son of God, the heir of every promise, he came down from heaven's throne room for you.

[26 : 02] Jesus, the Messiah, has come from the right line for the lost, and then finally and very briefly, the Messiah has come at the right time.

If you look there at verse 17 with me, you'll see that Matthew really wants you to know, doesn't he, that there were 14 generations between each of these epochal moments in the genealogy.

In fact, he actually, he goes to great lengths to make sure there are 14 generations between each of these moments. I think it's probably actually worth being open about that before anyone thinks we're trying to cover anything up.

Right? Three kings are missing around Isaiah and Matthew's genealogy. There were two different Jeconiahs that Matthew happily conflates into one. There are almost certainly people missing between Abraham and David too.

But please do not think that that is anything particularly mischievous or misleading or ignorant on Matthew's part. We can often look back at these things with a measure of historical snobbery, but he would have known exactly what he was doing and why he was doing it and his audience would have known exactly what he was doing and why he was doing it.

[27 : 27] And we'll see as we go through the book that it's very likely that Matthew's audience were Jews. Whoever they were, they definitely knew the Old Testament really, really well. So Matthew wasn't going to pull the wool over their eyes by skipping a few generations without them noticing.

They would have known what was going on and they would have seen the purpose of it. Ancient genealogies quite often skipped over generations. Father of can simply mean an ancestor of.

So there are gaps but those gaps are there for a reason and the happy result for Matthew is that we get three fourteens, don't we? Why three fourteens?

I wish I could tell you. But part of it I think is simply to highlight the magnitude of Jesus' arrival.

Abraham, David, and the exile are the three kind of great moments, great events in Old Testament history.

And between them all are fourteen generations. So I think part of what Matthew is saying is simply take note after the next fourteen generations. What is coming here really matters.

[28 : 47] Here is the next great epoch of the history of God's people. Why fourteen? A few different theories I've read this week.

The most likely one, I think, if you split the three fourteens into six sevens, you then get the announcing of Jesus as the seventh seven, right? The perfect completion, the end point of it all.

You can also put numbers next to David's name and then it adds up to fourteen somehow. I don't understand how Hebrew works. You can line up with waxing and waning cycles of the moon matching the number of priests through the Old Testament.

Maybe it's one of those, maybe it's all of them. I don't know. I know Matthew did. But here's the one thing I'm sure of, the one thing I'm absolutely sure of, and it brings us back around to where we began.

It was no accident that the Messiah came when he did. Because the primary purpose of the genealogy is to show that everything, everything has been leading to this point in history. [30 : 06] What Matthew shows us with his 314s is that history has been leading up to this point. It is all about Jesus. Everyone in the Old Testament looked forward to him.

They were waiting for him. We all look back to him. There's one thing I want ringing in your ears as you leave here this morning. It's that it is all about Jesus.

everything from the beginning of time to the end. The whole genealogy of Israel was built around and looking for the coming of the Messiah. The whole of creation is centered on the moment that God became man, came into creation to hang on a tree.

If you want to know what church is all about, if you want to know what Christianity was all about, if you want to know what Matthew 1 is all about, and every other passage of the Bible, it is all about Jesus Christ.

He is the King from the line of the promise, the Savior who came for the lost. So put your trust and hope in him and in him alone because he is who it is all about.

[31 : 22] He came from the right line at the right time. He came for people who are lost like you and me, people who without Jesus would be wandering aimlessly in this world, knowing that we don't belong.

So come, come and put your hope and trust in the one that history has been waiting for, the one that history now looks back to.

Put your trust in Jesus, the Messiah. Let us pray. Amen.