

The Son of David, The Son of Abraham

Matthew 1 ESV

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, ⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, ⁸ and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰ and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

¹² And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Introduction

This morning is the final Sunday in Advent and one of the lectionary readings is from the first chapter of Matthew.

Because of this, I thought it an appropriate time to begin preaching through the Gospel of Matthew.

While there will be breaks here and there, the goal is to preach through the book over the course of the next year.

Matthew is the first of the four gospels and the first book of the New Testament.

And more than the other gospels, Matthew presents Jesus as the “fulfillment” of the Old Testament.

This is one of the most prominent things throughout Matthew’s gospel and it appears in verse 22 of this morning’s passage,

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken.”

The person of Jesus and the events of Jesus’ life are the fulfillment of what was spoken in the Old Testament.

Matthew is all about fulfillment

But, Matthew is a gospel, it is a declaration of good news.

For Matthew, the fact that Jesus fulfills what was spoken of throughout the Old Testament is good news.

These two themes are the most prominent in the first chapter of Matthew’s gospel.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all that has come before.

And, because of this, there is good news, not only for Israel, but also for the whole world.

Given this, I have divided this morning’s sermon into two parts:

1. Jesus Fulfills (vv. 1-17)
2. Jesus Saves (vv. 18-25)

Jesus Fulfills (vv. 1-17)

For many evangelicals, the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament is seen as a kind of fundamental break.

So perhaps it is something of a shock to people when they turn to the very first chapter of the new Testament and find something that feels very much like something from the Old Testament...A genealogy.

But this shouldn’t surprise us.

It is very clear that the New Testament presents itself as having a large degree of continuity with the Old Testament.

And this is made very clear not only in the first chapter of Matthew but in the entire Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew and the Old Testament

When I say the entire OT I mean the entire.

The first two words of Matthew's gospel are βίβλος γενέσως (Biblos genesos).

This literally translates as "The book of beginnings" or "The book of Genesis".

Matthew's gospel begins with a reference to the beginning, the book of Genesis.

But Matthew's gospel doesn't simply begin where the Old Testament begins, it also ends where the Hebrew Old Testament ends.

The Hebrew ordering of the Old Testament is different than the ordering of your English Bible.

The last book in the Hebrew ordering of the OT is 2 Chronicles.

And Matthew ends with an allusion to the final verses of 2 Chronicles.

When Jesus gives his great commission in Mathew 28, he echoes the words of King Cyrus at the end of [2 Chronicles 36](#) where he commissions the Jews to return to Jerusalem to build the temple.

Matthew begins his gospel with a reference to the book of Genesis and ends his gospel with a reference to the last chapter of the Hebrew Scriptures.

What Matthew is doing is showing that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all that God has been doing from the beginning and throughout the Old Testament.

The Genealogy

This is especially what is going on in the first 17 verses of Matthew's gospel with his genealogy.

These verses present three phases in Israel's history that ultimately culminate in coming of the Messiah.

Verses 1 and 17 sum it all up.

Verse 1 states that Matthew is the book of genesis of Jesus Christ, "the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Then, verse 17 states that "the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations."

Matthew's genealogy divides the entire history of the Old Testament into three parts:

1. The first is from Abraham to David.
2. The second is from David to the exile in Babylon

3. The third is from the exile in Babylon to the coming of Christ.

As is the case with most biblical genealogies, there is really a lot more going on here than meets the eyes.

The people who are included and the people who are excluded are all significant.

But this morning I want to focus on two things about this genealogy that shed light on what Matthew is up to.

Biblical Numerology

But first, I have to spend a little time on how the Bible uses numbers.

In the ancient world various numbers carried symbolic significance.

For the most part this is lost on modern readers but it must be recovered if we are to understand what the biblical authors are often doing with numbers.

To keep things simple, the first thing I could state is that the number seven is very important in the Bible.

Seven often represents the creation week or themes of perfection and fullness.

But, in addition to this, multiples of seven, like 14, 28, or 49 are also significant.

The Waxing and Waning of Israel's History

In the case of Matthew's genealogy, one of the things that is going on with these three sets of 14 generations is a play on the number 14 and 28 and how it relates to the lunar calendar of Israel.

I mentioned a few weeks ago in my first sermon on the first Lord's Day in Advent that, in the Old Covenant, Israel's calendar was ruled by the moon.

The Old Covenant was the "night" time, waiting for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

Something similar is going on here.

Each month, the lunar cycle is a 28 day cycle.

For 14 days the moon waxes to a full moon.

Then, for 14 days, the moon wanes to a new moon.

Matthew divides up Israel's history into three periods of waxing and waning.

From Abraham the Patriarch to King David, Israel's history waxes to a full moon.

However, after David and Solomon, things begin to wane.

During the times of the kings, things get bad.

They get so bad that Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed and the people are taken off into Exile in Babylon.

In the OT this is described as darkness and a type of death.

However, even though Israel has died the death of exile, God isn't done with his plan to save the world.

And that is why we have another period of waxing.

After 70 years in Babylonian exile God brings his people back to the land where they wait for God's salvation.

Matthew's genealogy shows that God has finally rewarded the patient waiting of his people.

The Advent of the Messiah has now come.

And unlike what happens after David, the increase of Jesus' government shall know no end.

When Jesus arrives, there is no waning, in fact, the Sun has risen and will not set on the world.

His light has shown in the darkness and the darkness shall not overcome it.

The Year of Jubilee

But the other thing that is made clear in Matthew's genealogy is that the arrival of the Messiah brings about the ultimate jubilee of for God's people.

This again has to do with multiples of the number 7.

Three sets of 14 is six sevens.

But, with the birth of Jesus, there is the beginning of the seventh seven.

In the Law of Moses, the seventh year was a sabbath year where the land would rest and debts would be restored.

Then after 49 years (seven 7s) there would be a great Year of Jubilee where all was restored.

What Matthew shows in his genealogy is that the entire history is Israel in the Old Testament is leading to the Year of Jubilee, the year of the Lord's favor, which begins at the Messiah's Advent.

Jesus' birth is the seventh seven, the Year of jubilee, not only for Israel, but for all the nations of the world.

Jesus Saves (vv. 18-25)

And this leads naturally into the next point of this morning's sermon:

Which is that Jesus brings salvation.

Verses 18-21 recount how Mary was found to be with child even though she and Joseph had not come together in marriage.

What I want to emphasize here is that there are two more names that are included here that add to all the names from the first 17 verses.

Matthew's genealogy includes a lot of names but it focuses on two in particular: Abraham and David.

But in verses 18-25, two other names are introduced to show us who Jesus is and what it means that he is the Messiah.

You Shall Call His Name Jesus

Verses 18-19 state that Mary had come to be with child from the Holy Spirit and that Joseph, being a just man, had resolved to divorce her quietly.

However, in verse 20, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him not to fear to take Mary as his wife because the child is from the the Holy Spirit.

Then, in verse 21, the angel gave Joseph instructions as to what he shall name the child.

“You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

The name Jesus is a Greek version of the Hebrew name “Joshua”.

And the name “Joshua” means Yahweh saves.

Just as Jesus is connected to Abraham and David in his genealogy, here he is connected with Joshua.

Joshua took over from Moses’ ministry in the wilderness, at the edge of the Jordan, and led his people into the Promised Land.

In the gospels, Jesus takes over from John the Baptist’s ministry in the wilderness, at the edge of the Jordan, and leads God’s people into the fullness of God’s promises.

And at the heart of those promises is God’s promise to forgive his people’s sins.

At the heart of Jesus’ ministry is that Jesus comes to save us from our sins.

This is what the name Jesus means.

God With Us

But there is another name that Matthew draws our attention to at the end of chapter 1.

Verses 22 and 23 state that,

Matthew 1:22–23 ESV

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name *Immanuel*” (which means, God with us).

Not only is Jesus a new Joshua, he is also *Immanuel*.

And this is the fulfillment of the prophecy of [Isaiah 7](#).

In [Isaiah 7](#), the prophet Isaiah told king Ahaz to ask for a sign from God.

A sign from God that would prove to Ahaz that God would save his people.

Ahaz, in a move of false humility said he would not ask the Lord for a sign.

But Isaiah responds by giving a sign anyway.

And the sign of God’s coming salvation for Ahaz and Judah is what is quoted here by Matthew.

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.”

In Isaiah’s day, the way the people would know that God was with them to save them was that a virgin, or young woman, would conceive and bear a son whose name would be “Immanuel”.

Matthew takes up this theme and applies it to what has happen at the birth of Jesus.

Jesus is the sign that God is going to save his people.

Specifically that God would save his people from their sins, their most bitter enemy.

But there is something very significant about the name “Immanuel”.

The promise that God would come and dwell with his people has been a promise that God’s people have been waiting for since the beginning.

Ever since humanity was cast out of Eden and away from God’s presence there has been a looming question:

When will humanity once again be with God.

Jesus is the answer to that question.

In Christ, God has come to be with us.

In Christ your sins have been dealt with and you have full access to God’s presence.

In Christ you encounter God’s presence in his Word;

In Christ you encounter God’s presence as you keep in step with the Spirit in you life;

In Christ you encounter God’s presence as you fellowship with the body of Christ in the Church,

And, of course, you encounter God as Immanuel as you gather in worship on the Lord’s Day and come to the Lord’s Table to commune with God.

So come in faith this morning, knowing that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us to save us from our sins.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!