

“Christ, The Fulfillment of the Promises”
(Matthew 1:1-17)

Introduction: This morning, I would like for us to begin looking at this marvelous account of the apostle Matthew of the words and works of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was too wonderful of a story not to tell to the world. And so the Holy Spirit, according to Jesus’ promise, prompted Matthew to write it all down, in order that he might give to his people, and to all the generations yet to come, an exact account of the things which Jesus said and did. This was to prove that Jesus was in fact the Christ of God, the long-awaited Messiah. It is agreed, among New Testament scholars, that this Gospel, more than the other three, was specifically directed to a Jewish audience. Throughout the book Matthew quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures to show that Jesus is the One who He claimed to be. He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. But now having such a glorious story to write, how would you begin such a book? Where is the best place to start when you are wanting to tell others about the greatest events that have ever taken place in human history? Well, the story actually had begun a long time ago. It really began before history began, in the eternal counsels of God. But where Matthew begins, is where every Jew would begin: in the lineage of his forefathers. If Matthew is to show the Jews that Jesus is the Christ, he must first show Christ’s connection to two men in particular, Abraham and David, for it was to these two men specifically that God had promised that the Messiah would come forth. And this is exactly where Matthew begins, where he shows us in this genealogy that,

Christ is the fulfillment of the promises made both to Abraham and to David.

- I. The purpose of this genealogy is to show just that. And that is why Matthew begins with the statement which he does, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”**
- A. Remember, Christ is the fulfillment of *all* of the promises made to the fathers.
1. Paul writes in Romans 15:8, “For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers.” And he writes in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”
 2. Christ is the One in whom all of the promises are fulfilled and guaranteed to us. He is the One who is the fulfillment of the redemptive covenants made to God’s people, especially those two most important promises that He would be of the seed of Abraham and the son of David.
 - a. Remember what God had promised to Abraham. He said to him, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. *And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Gen. 12:1-3).
 - b. Later, He said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you

have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. *And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice*" (Gen. 22:16-18).

- c. The Lord tells us that in Abraham all the nations would be blessed. He tells us more specifically that this blessing would come through his seed, his offspring. But Paul tells us even more exactly who this "seed" was that He was referring to. He writes, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ" (Gal. 3:16). Christ was the One whom the Lord was pointing to in that promise. Christ is its fulfillment!
- d. But there was another important redemptive covenant that was made with one of God's people, and that was the covenant with David. God made a promise to David that He would raise up one of his offspring and seat him on his throne. He said to David, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant/seed after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me" (2 Sam. 7:12-14).
- e. Now certainly, the Lord was referring to Solomon. But He was not talking about Solomon alone. The Jews were well aware of this. When Jesus cast out a demon from a demon-possessed man, "All the multitudes were amazed, and *began* to say, 'This *man* cannot be the Son of David, can he'" (Matt. 12:23)? Jesus Himself asked the Pharisees, "'What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?' They *said to Him, 'The son of David'" (Matt. 22:42). Stephen, when he was testifying to the Jews concerning Jesus, said, "And after He [God] had removed him [Saul], He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' From the offspring of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus" (Acts 13:22-23).
- f. Now this is exactly what Matthew, as a good Jew, knowing the Jewish mind, sets out to do in this genealogy he sets before us. A genealogy simply gives the lineage of the one whose genealogy it is. The first verse here is like a heading which summarizes the whole point. It is the style that the Jewish culture used. You can easily see this by comparing it to those genealogies which are found in Genesis 5, 10 and 11.
- g. Luke's genealogy shows these connections as well, except through a different line from David. For this reason, it is believed to be the genealogy of Jesus, through Mary, rather than Joseph. We learn that both are descended from David, which would give to their child the right to rule. If you are to be the King of Israel, you must be a son of David.
- h. But Luke's genealogy, very interestingly, takes the lineage all the way back to Adam, rather than only to Abraham. Really the whole Old Testament is the story of the lineage of this coming Messiah. Even as early as the Fall, we learn that He was to be the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Since Noah was the only

righteous man in his time, the Messiah had to come from his loins (6:8). Shem was the son who was singled out for a blessing from God, whose blessing included the enlarging of his tents so as to include the offspring of Japheth. This was another Messianic prophecy (9:26). The rest of the genealogy shows us the continuation of this narrowing process, until we finally arrive at the culmination of the hope of the ages in Christ.

- i. We should not think it strange that the whole Bible was given for this purpose. For what person and event in the history of the world could even come close to it? What could possibly be as important as the birth of the One who is able to free us from our sins, who is able to set us free from the condemnation which we would have received from God, in everlasting burnings in hell? What could be more glorious than to reveal the One who is able to give us an everlasting inheritance in the heavens? Nothing which any man in history has ever done could possibly rival this!
 - j. And why does Matthew go about to set this out to us? It is so that we might be saved through faith in His name. The Bible says that you and I could not be saved by our works, by our repentance from our sins, or by anything else that we could do. If left to ourselves, we could only amass for ourselves a mountain of guilt for the day of judgment, for we always fall short in everything which we do. But in Christ, God has fulfilled His Law, His commandments. In Christ there is a perfect righteousness, one which can endure the holy judgment of God. And this righteousness He freely gives to those who will trust in His name. Is this good news? Yes, it is. And this is surely one of the motives behind Matthew's writing of it. You know that you love your neighbor as yourself when you are willing to share a treasure such as this with others.
 - h. Jesus Christ is the promised fulfillment of the redemptive covenants of God, the One who has come to set us free from our sins. His name even reveals His mission. Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation," and Christ means "the Messiah" or "the Anointed One," the One whom God anointed to be our great Prophet, Priest and King.
- B. The remainder of our passage simply lays out those who are involved in the line of the Messiah. I would like to go over some of this family tree very briefly, just to point out some things of interest, and also to show the graciousness of God in the lives of His chosen people.
1. It shouldn't surprise us that many of these names in the list are the main characters in the Bible.
 - a. Remember that the Bible is not a general history of the world, but it has a very narrow focus: It is the history of the redemptive work of God.
 - b. And since that work finds its fulfillment in Christ, we should expect to see that all of the great figures in biblical history are related to Him in one way or another.
 2. We have already seen that Abraham is one of those leading characters in biblical history.
 - a. He was the one who received the promise of a seed through whom the world

- would be blessed.
- b. And we see that blessing today going out to all the world as men and women of every nation turn to Christ as their Lord and their Savior.
 - c. But the promise to Abraham was also the greatest revelation of the Covenant of Grace yet given in the Scripture. It was the promise upon which everything else in God's gracious dealings to man was based, and that which finds its fulfillment in the New Covenant which the church now enjoys.
 - d. Abraham, in order to enjoy the blessings of this covenant, had to believe. And he did believe the promises of God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. This, Paul tells us in Romans, was written down so that we too might become the heirs of faith, that we would believe God's promise and so become the children of Abraham, who is the father of the faithful.
 - e. Abraham believed the promise of God, and he saw the beginning of its fulfillment in Isaac.
 - f. Isaac also believed, and he began to see its fulfillment in his son, Jacob. Rebekah was also barren, as Sarah was. But Isaac prayed to God, and the Lord opened her womb, and she bore twins. As you know, Jacob inherited the promises, while Esau became a covenant breaker, having despised his birthright. God also blessed Jacob with twelve sons, who became the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - g. In each of these cases, we certainly see the covenant mercy and grace of God. There is no man who deserves these blessings which the Lord gave. Even the faithful do not deserve them. They are purely of grace. But in these twelve sons of Jacob we begin to see God's mercy even more revealed. Remember what the ten did to their brother Joseph?
 - h. What's even worse, remember how the twins Perez and Zerah were born to Judah. They came through Tamar, his daughter-in-law. She pretended to be a harlot, and Judah went into her (Gen. 38).
 - i. Now, I am not implying that being in the lineage of the Messiah necessarily means that all of these were converted. Some of them doubtless were, and others were probably not, unless there was repentance on the part of these, which is not recorded for us in Scripture.
2. The next group we don't know quite as much about, although we are not left completely in the dark.
 - a. We read about them in the book of Ruth. After Ruth married Boaz, she gave birth to a son. And after she did, we read, "And the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi!' So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David" (Ruth 4:17-22).
 - b. This is a very important lineage, since it arrives at the birth of David, who is not only in the line of Messiah, but was himself one of the clearest types of Him.
 - c. But note here the covenant mercy of God. Ruth, who was a Moabitess, was

included among the covenant people of God. Moab was the first-born son of the oldest daughter of Lot, whom she bore to her father (Gen. 19:37). Moab tried to destroy Israel and even caused the men to play the harlot (Num. 22-25). But yet here we see the covenant mercy of God in granting to this one what appears to be a genuine faith. She forsook the gods of her forefathers, which would have certainly led her to destruction, in order to follow the true God of Israel. She was even included in the covenant line of the Christ! This is why her story is included in Scripture.

- d. But notice another name before that of Ruth's, that of Rahab. Remember that Rahab was a harlot, if she is in fact the same as that Rahab who lived in Jericho, during the time of its destruction. She heard the news of the what the God of the Israelites had done, and she feared. That is why she hid the spies and was saved from the ruin of the city. The author to the Hebrews includes her in the hall of faith (Heb. 11:31). And James uses her as an illustration of the kind of working faith that saves a person (2:25). Who would have ever thought that a prostitute in one of the cities of the Canaanites would have been redeemed by the Lord, marry into the covenant community and become one of Christ's human ancestors? But such is the covenant grace of God. He does not save the beautiful or the perfect, though there are none, but the unlovely and sinner. Jesus told the Pharisees, who thought that they were so righteous, "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31). Remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. (1 Cor. 1:26-29).
 - e. One other infamous woman of note was Bathsheba. We cannot fault David alone for the sin of adultery which he committed with her. She also had a will and could have resisted, but she did not. But notice that she too is included in the line of Messiah. I don't know whether she was converted or not. But certainly David was, and he was not only included in this genealogy, but was singled out to be the one through whom the Christ would come, as we have already seen.
3. What follows is a list of the kings of Judah up until the time of the deportation to Babylon. There were some good kings and there were some bad kings. But eventually, because of their unfaithfulness to God's covenant, they were removed from the land of promise (vv. 7-11).
 4. From verses 12-16, we have a list of those who were in the captivity and the return, all the way down to the birth of Joseph, and then to Christ. Some of these people are revealed in Scripture, such as Shealtiel, who was the father of Zerubbabel, who was one of the leaders under which the Temple was rebuilt (Ezra 5:2). But many of these others we know nothing about, except that they were in the line of Messiah.

5. And then finally we arrive at Joseph, who was the adopted father of Jesus. That this is Joseph's genealogy is most likely from the statement of the angel in verse 20. He calls Joseph the "son of David." There is no doubt that he is related to David, and if to David, then also to Abraham. And even though Joseph was not Jesus' human father, he was His legal father. Jesus therefore had the right of a son.
6. Matthew ends by telling us that there are fourteen generation in each of these three major epochs of Jewish history. He must have had another purpose in mind than giving us a complete lineage, however, as there are some names which are missing from the list. But this was not an unusual thing to do among the Jews. It wasn't always done, but it was on occasion. What that reason was, we really don't know.
7. But the important point should not be missed. This whole genealogy is leading up to Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of God. He is the One who, Matthew will say, has fulfilled the promises, He has brought everlasting salvation. And each of us here who know Christ, who have embraced Him as our Lord and Savior, know the importance of this. In Christ, our sins are forever removed: those we have committed or ever will commit. In Christ, we have a perfect righteousness, so that even with all of our own failings, we will not fall short of heaven. And in Christ, we have all the help and encouragement we need to press forward into God's kingdom for His glory now, and forevermore.
8. I would lastly leave those of you who do not know Christ as your Savior an invitation to take hold of Christ and receive His blessings. The Bible says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). If you receive Christ this morning, as your Lord and Savior, these blessings the Bible speaks of will be yours. He will forgive your sins and give you a perfect righteousness and entrance into His eternal kingdom. Don't worry that you are not good enough to receive Him. Christ did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Come to Him and enter into the household of the faithful.
9. But if you do come to Him, remember to give all glory to God. For the Scripture says if you do, you "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (v. 13). Your desire to come did not come from yourself, but from God. If your heart is changed, it is only because He has first set His affections on you. "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Amen.