



Sermon Transcript December 1, 2019

Advent 2019 Christmas Introductions Introducing the Promised One Matthew 1:1-17

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on December 1, 2019 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at www.wethefc.com

Introduction to Advent 2019

It is fascinating to consider the many different ways people are introduced to Jesus. Some are born into families and grow up in church families where they are introduced to Jesus from as early as they can remember. In fact, they can't remember a time when they didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Others are introduced to Jesus because someone told them about Jesus and eventually they found themselves believing. There are some who come to faith as a result of carefully weighing all the evidence, often comparing Christianity to other worldviews and other religions and after a careful study of these matters, they find the evidence for Christianity to be the most compelling and reasonable explanation for life. And then, some are introduced to Jesus through some kind of divine encounter that can only be explained by a supernatural God.

It is the same gospel message. It is the same Holy Spirit who brings us to life. It is the same call to repent of your sin and turn in faith to Jesus. But our journeys are unique and deeply personal.

That is similar to what we find at the beginning of the New Testament and the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. All four Gospels give us a historical account of the life of Jesus. Collectively, they tell us about his birth, his life and ministry, his teachings and his message and of course they all center their account of the life of Jesus around the week of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, each of them are making the claim that this Jesus is the Son of God. John tells us that is the reason he writes what he writes. He says, *"these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."* That is why Michael Wilkins says that the Gospels are not just historical accounts—biographies of the life of Jesus. Rather, he says that the unique feature of the Gospels is that they are persuasive, they are written "to awaken or strengthen the faith of their readers."¹ I like the way Peter says it in 2 Peter 1:16 (NLT). *"For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes."*

And yet, in spite of the similarities you find in the four Gospels, they are unique in how they go about introducing us to Jesus. Just like there are varied ways in which we were introduced to Jesus, each Gospel writer has a unique way of introducing Jesus to us. Matthew introduces us to Jesus by starting with the genealogy of Jesus. Mark introduces us to Jesus by starting with the message of Jesus. Luke introduces us to Jesus by telling us that he did his research and that he has put together *"an orderly account"* of the life of Jesus. And then John begins his Gospel account with a rich theological statement about

Jesus, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* He makes the claim that this supernatural Jesus has come to dwell with man.

This Advent Season we are going to look at how each of the Gospel writers introduce Jesus to us and we are going to consider what they are telling us about Jesus through their introductions. My prayer is that these introductions would "awaken faith" and "strengthen faith" in you. But then we also want to learn from these Gospel writers how to introduce Jesus to others. That is the call we find at the end of each of the Gospels. It is the call to take this message and *"make disciples of all nations."* This is the reason why we want to plant churches: new churches reach new people. This is why we just spent two weeks talking about missions. We want to partner with missionaries as they introduce Jesus all over the world. This is what we are all called to do as we are sent out to the places we go this week. It is our desire to introduce Jesus to others.

So with that in mind, we begin with Matthew's introduction of Jesus to us. He begins by tracing the family tree of Jesus through forty-two names that go back 2000 years, all the way back to Abraham.

Matthew 1:1-17

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.

Introduction

So reads the record of the genealogy of Jesus, the Christ, as recorded for us in the Gospel of Matthew. This long list of names, forty-two to be exact, is more than just a mere listing of the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. This is more than just a tracing of the family tree back to Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel. Matthew is making a statement about Jesus through this long list of names. So what is Matthew telling us about Jesus through this grouping of forty-two names?

You must keep in mind that when you read through the book of Matthew that he is writing his account of the life of Christ to a Jewish audience. He is trying to persuade his fellow Jews that this Jesus is the promised Messiah that the prophets spoke about in the Old Testament. That is why verse 1 reads the way it does, *“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”* David and Abraham were not just important names in the family tree. Rather, they represented covenants—promises—God made to the people of Israel. So what Matthew is saying with this genealogy is that this Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of God.

All the promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus. That is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20. He writes, *“For all the promises of God find their Yes in Jesus.”* That is the emphasis of the Advent devotional this week. The theme for this week is that Jesus is the PROMISED Messiah. All your readings this week will be from the Old Testament because they speak of the promises God made in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Jesus. God keeps the promises that he makes. God can be trusted.

We just completed the sermon series on our doctrinal statement. And one of the lines that stood out to me was the concluding line of our statement about the Bible. Having confessed that we believe the Bible to be God’s Word, we say at the end of that

statement, “Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires and trusted in all that it promises.” God is faithful. We just held the cup in our hands and were reminded of “the blood of the covenant.” Through the blood of Jesus, God has sealed his promises to us. There is a great benediction at the end of Hebrews that goes like this: *“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant, brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever.”* God has kept his promise in raising Jesus from the dead. He will never leave you. Your sins are forgiven. You are a child of God. Death cannot hold you. All things work together for good. And on and on and on these promises go.

So what promises emerge from this genealogy of Jesus? Using verse 1 as an outline, I would like to suggest that as Matthew is introducing Jesus to us he is telling us that in Jesus we have the promise of a new beginning, a new kingdom and a new family. All these promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus.

The Promise of a New Beginning

The promise of a new beginning is picked up in the subtleties of this passage. In our English version of Matthew 1:1, we see the word “genealogy” - *“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ . . .”* In the Greek version, with which Matthew wrote his gospel account, we find the Greek word for “genesis.” *“The book of the genealogy (the genesis) of Jesus Christ.”* As you know, Genesis is the first book of the Bible. The word “genesis” means “beginnings.” The book of Genesis details for us the beginnings of creation, the beginnings of man, and the beginnings of God forming a people for himself through the covenant he made with Abraham. Don’t miss the nuance that Matthew is embedding into the beginning of his gospel account of the life of Jesus by using this word “genesis” at the very beginning of his introduction of Jesus to this Jewish audience.

Now lest you are thinking I am making too much of a fuss over a simple word, I need to share this with you because I think Matthew is being deliberate in what he is saying about Jesus and the new beginning Jesus brings to this world God loves and created. This is not the only place that the word “genesis” shows up in Matthew 1. You see it again in Matthew 1:18. Again it is hidden in the English but it sticks out like a sore thumb in the Greek text. The verse reads like this in English, *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.”* The word translated “birth” in English is the word “genesis” in Greek.

Do you know what Matthew is doing here by repeating the word “*genesis*” in Matthew 1:18? He is following the pattern of Genesis 1-2 and the story of the creation of the world. Some people scratch their heads when they read Genesis 1 and 2 because in essence the story of creation is told twice in the span of two chapters. In Genesis 1 you have basically the account of creation told in a rather systematic way. Here is what happened on day one, day two, day three and so on. It is a rather “matter of fact” approach to detailing the account of creation. But when you get to Genesis 2 the account of creation is told more in the form of a story. And it is sometimes difficult to mesh some of the details between the two chapters. But one chapter is just a list and the other chapter is a story. That is the pattern you find in Matthew 1. The genealogy of Jesus, like Genesis 1, is simply a matter of fact account of the “*genesis*” of Jesus. But starting in Matthew 1:18, you have the story of the “*genesis*” of Jesus. “*Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed . . .*”

By using the word “*genesis*” in Matthew 1:1 and 1:18, Matthew is saying something very important about this Jesus. He is staking the claim that through the birth of Jesus, a “new genesis” has occurred. A new beginning has come to this world.

This new beginning that comes with Christ is both cosmic and personal. Someday there will be a new heaven and a new earth—a new beginning, a new creation. And yet, in a very personal way, Paul informs us in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold the new has come.*” Jesus is the one who can make something new of your life.

The Promise of a New Kingdom

The next thing we see in Matthew 1:1 is that Jesus is the *son of David*. In fact, David is a focal point of this genealogy. The fact that this genealogy is divided into three neat sections of fourteen generations is a tip to David. The number that corresponds with his name in the Jewish alphabet is fourteen. In fact, some generations were skipped to make this record an even fourteen generations in all three sections. It was done so to point the reader to David. Why is it important that Jesus be linked to King David who lived a thousand years prior to the birth of Jesus? The reason it is important that Jesus be connected to David is because of what was promised to David. David was promised that a son would come from his lineage who would bring hope to the people of Israel.

You can hear this promise being made and reiterated throughout the Old Testament. The first time we get wind of such a promise is when we hear the prophet Nathan deliver

this very promise to David himself. In 2 Samuel 7 this is what God said to David, “*I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom . . . And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever . . . And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.*” It is a promise and a hope that gets repeated numerous times throughout the Old Testament. Consider two examples from the book of Psalms.

- Psalm 89:35-37 - “*Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.*”
- Psalm 132:11 - *The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.’*”

So can you see why Matthew constructs his genealogy with David being a focal point in the lineage of Jesus? To this predominantly Jewish audience, Matthew is linking this Jesus to David. Incidentally, Matthew uses the name David seventeen times in this gospel. There is no other book in the New Testament that mentions David more than Matthew does. Before the narrative of the life of Jesus ever begins, Matthew is telling us that this “son of David” is “that” son of David, the one who was promised long ago.

But you can’t stop there. Linking Jesus to David is not just about family trees and a trivial answer you might find regarding the lineage of Jesus on the game show Jeopardy. With this link to David comes hope because with this coming king comes the advent of the kingdom of God. Isaiah the prophet links the hope of a new kingdom to the birth of this descendant of David. We hear the words of Isaiah sung in Handel’s *Messiah* when we hear, “*For unto us a child is born . . . unto us, a son given . . . And the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . And his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father the Prince of Peace.*” That is taken right out of Isaiah 9 where it also says, “*Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and uphold it with justice from this time forth and forevermore.*” So when we talk about a descendant of David sitting on the throne of David forever, we are not just talking about the succession of a king. Rather we are talking about the ushering in of a kingdom that brings peace to this world. We are not just celebrating the birth of a king this season. Rather, with the coming of Jesus, the legal heir to the throne of David, we are celebrating the coming of an entirely new kingdom!

Paul captures the significance of this in Colossians 1:13-14 where he says that *“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”* Because the *son of David* has come—the King has come and he has brought with him the promised kingdom of God. Right now that kingdom is taking root in our hearts through faith in Jesus. It is a rule that brings about blessing and peace.

When John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus to ask if he is indeed the promised Messiah, Jesus responds by asking John what he sees. Jesus says to them, *“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news preached to them.”* In other words, the kingdom of God has come in Jesus! When the kingdom of God breaks into your life, it changes you.

The Promise of a New Family

Finally, we see that Jesus is *“the son of Abraham.”* God promised Abraham that he would form a people from Abraham’s descendants who would in turn bring God’s blessing to all people. So when you think Abraham think covenant and think God’s people. Through Abraham God is forming a people for himself. Who is this people? When the genealogy begins, it seems like a rather limited list of people. *“Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.”* The inclusion of Judah’s brothers is a reference to the twelve tribes of Israel and so you may be forced to wonder whether the boundary line for being part of God’s people is limited to the children of Israel.

But then you start to take a look at the rest of the names and all of a sudden there is hope for all people. First of all, you are not long into this genealogy and you find the first of five women listed in this genealogy. In Jewish genealogies, descent was traced through the male and it was rare to have women included at all. And yet here you find five women in the genealogy of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and of course, Mary.

Furthermore, not only are these five women mentioned, three of which are found in the first section of Matthew’s record of the line of Jesus, but it is not like these women were women of stature like a Susan B. Anthony or a Harriet Beecher Stowe or a Rosa Parks. It is quite the contrary. Tamar seduced Judah, resulting in the birth of twins. Rahab was a prostitute from Jericho. Then there is Bathsheba, who seems to be a willing partner in the adulterous relationship she had with David. So these are not necessarily proud

moments in the family tree, and yet here they are in the lineage of Jesus.

Furthermore, you could make a case that four of these women may have been Gentiles, two for sure were. Rahab was from Jericho and Ruth was from Moab. Bathsheba was married to a Hittite and Tamar was most likely a Canaanite woman. And so you have these Gentile women, who apart from Ruth, have a rather checkered past and here they are in the line of Jesus.

As we look at these women, I would also caution you to reconsider how you look at them. Women, as is the case in many cultures today, were marginalized and abused. Tamar was acting out of the neglect that came from the house of Judah. Bathsheba was only responding to the desires of David, the powerful king. In many ways, these women acted more righteously than their male counterparts, and in the story that unfolds they stood in contrast to the lack of faith found in the men of Israel.

And so in this genealogy you have women, who were considered somewhat on the outside. There are Gentiles in the line of Jesus. There are instances of scandal and impropriety in the holy lineage of Jesus. And so imbedded in the genealogy of Jesus is the reminder that Jesus brings hope for all people. Wilkins concludes, “With the birth of Jesus Messiah, the dawning of salvation has arrived for all people regardless of ethnicity, gender or status. . . . Matthew solidifies his church’s identity as the true people of God, who transcend ethnic, economic, and religious barriers to find oneness in their adherence to Jesus Messiah.”²

So by faith, you are united to this long list of names. If God can handle these stories in the line of Jesus, God can handle your story. If you feel your story is too sordid or too checkered to be included in the family of God, think again. There are plenty of stories in the line of Jesus that would make anyone blush. Jesus came for stories like yours. Jesus came for the marginalized and for the sinner and for the one without hope. Turn to him with faith. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:10, “*Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*” In Jesus there is hope for all people. Through faith you become part of the family of God.

Introducing Jesus

Through this genealogy, Matthew is introducing Jesus to us as the one through whom God fulfills his promises. It is a promise for a new beginning, a new kingdom and a new

family. Matthew is telling us that God keeps his promise to this broken world through a person, the Son of God, Jesus.

Darrel Bock makes this observation and I think it is accurate. He said, “A lot of people feel disconnected to the world they are a part of. They feel very lonely, very alienated, they feel very estranged. The goal of Jesus is to get inside of us and reconnect us to where we ought to be. And in the process of doing that you find yourself and you find the living God. I can’t imagine a better thing to be connected to.”³

What he is saying is that we were made for relationship with God. It is God who has pursued us. It is God who wants to meet us. The story of Jesus is a perfect illustration of God’s desire for us. He came to us.

Can you think of people in your life who are in need of a new beginning? Can you think of people in your life who need to come under the blessings of the good rule of Jesus? Can you think of people who are without hope in this world and longing for relationship? We need to introduce them to Jesus.

He offers us a new beginning. Through Jesus we are a new creation.
He brings us into a new kingdom. It is a kingdom where Christ rules in our hearts and through his death on the cross, offers us forgiveness of sin.
He welcomes us into a new family where we are the children of God.

All the promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus. Point them to Jesus!

¹Micahel J. Wilkins *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004) 65

²Ibid, 68

³Darrell Bock in “Jesus: Man, Messiah, or More: Overview Pt. 1 <http://www.dod.org/products/DOD2121.aspx>

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