

The Advent of the King

The Ancestry of the King

Matthew 1:1-17

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Scripture

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. *Advent* means “coming,” and so *Advent* is the first season of the Christian Church calendar in which we anticipate and celebrate the first coming of Jesus Christ.

For the next four weeks of Advent I would like to preach a series of sermons titled “The Advent of the King.” This series of sermons is based on Matthew’s Gospel, chapters 1 and 2.

Commentator Warren Wiersbe notes, “If a man suddenly appears and claims to be a king, the public immediately asks for proof. What is his background? Who pays homage to him? What credentials can he present?”¹

Matthew anticipated these questions. So, he began his Gospel with a careful account of Jesus’ background and birth. Matthew presented the following facts about the kingship of Jesus in Matthew 1-2, which we will examine in the coming weeks:

1. 1st Sunday of Advent: The Ancestry of the King (1:1-17),
2. 2nd Sunday of Advent: The Arrival of the King (1:18-25),
3. 3rd Sunday of Advent: The Adoration of the King (2:1-12),
4. 4th Sunday of Advent: The Anger Against the King (2:13-18),
and
5. Christmas Eve: The Anticipation of the King (2:19-23).

So, as we begin our study of the Advent of the King, let’s begin today by examining the ancestry of the King. This is found in Matthew 1:1-17:

1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, “An Exposition of the New Testament Comprising the Entire ‘BE’ Series”—Jkt. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996, c1989), Mt 1:1.

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

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had
been Uriah's wife,
⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,
⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his
brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abiud,
Abiud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,
¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,

**Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Eliud,
¹⁵ Eliud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,
¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of
Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called
Christ.**

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ. (Matthew 1:1-17)

Introduction

My New Testament professor and advisor, Don Carson, begins his commentary of Matthew's Gospel in his *New Bible Commentary* by saying that "the modern reader finds this list of names a dull way to begin a book"²

I suppose that some of you may be thinking the same thing as you noticed that I am planning to preach an *entire* sermon on a genealogy! You can't believe that there is anything profitable in a genealogy. Why, you can think of about 212 other things to do than to sit and listen to a sermon on a boring genealogy!

Well, I hope to dispel that thought this morning. Genealogies can be wonderful, fascinating, and interesting. And the genealogy of Jesus Christ is certainly wonderful, fascinating, and interesting.

About fifteen years ago my wife Eileen's brother Dick began working on their family tree. He was able to trace their ancestors on their mother's side to the early 1700s. We learned a lot of interesting information about Eileen's ancestors. Dick's research came in handy when our daughter Lauren had to do a family tree project when she was in the third grade.

² D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, Rev. Ed. of: *The New Bible Commentary*. 3rd Ed. / Edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL, USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Mt 1:1.

The way Lauren viewed her family tree was perhaps not as interesting as the way Linda Click's daughter viewed her family tree. One day Linda sat down with her daughter and explained with great pride that her grandfather was a preacher, her great-great grandfather was a preacher, and her great-great-great grandfather was a preacher. To which her daughter replied, "Wow! We sure come from a long line of grandfathers!"³

Matthew's purpose in writing his Gospel, and especially in chapters 1 and 2, was to establish Jesus' right to Israel's kingship.

Matthew began his Gospel with the ancestry of Jesus. He knew that one of the proofs of kingship was ancestry: people wanted proof that Jesus had a royal heritage. And that is exactly what Matthew set out to prove in this opening section.

Jewish people were properly concerned about ancestry. For example, property rights depended upon one's ancestry. God had given different parts of the Promised Land to different tribes. People could own property within the borders of their own tribe, and so it was important that they know who their ancestors were.

Vocational rights depended upon one's ancestry. Only the descendants of Levi could serve as priests. And David's descendants served as kings. Jesus, of course, was a descendant of David.

Many Jewish families maintained detailed and highly valued ancestral files. However, the official records of ancestral files were kept at the Temple in Jerusalem. Interestingly, as pastor and commentator John MacArthur points out, "It is both interesting and significant that since the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. no genealogies exist that can trace the ancestry of any Jew now living. The primary significance of that fact is that, for those Jews who still look for the Messiah, his lineage to David could never be established. Jesus Christ is the last verifiable claimant to the throne of David, and therefore to the messianic line."⁴ In other words, Jews who are still waiting for a Messiah could never prove it, since the ancestral records prior to 70 A.D. have been destroyed.

³ Linda Click, Adrian, MI. *Christian Reader*, "Kids of the Kingdom."

⁴ John MacArthur, *Matthew* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 3.

While there are four Gospel accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there are only two ancestral records, or genealogies. Only Matthew and Luke present genealogies. Peerless John Calvin notes that though they substantially agree with one another, there are four points of difference.⁵

First, the genealogies differ in *order*. Matthew's genealogy presents a *descending* order from Abraham to Jesus. Luke's genealogy presents an *ascending* order from Jesus to Adam.

Second, the genealogies differ in *starting point*. Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham. Luke begins with Adam.

Third, the genealogies differ in *lineage*. Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' ancestry through Joseph in order to show his *royal* heritage. Luke's genealogy traces Jesus' ancestry through Mary (Heli in Luke 3:23 is most likely Joseph's father-in-law and therefore Mary's father) in order to show his *physical* heritage.

And fourth, the genealogies differ in *names*. When Matthew and Luke speak of the same persons, they sometimes give them different names. In addition, they sometimes leave out direct descendants. This was commonly accepted by Jewish people. Matthew particularly does that in order to present three sets of fourteen names. He did this most likely to help with memorizing the names.

John MacArthur states that Matthew's genealogy establishes Jesus' royal lineage. He notes that "Matthew's intent is not to have the reader digress into a study of each person listed, but to show that all of these persons point to the royalty of Christ."⁶

Lesson

But we learn far more from Matthew's genealogy than merely the ancestry of the King. In the ancestry of the King we see wonderful evidences of the grace of God. Jesus was sent by the God of grace to be the King of grace. I would like to follow John MacArthur's outline to show how the grace of God can be seen in

⁵ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Galaxie Software, 2002; 2002), Lk 1:76.

⁶ John MacArthur, *Matthew* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), 4.

the ancestry of Jesus. We will examine these in logical, rather than chronological, order.

I. The Grace of God Is Seen in the Choice of One Woman (1:16)

First, the grace of God is seen in the choice of one woman.

Matthew 1:16 says, **“and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”**

God showed his grace to Mary by choosing her to be the mother of Jesus. And although Mary was descended from the royal line of David, she was an ordinary, unknown young woman.

Mary was certainly devout and faithful to God. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she was about to bear a child who would be the Son of the Most High whose kingdom would never end, she responded in obedient submission, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said” (Luke 1:38).

The Roman Catholic Church claims that Mary was free from sin from the moment of her conception.⁷ This is known as the *Immaculate Conception*. However, Mary was just as much a sinner as any other human being ever born, except for her Son, Jesus. Mary needed a Savior, as she herself expressed at the very beginning of her song of praise, often called the *Magnificat*: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in *God my Savior*” (Luke 1:46-47, emphasis added).

The Roman Catholic Church also contends that Mary is a mediator—along with Jesus—of God’s grace.⁸ However, the Bible never ever indicates that Mary is a co-mediator with Jesus of the grace of God. Indeed, rather than dispensing God’s grace, she is the recipient of God’s grace. When the angel Gabriel greeted

⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York, NY: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1994), 124.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 252-253.

Mary, he said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). The term “highly favored” indicates that she was the *recipient* of grace and not that she was the *source* of grace to others.⁹

Mary needed God’s grace and salvation because she was a sinner, just like any other human being. That is why she rejoiced in “God my Savior” (Luke 1:47).

And so the grace of God is seen in the choice of one woman.

II. The Grace of God Is Seen in the Choice of Two Men (1:1)

Second, the grace of God is seen in the choice of two men.

Matthew 1:1 says, **“A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.”**

Both David and Abraham were sinners, and yet by the grace of God they were the ancestors of Jesus Christ.

The reason for highlighting David and Abraham is because they each represented a covenant that God made with them concerning his grace. According to O. Palmer Robertson, David represented the *covenant of the kingdom* and Abraham represented the *covenant of the promise*.¹⁰

Matthew begins by noting that Jesus is **“the son of David.”** The significance of mentioning David is that God promised David an eternal kingdom. God promised that David would have a descendant who would rule as king forever. Through the prophet Nathan God said to David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). Matthew shows that Jesus is in fact a descendant from David, and is therefore the rightful and legitimate heir to the eternal kingdom.

⁹ *NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., 2003), Luke 1:28-29 footnote.

¹⁰ O. Palmer Robertson, *Covenants: God’s Way with His People* (Philadelphia, PA: Great Commission Publications, 1987).

Matthew also notes that Jesus is “**the son of Abraham.**” The significance of mentioning Abraham is that God promised Abraham that he (i.e., God himself) would be the God of all his true descendants. God said to Abraham in Genesis 17:7, “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.” Matthew shows that Jesus is Abraham’s descendant, and that the promise is fulfilled in him.

And so the grace of God is seen in the choice of two men.

III. The Grace of God Is Seen in the History of Three Eras (1:17)

Third, the grace of God is seen in the history of three eras.

Matthew 1:17 says, “**Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.**”

Matthew divides the ancestry of Jesus into three eras of fourteen generations each. As mentioned earlier, it was most likely done in order to aid in the memorization of the names listed.

However, there is perhaps another reason for dividing the ancestry of the king into three eras. Commentators have made various suggestions, but I think the great commentator, Matthew Henry, best sums up why there are three eras. He says, “In the first fourteen, we have the family of David rising, and looking forth as the morning; in the second, we have it flourishing in its meridian luster; in the third, we have it declining and growing less and less, dwindling into the family of a poor carpenter, and then Christ *shines forth* out of it, the *glory of his people Israel.*”¹¹

And so the grace of God is seen in the history of three eras.

¹¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991), Mt 1:1.

IV. The Grace of God Is Seen in the Inclusion of Four Outcasts (1:3-6)

And fourth, the grace of God is seen in the inclusion of four outcasts.

Four women (in addition to Mary) are mentioned in the ancestry of Jesus. Matthew 1:3-6 says, “Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was **Tamar**, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was **Rahab**, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was **Ruth**, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been **Uriah’s wife**.”

Why are these four women mentioned in the ancestry of Jesus? Commentators have suggested several reasons. First, they represent sinners saved by the grace of God. God’s grace is extended to both men and women. God’s grace knows no gender boundaries.

Second, they represent Gentiles saved by the grace of God. Three of them—Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth—were clearly Gentiles. Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, may also have been a Gentile as her husband as a Hittite (2 Samuel 11:3). The promise to Abraham, and fulfilled by Jesus, was that salvation was for *all* people and not just for the Jews. Matthew wants to point out that God’s grace has always been for all people, even in the days prior to Jesus’ birth.

And third, they represent women who had illicit relationships and/or bore children outside of marriage. Tamar had intercourse and children by her father-in-law, Judah (Genesis 38:1-30). Rahab was a prostitute (Joshua 2:1). Ruth, a Moabite, first married an Israelite named Mahlon (Ruth 1:4), which was a violation of Jewish Law (Deuteronomy 7:3). And Bathsheba committed adultery with David and had a child by him (2 Samuel 11:4-5). And yet, in spite of their past sins, God’s grace was extended to them.

So, the grace of God is seen in the inclusion of four outcasts.

Conclusion

The movie *A Knight's Tale* is set in medieval England. It tells the story of a young would-be knight named Ulrich.

In those days, men had to be descended from noble stock in order to become a knight. But Ulrich does not have a drop of royal blood in him. Even so, he attempts to secure his place in history by winning a famous tournament.

It is traditional for the knight's squire to introduce him at such tournaments, usually delivering a grandiose recitation of the knight's royal lineage. In one scene in the movie, Ulrich's squire is young Geoffrey Chaucer. People in the audience smile as Chaucer cranks up the hype like a modern-day puffmeister:

I cannot look upon my Lord Ulrich, for I weep to see his shining face. My Lord is a gift to your eyes, for we shall never ever see his like upon this Earth again. I would list his lineage if it served to honor him. Most men here—it's sad, but it's true—they look to their past to prove their worth; they look to the deeds of their fathers.

Now, Sir Ulrich has great ancestors, make no mistake about that. Sir Chirard von Richbach, Duke Guelph of Saxony, Van Misch IV out of Brunswick—but these great, great men pale into insignificance next to him. I do not list them to honor him. I list him to honor them!

That was all hype, of course, but that last line captures the essence of Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17. Jesus Christ “has great ancestors—make no mistake about that! But these great men (and women) pale into insignificance next to him. I do not list them to honor him. I list him to honor them!”¹²

The reason we spend time talking about the ancestors of Jesus is because of the grace of God that is extended to them—and us!—through Jesus, the one to whom all honor alone is due. Amen.

¹² *A Knight's Tale* (Columbia Pictures, 2001), directed by Brian Helgeland.

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*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAYER:

Our Father, we thank you today for the grace that is seen in the ancestry of the King.

We thank you for the grace of God seen in one woman, two men, three eras, and four outcasts. What a marvelous tribute to your grace!

Father, if there is anyone here today who is not yet a recipient of your grace, will you please grant that person your grace. We know that your grace is undeserved. We know that your grace is unmerited. And we know that you grant your grace to all who cry out to you for mercy and forgiveness. And so, Lord, please extend your grace to each sinner who asks you for forgiveness and mercy.

And all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Give thanks to God for his grace seen in so many different ways in his word. And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.