# Genealogy of Jesus

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Preacher: Tim Suffield

[0:00] Good morning, friends. My name's Tim. I'm part of the team here. What we're going to be doing this morning is starting a new preaching series. We're going to be working through the Gospel of Matthew. And our kind of aim with this, if I'm honest, is not complicated.

We thought, wouldn't it be good to sit at Jesus' feet and see what he might have to say to us. We're going to take our time. We're not going to go through it super fast. It's quite a long book.
So our plan, which may or may not end up coming to fruition, but our plan is... Because if we work through it, if I kind of start to finish, it'll probably take us about a year and a half or so.
Our plan is to try and do that just in the autumns over the next few years. And we've mapped it out, and we think it'll take four. So we'll see how that goes. But what we're going to do this term, as it were, is work through from the start of Matthew through to about the end of the Sermon of the Mount.
It's sort of Matthew's telling of the great story of all that Jesus would do and teach. So this morning, I'm in Matthew chapter 1, starting right at the beginning.
[1:03] If you've got a Bible with you, do turn there. The words will be on the screen as well in a moment. I'm going to read a section that I suspect most of us skip over when we read the Gospel to ourselves.

Let me read it to you. 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 Abinadab, and Abinadab the father of Nashon, and Nashon 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 Jeziah, and Jeziah 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 Sheatiel, and Sheatiel 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 Mathan, and Mathan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, to whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.
[3:08] 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Probably not how we'd start a story. I imagine. I could, because I could have got up earlier and said, good morning, my name is Tim, son of Neil, the computer programmer, son of Walter, the carpenter turned preacher, son of we're not entirely sure.
Which, you know. But we, I imagine if you decide to read through, particularly the Gospel of Matthew, because it starts this way, you kind of, you skim this a little bit.
If you know your Old Testament, the first few names you're sort of familiar with, but after that you're like, I don't really know. When you kind of, you're like, Christmas is coming next, let's skip over the

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page. That's next week.
It's going to be, we're going to have Christmas in September, but we're going to try this week to consider what does this, why does he begin this way? And what on earth does this tell us about the story that Matthew wants to tell all through his Gospel?
[4:20] And again, if you're reading through the Old Testament, you'll find lots of these, again, I imagine you tend to skip them. If you're trying to, if you think, oh yes, I'd like to read one or two Chronicles, and then you discover that one Chronicle is almost entirely a genealogy for, I don't know, 40 pages or something, you then, you sort of lose the will, I suspect.

And yet, the Bible thinks they're important. It might feel to you a little bit like watching the credits at the end of a film. I mean, I guess we do that a little bit more these days, now that they put those little teasers at the end, but you don't really do.
You kind of chat to the person next to you while the names scroll by, unless you happen to know someone who's in it, at which point, of course, you're like, you're trying to look for their name. And we might like this one about Jesus, but even if we know our Bibles reasonably well, I suspect they glaze after Solomon.
Because you're like, oh, I kind of heard of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Judah, and then I've lost it a bit, but oh, yeah, okay, Boaz and Rahab and Ruth and, oh, Jesse and David, Solomon, and then you've kind of, you've sort of run out after that.
And our eyes glaze until we get down to Joseph and Mary, and we're like, oh, yes, Jesus, great. On we go with the story. So why should we care? What I'd like to do this morning is give us, if I may, ten reasons why we care about this.
[5:38] Ten reasons why Matthew starts this way. Ten things in this genealogy that essentially are, what he's doing is he's setting out his store for the story he wants to tell, but because we're not used to reading this way, we don't particularly notice it.

Now, the first is the simplest and possibly the most important. In a minute, we're going to get into a couple of things that I'm going to go through relatively quickly because they're a little touch technical, so forgive me. But the first, I think, is the most important.
Why do you care about the genealogy? Because these are real people. And people matter. Think of the kind of word that Helen brought to us just a few minutes ago about starting her class this year and the love that she's fitting for these children and the way the Lord loves you.
I'm sure for her, part of that has involved learning their names. I used to, I mean, I taught secondary when I taught. You have to teach a lot more. I teach most of the school. I was terrible at learning their names, but it's an act of love, isn't it, to learn someone's name.
And you do your best with it. In a church that you maybe don't know everyone in the room, I suspect most people who don't know everyone in the room, but you try when you meet a new person to learn their name. And certainly if you do manage it, when you meet them again and you remember their name, oh, they feel loved.
[6:54] Now, we don't always manage that, but you try, don't you? Because you know that the person feels loved when they do. God knows your name. He cares about all of these people.

However hard things might be this morning, whatever is going on in your life, the Lord God Almighty knows not just your name, but the number of hairs on your head. You don't know that.
Your mother doesn't know that. But the Lord does. Because he's bothered to count. Because he loves you. And he's for you. People matter.
These people matter. Some of them, you might be like, all right, a few of them, you know, there's stories from the Bible. Or many of the rest sort of glaze over your head. But they were real people in the line of Jesus.
And their stories matter. Just like yours does. God knows your name. But what else is Matthew keen to tell us?
[7:55] If you'll forgive me, I've got some slides. You know I don't particularly like them. But I just, what I've done is I've put all the names up there. You may or may not be able to read them. I'm just going to try and highlight the ones that I'm talking about. So that you can find them in the genealogy.

Because it's hard otherwise to follow what on earth I'm going on about. So all people matter. The second thing, all nations matter. So what we find in here, in this list of men.

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Because it's, you know, the father of this. And the father of this. And the father of this. We find three women's names. Well, four. I'm ignoring Mary for now. Before we get to her. Three women's names. And one woman mentioned but not her name.
So we have Tamar, the mother of Perez. Rahab, the mother of Boaz. And Ruth, the mother of Obed. None of them are part of the people of Israel.
They're all Gentiles. So all the women mentioned by name until Mary. Gentile women. And then Solomon by the wife of Uriah. And you might be thinking, why has he not said Bathsheba's name?
[8:52] If you know the story, that's because Uriah is a Gentile, even if Bathsheba isn't. So what Matthew's chosen to do is bring forward the Gentile name. The name of someone who was outside of the people of God and yet came into it.

And there's four of them. Almost like he wanted us to notice the four corners of the world as they thought about it in their culture. He starts with, Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham.
And Abraham was the one commissioned to bring blessing to all of the nations. And then he wants to show us, in this long list of names, that actually, no, no, he is here to bring blessing to all of the nations of the world.
Matthew's story is not just, it looks like a story about Israel. And to some extent it is, but it's not just that. It's a story about all the nations of the world. He's saying that this man who's going to be at the end of his genealogy, who he's going to tell his story about, is here for all of the world.
And he wants us to notice that because he chooses to include these women and no others. The next thing I'd like us to notice is actually that these women all have scandalous births of one sort or another.
[10:13] And that's important because the fifth woman mentioned, Mary, would be accused of that. So again, I don't know if you know these stories from the Old Testament, but Perez is the son of Judah by Tamar, who is his son's wife.

In fact, he's been the wife of a couple of his previous sons. And then he has a sort of roadside, I can't think of any polite word for it, if I'm honest. He treats her like a prostitute at the side of the road, has sex with her, and then discovers later that she's pregnant.
But Rahab was a prostitute by trade, though a much more... Though we worked through the story of Joshua not long ago, and you might remember us to turn her to be a very righteous woman.
Ruth is not just a foreigner. Again, if you were in our Bible studies through the book of Ruth, we spent a lot of time with this, but Ruth is not just a foreigner, but a Moabite from the worst kingdom in the world.
There is a scandal for Boaz to marry her. And Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, is taken, let's say, by David, who abuses his authority in order to sleep with that, and then he has her husband, Uriah, murdered.
[11:31] So that no one would discover... Well, it became very apparent, but so that the scandal of what he'd done when she becomes pregnant with Solomon, who turns out to kind of be Israel's greatest king, in one sense, but born in scandal.

All four of them born in scandal. And all four of them, by the time of Mary and Joseph, considered to be righteous women by those who would first be reading this. And so he wants them to see this woman, Mary, who it looks like she's gone and got pregnant with someone who's not her husband because they aren't married yet, and she's pregnant.
He's like, read her story in the light of these others. Women whose stories look awful, but yet when you read them, you're like, oh, no, no, they're the righteous one in this tale.
And Matthew wants us to think of Mary like that. Joseph needed... We'll see it on the page over next week, but Joseph needed the same persuading that was easily persuaded when the Lord spoke to him.
It appears scandalous, but that is where righteousness comes from. Fourth thing. If you know your Old Testament really well and you count those lists up, you might go, hang on, not all the kings are there.
[12:45] There are some missing. And that's not... And Matthew, he's like, oh, there's 14 and 14 and 14. You're like, was there really? And you go, oh, well, no. So why has he done that? He has left out three kings between Joram and Uzziah.

He's left out Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, who are the sons of Athaliah. Now, again, I'm not expecting most of you to know your Old Testament this well. She's the one queen of Judah, and

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she's probably the worst person in the entire Old Testament.
She's awful. Truly evil woman. And those three sons are the house of Ahab from the northern kingdom. We've just preached through the story of Elijah, the king that he was facing, his house that ends up in the southern kingdom.
They're not included in the story. In fact, this happens in the Old Testament a few times too. They take people out of genealogies. It's a sign of judgment by God that those who are removed, it's like they don't exist anymore.
Their story has been wiped out because of the horror of what they did. Matthew is making a point about that particular era of Judah's history and deliberately ignoring those three kings because they are the worst of the worst.
[14:01] And so why does he want us to know that here, not just because it's the way they view their history, but also because Matthew is talking about someone who is going to bring judgment from God.

That's the story that he's going to tell of Jesus, that he is one here, not just to do some of the other things that this genealogy points out that we'll get to in a moment, but also to judge and to bring judgment and that some might find themselves excluded because of the way they choose to live.
Okay, next thing. You definitely wouldn't notice this one. I didn't until someone pointed out to me. But we've got three names here at the end. Abiyud, which we should read in the Hebrew as Abijah. He hasn't done that because there's already an Abijah in the list. But Abijah, Zadok, and Eleazar. And they're deliberately spaced out like that in the third list. These are, they're priestly names. Abijah and Eleazar, top and bottom one, are Aaron's sons. So they're the first priest that Israel has. And Zadok is David's high priest. Again, if you don't know that, you might know the song that they play when the king gets crowned.
[15:17] Zadok the priest. These are probably some of the most obvious priestly names there could be. And they're in a very particular arrangement. You might be like, well, that's just because that was those guys' names.

Yes. But Matthew also, he wants us to notice that. He wants us to go, why suddenly does it get very priestly at the end? Are you saying this guy who's going to be at the end of it, is he a priest as well? And he wants us to think, well, maybe. And as we're reading his gospel, look at it. Does Jesus sound like a priest? Is he doing the work that the priest would do of helping people get to God? And particularly towards the end of the gospel, as he comes to his own confrontation with the priest, that becomes very apparent. That for Matthew, Jesus is, he's the real high priest here.
And he wants us to see that he is in a line with at least the names of priests. Now, these aren't those men, because the time's all wrong. Abijah and Eleazar would be around the time of Moses, so kind of around where it says, Abinadab Nashon on there.
[16:28] And Zadok would be in the time of David. But still, the names are meant to be evocative to us. And on their own, that doesn't stack up to very much until you start to notice just how often he talks about David.

So again, forgive me, because I find this stuff super exciting, and some of you are just starting to glaze a little bit. That's okay. Essentially, the point that we're building towards is all this tells us about Jesus and how good he is.
And that even in this long list of names, Matthew is trying to tell us about Jesus and how good he is. He tells us it's three lists of 14. And he might go, it doesn't quite add up, which is why we've put Jack and I on there twice, because you need to in order to make it add up.
But he seems quite convinced it's 14. And he says that at the end, verse 17, all the generations trying to be ahead of David were 14 and 14 and 14. And in fact, he puts the name of David in there lots of times.
If you have the actual text in front of you, you see David repeated and David repeated in the list, and then David at the start, and then David twice at the end. David's name is the most common one in this whole list.
[17:34] And it gets five mentions. No one else gets more than the word. Jesus gets three. And in Hebrew, words add up to numbers, because I have numbers.

They use letters for numbers. And David is 14, which is why he's so bothered by it. So actually, we've got David and David and David and David over and over and over again.

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It's the central name in the list. Or at least one way of looking at it is, you find it three times outside of the list. He's like, it's almost like Matthew was shouting at us, David!
David! As we're reading this, we're in lots of names, and he wants us to keep hearing David over and over and over again. So he's done a little hint of a priest, and now he is shouting about the fact that this man is like David, who is the great king of Israel.
The king that they all hoped would come again. When they talk about, the Jewish people at this time, when they talk about a Messiah to come, they talk about him as the son of David, they mean he'll be almost as good as David.
[18:47] Of course, as it goes on, Matthew's like, it's better, actually. Matthew wants us to see that not only is Jesus one who brings judgment, not only is he one who is priestly, but he is, that comes as a king to restore the kingdom.

He's here to restore, and indeed do better than, all that God would once have done amongst them. And then with that same idea, we can get a little bit more excited by numbers if we really want to. So 314s also means that we have six sevens, which means that Jesus comes at the end of six sevens. He comes almost like on the last day of the week.
Almost as though a seventh one is about to begin. Which means that he, Jesus, is the Sabbath man. He's the last day of the week man.
He's the one when the worship of God comes. He's the day of peace and rest. He's in fact, because it's the seventh seven that he starts at, it's almost like he's the Jubilee man.
[19:58] I don't know if you know that term from the Old Testament, but they celebrate the Sabbath every seventh day. This kind of day of stopping. And on the seventh year, they celebrate a Sabbath year. It's like you have a stopping year.

And on the seventh Sabbath year, so every 49th year, you celebrate the Jubilee, which is the year when it's like all slaves are freed, all debts are forgiven, everything is restored to how it originally was in the kingdom, freedom reigns.
Now the people of Israel, as far as we can tell, never did it, despite it being in their law. That's one of the reasons they end up in exile. But what Matthew is saying, by carefully producing with history a list that is laid out like this, means he goes, look, he's coming at exactly the right time so that you know that this is the man who is going to end slavery, he's going to end exile, and he's going to bring the time of the new creation.
Not only is he going to judge, not only is he a priest, not only is he a king, this is the one who's going to bring a new creation. This is the one who's bringing freedom to all captives. Have you noticed?
And he just wants us to read the genealogy and go, oh yeah. Okay, another one. He mentions twice, which is just odd, and his brothers. It might feel like a more minor point, but he mentions twice and his brothers.
[21:18] With Judah, we might kind of get it, because we're like, oh, you mean all the sons of Joseph and all the others, all the sons of Jacob. We know it because we know the musical, and that's how we think. But he mentions it twice.

It seems like a strange turn of phrase. If we read the rest of Matthew, then we find out that he talks a lot about brothers, and that it is the term he generally uses for the gathered community of the church.
Like, the brothers are those that Jesus is there to gather in. Because for Matthew, the church that Jesus is forming is the household of God.
It's familial. It's about brothers and sisters. And again, he wants us to get a hint of that right from the beginning. And then the two big ones, Matthew's two biggest points, which might not be super obvious.
Forgive me for putting a little bit of Greek on the screen, but the first sentence said, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. That is not the Greek. The Greek says, the book of the genesis of Jesus Christ.
[22:18] Now, does that word mean genealogy or beginning or origin? Yes. But the book of the genesis of Jesus Christ. So the New Testament starts with the sentence, the book of the genesis, which is essentially how the Old Testament starts.

In fact, in the book of Genesis, time and time again, in fact, ten times in the book of Genesis, it says, the book of the genesis of someone.

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And then we read about their descendants. That's how Genesis is framed, with ten of those. It starts in chapter two with the generations of the heavens and the earth.
And then in chapter five, the book of the generations of Adam. And then there's eight more after that. Matthew wants us to read his gospel somehow connected to that. What is the point that he wants to make?
If you get to know the whole book, you might notice that he starts here and he ends in Matthew 28 with the Great Commission that sounds an awful lot like the very end of the book of two Chronicles, which in the Jewish reckoning was the last book of the Old Testament, though we have ours structured slightly differently.
[23:28] So his whole gospel goes from the start to the end of the Old Testament. And actually, if we map it through, we discover that Matthew's whole gospel just goes through the events of the Old Testament, one after another, after another, after another, after another.

And each time, Jesus fulfills and does better than whatever had happened in the original story. Matthew's point is Jesus is Israel. He relives the whole Old Testament through the gospel.
and he wants us to see that that is a deliberate thing. Even, forgive me, Sean, for stealing perhaps one of your things, but you turn over the page and you discover, yes, okay, Mary is, a story about Mary is going to give birth to a child, but what happens is that the spirit hovers over the waters in order to make her pregnant.
That's how Genesis chapter 1 starts. And then we have a man and a woman. The man is asleep and he wakes up and he's got a wife. That's Genesis 2. That's Adam and Eve. Like, he's deliberately structuring it so that he chooses how to arrange the stories, yeah, with history, but arrange the stories so that we go, oh, that's the whole Old Testament, that is.
And that's his point. That this man who is judge and priest and king and going to bring the new creation, he's also going to fulfill everything that God's people once did and didn't do super well at.
[24:48] He's just going to do it all for them. This is a new creation. This is a new beginning. That's his point. He's like, what does a new creation look like with all this?

Let's start again. And then the last thing is not only is Jesus Israel, but surprisingly enough he's Israel's God. Because in Genesis they don't introduce genealogies.
That sentence I had on the last screen. They introduce descendants. And what we have here then is it's like all the people before Jesus. But his opening phrase makes it sound like it should be all the people after Jesus.
It's just a bit funny. And then we notice that actually there's a little shape here. It's called a chiasm. You don't need to know about that. But essentially like a literary device used in the Bible a lot, death and resurrection shaped.
It goes, Jesus, David, Abraham, Abraham, David, Jesus, who was called the Christ. That is the structure of this. The first sentence goes, Jesus, David, Abraham. And then we have paragraphs that go Abraham, David, Jesus.
[25:51] And what's the point you want us to notice? That it's not just Abraham, David, Jesus, but also that Jesus is at the start. Not only is he the result of Israel, like its culmination, he's also the beginning of it.

He comes before Abraham. Abraham. He is, if you like, Abraham's ancestor. In the same way that in Luke's gospel when he does this to you in the energy, he traces it back to Adam, the son of God. Again, Jesus sits at both ends of it. Matthew's point is that Jesus is not only the culmination, the end, the final step of Israel, but he's Israel's God.
He is the start as well. That this man who has come to judge, and he's a priest, and he's a king, and he's going to bring a new creation, and he's going to fulfill all the promise that Israel had. He also is God before it all.
Before Abraham was, I am, he says. Okay, ten things. Why do you care? Because I get excited by this stuff.
[27:00] Some of you are kind of humoring me with it, and that's lovely, but why do you care? Why does this affect your life at all? Because Matthew introduces his gospel like this because he wants us to get almost a whole of it right at the beginning and then go through and tell it to us slowly and methodically.

Why do you care? You care because Jesus is the son of Abraham, which means he's here to bring blessing to the Gentiles. The vast majority of people in this room are not Jewish. I'm not Jewish.

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A handful of you are, but I'm not Jewish. But the blessings of the people of God are now spread abroad by Jesus to all of us. He welcomes all nations in because he is the son of Abraham and he's the son of David, the true king.
So he's king over your life, tells you how to live, and he's the high priest, a priest king like Melchizedek in Genesis. And Israel's history leads to Jesus as its fulfillment.
He's true Israel and so are all who follow him. Jesus is the promised Messiah born in scandal, here to judge, to create a household, that's you, to bring a new creation, that's what you taste on a Sunday, and to announce himself as Israel's God.
[28:07] Why does it matter to you? Because he's saying I'm the single most important person who has ever lived. Listen to me. And an awful lot of what we find in Matthew's gospel is his teaching.

But he's saying, listen to me. I have the right to tell you what to do. Listen to me.
And perhaps more importantly, to go back to where we started, that one, that magnificent one, who this, these long lists of names, six times seven of them, are laid out carefully so that you catch how magnificent he is.
He knows your name. He knows your name. Whether you know him or not. I know there'll be people amongst us who are just curious and looking in, you're not really following him.
He knows your name. He wants you. He wants you to be part of this, this household that he's forming. He wants you.
[29:14] Even if you're following him and you're like, it's hard this week, he knows your name. You're like, that doesn't really help with the problem. No, but it does somewhat help with your perspective on the problem.

Israel's God, the great one, who made all things and is making all things new, he knows your name. And he loves you.
I think that's really good news. What we're going to do now is the band are going to come. In a moment, we'll sing, I'm going to pray. How about you stand with me if you're able?
In a moment, we'll worship Jesus. Jesus, we come to you amazed to start with at just the sheer intricate beauty of your word, that you would weave all this truth into all that you spoke through those who wrote it.
But beyond that, amazed at the intricate beauty of your love for us. That you would come to fix all our problems. That you would come to make a way for people like us to know the living God.
[30:36] that you would want to gift us life and hope, redemption and rescue. We're amazed that you would know our names.

that we matter to you enough that you learned our names. And unlike the rest of us, there's no chance of you forgetting them.
That you greet us by name. Jesus, we don't, Sean said earlier, we don't really have the words to say thank you.
I kind of feel similar. We don't really have the words for it, Lords. The depth and the wonder and the beauty of all that you've done overwhelms us. Would you just sit it into our hearts if there are those who don't know you?
Again, would you just sit into their hearts some of the wonder of all this? There are those here who are exploring. Would you speak with them? But for those of us who know you, be most in the room.
[31:40] Just fill our hearts again with wonder and with joy that the living God knows our name and he came to get us. And he's going to keep coming to get us until all things are made new.

Wow. Thank you, Jesus. Amen. Let's sing.

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