

## Jesus Is the Messiah

Matthew 1:1-17

### Slide 1

Most shows on television today are self-contained series. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

But, once in a while, the producers decide to stretch one story over two episodes. So, in the first episode, you'll see the beginning and the build-up of the drama.

Then, when time runs out, you're left with a cliffhanger. The next week's episode will begin with a recap of the storyline and once that's finished, the episode will continue to its conclusion.

This is exactly what we have with the opening of Matthew's Gospel. When modern readers see the opening sentences of Matthew's Gospel, they think that it's just a list of names.

But to the ancient reader, when Matthew wrote his Gospel, it was a review of a two-episode drama.

By beginning with the genealogy of Jesus, Matthew was reviewing for the Israelites what had taken place before. This was essential so the readers would know what was to follow.

One commentator, on describing Matthew's Gospel, said, "*What an amazing way to start a Gospel—with a great long list of names! But, to Jews, that wasn't surprising. It sets Jesus of Nazareth in the context of what God had been doing for His people from the earliest days. It ushers in the theme of fulfillment, which is so prominent in this Gospel. The climax of God's work for humankind throughout the centuries is—Jesus.*"

Now, if I was writing a story, it's unlikely that I'd start it by describing the main character using their genealogy, but that's exactly what Matthew did.

Matthew wanted the Israelites to see, right from the start, that Jesus was the fulfillment of the expectations for which God's people had been waiting, and the people understood this.

They knew how important genealogies were. They knew:

- That ancestry proved one's claim on land;
- That ancestry determined the claim to inheritance;
- That ancestry established the basis for taxation; and
- That any claim to royalty or priesthood had to be verified by genealogy.

Today, I'm starting a new series of sermons called, "*Bloodlines: The Genealogy of Jesus.*"

As we spend the next few weeks on Matthew 1:1-17, you'll be amazed at what you'll learn from this portion of God's Word.

These few verses teach us that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah who the people of God had been anticipating.

## **Slide 2**

The most important thing I want you to learn today is that God takes His time.

Matthew began his Gospel with these words, "*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.*"

If you knew nothing at all about Jesus, the Bible, Christianity, or Judaism, you'd probably think, from reading this verse, that Jesus' father was David or that David's father was Abraham.

But, as you continue reading Matthew's genealogy, you'll discover that Abraham had many descendants before David was born.

Moreover, there were even more descendants from David to Jesus. So, what's going on here?

Well, as you read and study the Bible, you'll discover that Jesus' ancestors go back more than two millennia.

Abraham lived around 2,000 BC and David reigned as King over Israel from 1010 to 970 BC. So, you may wonder, *"What's so significant about David and Abraham?"*

Well to understand this, you'll need to go back further in history and start your study from the very beginning, in Genesis.

As you begin reading in Genesis, you'll discover that God created Adam and placed him in a beautiful garden that was known as the garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:15-17, *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."*

After God created Adam, verse 18 tells us, *"The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. So God created Eve, who was Adam's wife."*

Adam and Eve were to manage the garden of Eden, taking care of it and all the creatures that God had created. But more importantly, they enjoyed a wonderful, personal relationship with God.

God met with them daily. It was a beautiful time in which they probably reported what they had done and how things were going with their work in the garden.

But one dreadful day, everything changed. Genesis 3:1, *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?’”*

The serpent caused Eve to distrust the goodness, beauty, and kindness of God. Did you catch how he did that?

Listen to what the serpent said in verse 1, *“Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”*

This was a lie. God hadn't said that Adam and Eve couldn't eat of any tree in the garden.

God actually told them that they could eat of all the trees in the garden, except just one—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam, who was likely with Eve when the serpent addressed her, didn't stop the conversation, then he, together with Eve, ate of the fruit of the tree.

Immediately, they knew that they were in trouble. They tried to hide from God but couldn't do it. Adam and Eve had fallen into sin.

Because of this, God banished them from His presence. The personal relationship they had enjoyed was broken. They were now cut off from God's presence.

But even in their banishment from His presence, God promised a deliverer when He cursed the serpent in verses 14-15.

Genesis 3:14-15, *“So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*”

So, right from the beginning, God promised a deliverer.

Then, as time passed, the terrible effects of sin got so bad that we read in Genesis 6:5, *“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.”*

Because of this, God sent a flood that destroyed every living creature on the earth except Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, and select creatures that God had created.

After the flood subsided, God began again with Noah and his family.

But as the years turned into decades, and the decades turned into centuries, sin was still present among the people who were scattered all over the world.

### **Slide 3**

God then called a pagan, named Abram, to leave his country and his people and go to a land that He would show him.

Genesis 12:1-3, *“The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. 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.”*”

Abram obeyed, left his country, and went to what we know as the Promised Land, the land God had promised to show him.

But Abraham and his wife Sarah were childless. So, when Abraham questioned God about this in Genesis 15, God *“took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”*

This was more than 2,000 years before the birth of Jesus. But, as we learn, we cannot rush God and His plan.

Twenty-five years after God promised Abraham a son, Isaac was born. Matthew 1:2, *“Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.”*

Twelve sons were born to Jacob, whose name was later changed by God to Israel.

Then, because of a famine, Israel and his sons went to Egypt where Joseph, one of Israel’s sons, was the Prime Minister who oversaw the distribution of grain.

Hundreds of years later, when Joseph had been forgotten, the Pharaoh of Egypt placed the people of Israel into forced labor.

It was during this period that God raised up Moses to deliver His people from Pharaoh, after which they returned to the Promised Land.

#### **Slide 4**

A few hundred years later, God eventually raised up David to become king of Israel. David defeated all the enemies of God’s people, bringing peace and prosperity to the land.

Now, David wanted to build a house for God in which God could be properly worshiped, but God wouldn't let him. Instead, God said that He would build David a house.

*2 Samuel 7:12-13, "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."*

That was 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus. The people longed for God to act. For thousands of years, the people waited patiently on God to send His promised deliverer.

In fact, after the Prophet Malachi, the Israelites didn't hear from God for 400 years. Four hundred years! It seemed as if God had forgotten His promise.

But God never forgets His promises. He may take a long time to bring His promise to fruition, but He always fulfills His promises.

So, the first thing we need to learn from the genealogy of Jesus is that God takes His time.

For example, Jesus has promised that He'll come back again. I don't know the date for His return, but it has already been over 2,000 years since He made that promise.

Yet, regardless how long it takes, I believe, with all my heart, that Jesus is coming back again. Why?

Because God always keeps His promises. Every single promise of God will be fulfilled. This is why we must learn to trust God in every situation.

## Slide 5

Getting back to Matthew, have you noticed that whenever the Christmas story is read, it rarely begins in Matthew 1:1.

The Christmas story almost always begins at Matthew 1:18, where we read, *“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about...”* Why is that?

It may be because people think that the list of names is boring. Or perhaps people think that the real story only begins in verse 18 and not in verse 1.

But Matthew began his Gospel the way he did because he insisted that God had done something in history.

Matthew was beginning to write about a historical event. But, before he started, he wanted us to know how God broke into history.

He didn't begin the story of Jesus' birth with, *“Once upon a time.”* Matthew wanted his readers to know that Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection wasn't a fictional story. It wasn't a fable. It wasn't a fairy tale.

Christianity isn't some make-believe story that makes you feel better if you believe it. No!

Christianity declares, *“God has done something. God has broken into history. He has done so in the person of Jesus, and how you respond to Jesus will determine your future and your destiny.”*

This isn't what people like to hear at Christmas. The mantra one hears at Christmas is that it's all about love, joy, and peace.

But if you don't understand what God was doing when He broke into history with Jesus, all of that's meaningless.

## Slide 6

### Conclusion

Skeptics have trouble accepting this. They're okay with love, joy, and peace, but once you insist that Jesus was a living, breathing individual who lived and died and rose again, and that He demands a response to His claims, then they want to have nothing to do with you—or your Jesus.

There's a story about J. R. R. Tolkien, the author of *Lord of the Rings*, talking with C. S. Lewis, who was an atheist at that time, about the great old legends, fairy tales, and myths.

They were noting how different they were from realistic fiction.

Those ancient stories would depict wonderful things like stepping out of time, escaping from death, communicating with non-human personal beings, loving without parting, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

Even though we know that these stories are not factually true, we want to believe that they are real.

As they were discussing these tales, Lewis said, *"I love the old myths, legends, and stories, but myths are lies, though breathed through silver."*

Tolkien said, *"No, not all of them. Think about this story. A man from an obscure village, a nobody, is found to have a power that no one has ever seen before to resist evil. He's raising children from the dead, stilling the storm, feeding the multitude, casting out demons, and loving the poor and marginalized. He's making a difference, and then he's betrayed. He's put to death, and all hope is over. But wait! He's miraculously raised from the dead! What does that sound like?"*

Lewis said, *“That sounds like another one of those great stories that aren’t factually true, but it’s so moving and so wonderful.”*

This is why Matthew’s story is so different. It doesn’t start with, *“Once upon a time.”* It starts with, *“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.”*

Tolkien essentially said, *“Jesus is not one more story pointing to an underlying reality. Jesus Christ is that ultimate reality to which all the stories point.”*

That’s profoundly true. Every story points somehow to Jesus. He is the ultimate reality to which all stories point. It was in Jesus that God broke into and changed history forever.

The word “Christ” simply means “Anointed One.” God anointed Jesus and sent Him to be that deliverer He promised to Adam and Eve.

Jesus the One God anointed and sent to be the One through whom all the nations on earth would be blessed.

Jesus is the One God anointed and sent to sit on David’s throne for all eternity. Jesus is the One God anointed and sent to the cross to die for all our sins.

So, if you’ve never done so, put all your hope in Jesus because He’s the only One who can save you from sin and hell.