



All In the Family

Then Christ Came #1 | Dec 3, 2023 | 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 AM | Steve H

Opening

The First Time

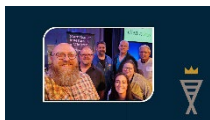
Can you remember the **first time** you attended Tonganoxie Christian Church?



My first visit to TCC was in the summer of 2007. I remember arriving in Kansas City at the old airport, hopping in a white church van and getting a ride into town. I remember pulling into town, pulling into the church, and peeking in the sanctuary with the blue carpet and the white pews and the medieval lights (*remember those? If you started coming here after 2014, look at the pictures!*). I had meetings with church leaders to explore the idea of me joining the staff... and I had little idea at the time that I would be standing here sixteen years later preaching this sermon!

You all had a “first time” experience walking into this church. For some, it was “this congregation” rather than “this church building,” because you walked into a smaller structure on 4th Street. For some, it was walking into the school as your child started attending Genesis Christian Academy. For others, it was walking in the doors today, trying to figure out what this might look like if you came back next week!

That’s how you would answer if I asked about the first time you *entered* the premises. But if I asked you to talk about your *experience* at TCC, you might not start in the same place.



“What led you to make TCC your church home?”

That story might sound very different.

- You might talk about meeting a girl and caring more about her than about Jesus...but you followed her here and figured out you loved both!
- You might chat about having a baby and realizing that you and your husband wanted to raise him with the right values. You tried out a few places until this felt like home.
- You might backtrack... sharing about a recent funeral held here for a family member, and how the people in this church showed compassion and encouragement and support. This is the kind of community you’ve developed at TCC, and it’s why you wanted a church home in the first place.

- You might talk about Hebrews 10:25 (“*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*”) and how it motivates you to be involved in a church community to grow and to help others grow.

Depending on what experience you are trying to communicate, you’re going to emphasize different pieces of information, share different facts, and approach the question from different angles. Your story about making TCC your church home *might not start* with the first visit you had to the church. In fact, you *might not mention that first visit at all!*

But during your presentation, you’ll share the reason your story fits into the ongoing story of TCC.



“Then...Christ Came”

Today we are beginning a new sermon series as we build up to Christmas.

Last week, we wrapped up our series on the Book of Psalms. In that series, I hope you gained wisdom and a godly perspective on your emotions...and please know that you can continue to read Psalms and appreciate them even after we’re done. It won’t violate any church rules. 😊

Today, though, we are moving into this new series entitled, “**Then...Christ Came.**” It’s going to focus on the story of Jesus’ arrival.



Now, the typical story of Jesus’ arrival centers on a manger. It’s the basic Christmas story; and you probably know it well, even if you didn’t grow up in church:

- An **angel** informs young, engaged **Mary** that she will have a special child – not in the normal way, but as a virgin birth.
- **Joseph**, Mary’s husband-to-be, sticks with her (after some divine prompting of his own) and marries her.
- As Mary is close to her due date, she and Joseph must make a government-mandated trip to Joseph’s ancestral town of **Bethlehem**.
- When they arrive, there is **no room** at the local inn...but they can stay in the stable.
- Mary goes into labor, **gives birth** to a baby boy, and lets him sleep in a **manger** (a feeding trough for the animals).
- He is visited by local **shepherds**...who learned of the birth from **singing angels**.
- He is visited by **wise men**...who learned of the birth from a **star** in the night sky.
- He is named **Jesus**...and God’s plan to solve the problem of sin is set in motion!

In any telling of the Christmas story, those elements are there... in songs, in plays, on Christmas cards, and in displays (*like our fantastic new nativity set out front! Thanks to Glenda Stoppel for finding it and Ron Seetin for putting it up!*).

None of these details are wrong! Chronologically, these elements correctly describe the Christmas story of the birth of Jesus.

But...



The Christmas story you and I know isn't how the New Testament writers want us to meet Jesus!

What do I mean? Well, when you read the four accounts of Jesus life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection (aka the Gospels), the Gospel writers don't *start* here. True, they might *include* the birth narrative, but their *introduction* starts elsewhere. They tell us some information, and *then...Christ came*.

Each Gospel writer picks a different launch point as they begin to reveal the story of Jesus. And their storytelling choices are important! Why? Because...



- **When** you meet a person matters. And...
- **How** you meet a person matters.

For the Gospel writers, they want us readers to meet Jesus in a particular way. They want to help us see Jesus through a particular lens. They want us to consider his story from a certain angle.

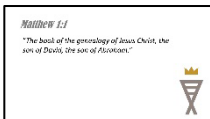
As the stories pick up speed and get going, each of their presentations will eventually share similar details. We'll see the story of Jesus unfold with many parallel and overlapping events. Their stories are consistent and compatible as they bring us closer to the cross. But the *first time* we encounter Jesus in these stories will help us understand the authors' perspectives and give us a chance to approach Jesus through their eyes...to maybe see Him in a new way ourselves.

Each week in this series, we're going to explore the opening of a different Gospel to see how Jesus is introduced.

So, let's get started! Open your Bibles to the first gospel to see how we are introduced to Jesus...in **Matthew**.

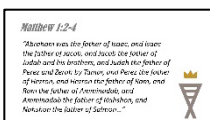


Meeting Jesus in Matthew



"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matthew 1:1, ESV)

Beginning with this statement, Matthew launches into a long list of (sometimes hard-to-pronounce) descendants, taking us from Abraham all the way to Jesus himself.



"Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob 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 Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon..." (Matthew 1:2-4, ESV)

(Should I say it? Ok, I'll say it. Matthew gets the award for the most boring introduction of the four Gospels! It's just not fun to read!)



We've touched on this material in different sermons in the past few years, such as in our sermon series on the "Not-So-Great Grandmothers of Jesus" two years ago. A year earlier, we even had a video of a certain teenage someone reading those names for us...a video I will not play, but which does live rent-free in my brain!

But in case some of the details are fuzzy, let me share a few things about this genealogy that might help you appreciate the list more.



The Importance of Names

Matthew isn't the only place in the Bible where we find genealogies. These lists of names show up in Genesis, in Numbers, and in 1 Chronicles (to name just a few). Sometimes the lists are broad (a single generation of all descendants), sometimes they are deep (successive generations), sometimes they ascend (child to parent), sometimes they descend (parent to child). But all of them tie together ancestors and descendants.

And while the names are hard for us to read because they're foreign and unfamiliar, our problem with genealogies is not that they are inherently boring... it is that we are disconnected from the source material! You and I don't care too much about these lists...but the Jewish audience that originally read them certainly did!

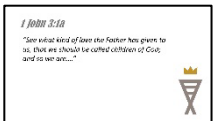
See, as Christians, we don't worry about the family tree because our genealogy is flat:

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are...." (1 John 3:1a, ESV)

There's only *one* generation we consider: Father and children, God to us! Our generation is wide – spanning continents and decades – but it is flat. The Jewish readers of Matthew's gospel, though, didn't have that same type of connection. They weren't grafted in directly to the trunk; they were offshoots on a long branch. To understand their connection to God, they had to go back through multiple generations.

Genealogies, then, were a way to cement and legitimize relationships. If you were in the list, you were part of the people...in Israel's case, the *People of God!* The lists could show continuity and connections; they could show who was in and who was out! The lists were proof of God's plan!

So, before you read any name on the list, approach it with an understanding that this was important and vital information for the original audience. It wasn't mind-numbing; it mattered!





Matthew's List of Names

Matthew's list of names is important. But it is also a *curated* list – the information has been intentionally selected for a purpose. He makes some choices about how to share these facts, helping his readers understand deeper truths.

Notice what Matthew does with his list:



Trimmed for Brevity

Matthew's genealogy isn't a tree, spreading out to show all the different branches. Instead, it has been trimmed for brevity. It is like a lightning bolt, taking the most direct path through the information to get from point A to point Z. Aside from a couple of mentions, we don't find a lot of siblings included, just "So-and-so fathered what's-his-name, what's-his-name fathered who-dat," etc.

The brevity serves to focus attention on the destination, the endpoint of the list...which is **Jesus** in Matthew 1:16.



Tied to Important Names

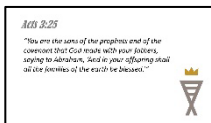
Matthew starts with a couple of important names that he wants us to notice.

*"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of **David**, the son of **Abraham**."* (Matthew 1:1, ESV)

Why these two specifically?

Abraham

Abraham is important because he is the starting point God chooses when He narrows his plan of salvation to a specific family. God makes a covenant with Abraham that places his people (the Jews) at the center of God's plan for the world.

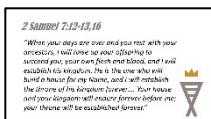


"You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'" (Acts 3:25, ESV)

The promise starts with Abraham.

David

David is important because he is the starting point God chooses when He narrows his Kingdom to one specific dynasty. God makes a covenant with David that places his family on the throne.



"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 the kingdom for ever... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.... Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16)

The promise starts with David.

By tying Jesus to these two individuals (he is “the son of David, the son of Abraham”), Matthew is making sure that we see Jesus in light of the historical, covenant promises God made.

The name-dropping focuses attention on **Jesus** as the fulfillment of those promises.

Connected with Unexpected Names

As Matthew continues his list, he gives us a chain of *fathers* connecting Jesus to these two spiritual pillars of Abraham and David. Yet Matthew also provides us with some unexpected names that reveal some interesting developments.

Sometimes knowing a little more about someone’s family gives you insight into their character. Have you ever been around someone and then met their parents and thought, “Yep. Now it all makes sense!” Their sense of humor or their unchecked ego is suddenly understandable because you see get an extra glimpse of what’s growing on the family tree!

So, what unexpected names does Matthew include?

He includes women! (Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, etc)

To establish connections in a genealogy, Matthew only needed to include men in the list. It was a patriarchal society, after all. Yet Matthew makes the curious decision to include a few key women in his list. These weren’t just *unknown* ladies; these were women who played a role in the Biblical narrative. Readers would recognize them from well-known Old Testament stories, so they were noteworthy.

But those stories have a catch...

Several of these women have a tainted background connected either to *birth* or *behavior*. They bring in outside tribes, foreigners, and sinful behavior. These elements aren’t prestigious – in fact, they are the opposite! – and so, they are unlikely choices for a normal genealogy! Yet the surprising/shocking elements of their stories are exactly why Matthew included them.

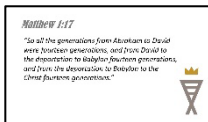
These women tie Jesus not only to the promises and covenants of God, but also to God’s acts of redemption and grace! They emphasize the promises made to Abraham that “ALL the families of the earth would be blessed” through this Messianic offspring.

By including sinners and strangers in the family tree, Matthew shows that **Jesus’** impact goes beyond the expected.

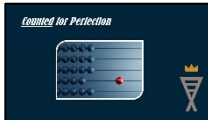


Counted for Perfection

Matthew does one other thing with his list of names. He helps us count the generations.



"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." (Matthew 1:17, ESV)



If you're a stickler for details, the math is a little weird. Hebrew math sometimes is different than ours in the way they allow counting.

Optional Example: Jesus died on the cross and on the third day he rose again. We think in terms of 24-hour periods, so 3 days = 72 hours. Yet the time from death to resurrection was much less (Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon would be ONE day; Saturday afternoon to Sunday AM is maybe 16 hours. Together that is 40 hours, and 40 < 72). But they count it as Friday (one day), Saturday (two days), Sunday (three days).

"Matthew states that each period has **fourteen generations**, but the first and third periods list only thirteen. A legitimate Jewish and OT approach would count David in both the first and second groupings and include Jesus in the third grouping."¹

Regardless of whether you agree with Matthew's numbering, you can at least appreciate what he is trying to do. This system of counting provides equal, ordered groupings – it is not RANDOM. This system also creates groups of 14...and 14 is a multiple of 7, the Hebrew number of PERFECTION. A Jewish person reading this summary would instantly recognize the hand of God in this arrangement.

Jesus is the culmination of an orderly, divine plan!

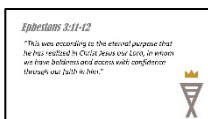


How Matthew Views Jesus

When you put all these pieces together – the connection to important names, the inclusion of a wider family, the numbers that can't be coincidence – it points to an important conclusion about how Matthew views Jesus.

Jesus is introduced, not as a baby, but as a clear, perfect fulfilment of God's promises!

Jesus is the Messiah. He is the promised Savior!



"This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him." (Ephesians 3:11–12, ESV)

¹ [New Living Translation Study Bible](#) (Mt 1:17). (2008). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



Ex: In my wallet I have a \$20 bill. It's rare to find one in my wallet because I have a teenager and a son in college. But here it is!

What is the most important part of a \$20 bill? That it is crisp? Clean? Not ripped? No, the most important part is that it is LEGITIMATE – that it is truly legal tender for debts!

This is why there are security features – watermarks, microscopic print, holograms, special paper – to ensure that this one is real.

The same is true for the Messiah. Matthew wants to introduce us to Jesus with confidence that He is the real deal. Matthew wants us to approach Jesus and know with certainty that He is the one – He is the Messiah. He's not some random dude born in the sticks; He is God's Anointed One, chosen to bring salvation to the entire world (Jews and Gentiles alike!).

Matthew starts with **legitimacy** ("Jesus fits! Jesus fulfills! Jesus is the One!") and continues to verify and confirm Jesus' identity as he writes. Matthew recounts details of Jesus' life and then cites Old Testament prophecies that he fulfills.

You can't read Matthew's gospel without hearing Matthew's certainty that Jesus is the Messiah!

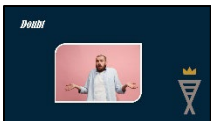


How We View Jesus

What happens if we approach Jesus with this same view? Does it change how we think of Him or worship Him?

Doubt

Certainty feels strange when you live in an age of doubt. You and I live in a time when we can't trust anything.

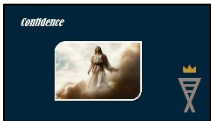


- Do you trust the **news** to tell you the truth? No! They are either wrong because of lazy reporting or because of biased opinions.
- Do you trust the **internet** to tell you the truth? No! Abraham Lincoln famously said, "Don't believe everything you read on the internet just because there is a picture with a quote next to it."
- Do you trust **pictures** to tell you the truth? No! In fact, Google's latest phone allows you to edit and adjust photos on the fly, so you can create a "perfect" family photo instead of the real one where babies are crying and all your chins decided to show up.

- Do you trust **churches** and **ministers** to tell you the truth? I wish I could say, “Yes” ...but polls show that people are more than twice as likely to have confidence in small businesses than in organized religion.²

And while I’m a member of the least trustworthy group of society right now (middle-aged, straight, white guy!), I hope you’ll still listen to this one point:

Confidence



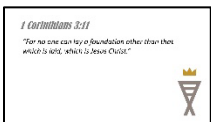
Matthew wants you to have confidence in Jesus.

He wants you to meet Jesus and have no doubts that He is legitimate!

- Do you doubt his **historicity**? Matthew points you to **real people having real babies** and real names from history...a birth list that ends up with Jesus.
- Do you doubt his **credentials**? Matthew ties Jesus to the **promises of God**.
- Do you doubt his **role**? Matthew shares his title: Messiah/Anointed One.

You can evaluate Jesus and He will stand up to the scrutiny. He is who Matthew claims He is!

So, if that’s the case, then build around Him! Like the parable of the wise man building his house on the rock in Matthew 7, we need to build with Jesus’ identity as our solid foundation.



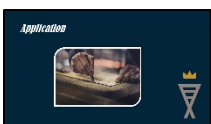
“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11, ESV)

He is our cornerstone; he is our foundation.

You may not know whether your car will start. You may not know whether your body will hold up. You may not know whether your savings will last.

But you CAN know Jesus. And like Matthew, you can have confidence and certainty that Jesus is legitimate. He is our foundation. He is our Messiah.

Application



What do you do with that confidence? You bring it into every situation like a ruler.

When I measure something with a ruler, I don’t question the markings. I trust them! And I make other decisions based on what they say.

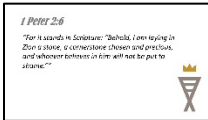
Likewise, we need to measure against our Ruler – the King of Kings!

- Is this action right? I need to weight it against Jesus’ viewpoint, not the Republican or Democrat parties.

² <https://news.gallup.com/poll/508169/historically-low-faith-institutions-continues.aspx>

- Is this attitude appropriate? I need to see how it stacks against Jesus' thoughts, not compare it to my neighbors.
- Is this belief correct? I need to know if it conforms to Jesus' teachings, not judge it based on a quick Google search.
- Is my compassion for my enemies sufficient? I need to weigh it against Jesus' heart, not listen to the mob.

Confidence in Jesus gives us a solid place to stand and conduct our lives. We don't have to be shaken, moved, nervous or fearful. We can build on Him!



“For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”
(1 Peter 2:6, ESV)

Closing



Before we ever see a baby in his gospel, Matthew wants us to know Jesus. He wants us to have unwavering confidence in His identity. He wants us to know that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises.

You can't read Matthew's gospel without hearing Matthew's certainty that Jesus is the Messiah!

Will you share that confidence in Him?

Invitation

If you've had any doubts about Jesus, today is the day to set them aside. Trust that He is the answer that God has provided.

We invite you to share that confidence by giving your life over to Him today. If you want to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, we invite you to come forward as we stand and sing!

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Notes

Meeting Jesus in Matthew (Matthew 1:1)

The Importance of Names (1 John 3:1a)

Matthew's List of Names

Trimmed for Brevity

Tied to Important Names

Abraham (Acts 3:25)

David (2 Samuel 7:12-13,16)

Connected with Unexpected Names

Counted for Perfection (Matthew 1:17)

How Matthew Views Jesus (Ephesians 3:11-12)

How We View Jesus

Doubt

Confidence (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Application

Discussion Questions

Use the following questions based on today's sermon as a starting point for spiritual discussions with your family or a small group of Christian friends this week.

Fellowship—Relationship with a Purpose

- Can you remember the first time you attended Tonganoxie Christian Church? Who did you meet? Where did you go? How did you continue attending?

Growth—Thinking About Spiritual Matters

- Does it ever surprise you that only two of the four gospels (Matthew and Luke) share the Christmas narrative of Jesus' birth? What does that tell you about the focus of Jesus's story?
- When and how you meet a person matters. When was your introduction to Jesus in your own life? How did it impact you at the time? How might it have been different in another setting?
- How does Matthew choose to introduce us to Jesus? Read Matthew 1:1.
- Read through the names in Matthew's list. Do any names stand out to you? Why?
- Matthew summarizes his list in Matthew 1:17. What is the significance of each person? Place? Number?
- Matthew's presentation gives us confidence in Jesus' identity as the Messiah. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your own confidence in Jesus' identity. What contributes to your certainty?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, rate how important that confidence is as you face your daily challenges. Are the ratings similar or different? Why?
- Choose one issue that you face (at work, in family, in the news). How can a certainty of Jesus' identity change the way you view that issue?

Prayer – Taking Your Thoughts to God

- Thank God for fulfilling his promises about the Messiah/Christ through Jesus. Ask God to give you more confidence and certainty in Jesus in the face of cultural doubts.