

# MATTHEW

1

## Matthew 1:1–17

---

**1:1–6** *<sup>1</sup>This is the list of ancestors of Jesus Christ, descendant of David and Abraham. <sup>2</sup>Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. <sup>3</sup>Judah and Tamar were the father and mother of Perez and Zerah. Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, <sup>4</sup>Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon. <sup>5</sup>Salmon and Rahab were the father and mother of Boaz. Boaz and Ruth were the father and mother of Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup>Jesse the father of King David. David and Uriah's wife Bathsheba were the father and mother of Solomon.*

As Matthew began his gospel, he launched directly into a detailed recounting of the Christ's genealogy. Matthew was writing to the Jewish people of his day, so he was intent on demonstrating that Jesus was indeed their long-awaited Messiah and the rightful heir to the throne of David. The first thing he needed to do was prove that Jesus was of the house and lineage of David.

But Matthew was not content to start with David. He went all the way back to Abraham, acknowledging the Hebrew basis of his readers' heritage—that they were the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In other words, they were the children of God's covenant with Abraham. This covenant was the foundation on which all of the promises to their people were built.

*The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's home. Go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed.'* (Genesis 12:1–3)

Of the twelve sons of Jacob, the lineage proceeds through the family of Judah. Through his line, the kingdom of Israel would be established, and God's covenant would be fulfilled. "*Judah, your brothers will praise you. . . . <sup>10</sup>A scepter will never depart from Judah nor a ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes and the people obey him*" (Genesis 49:8, 10).

In Jewish tradition, only the names of men were included in genealogies. Yet interestingly, Matthew included the names of four women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. And these women weren't the honorable figures one might expect to find in such a genealogy. Tamar actually tricked Judah into having relations with her (Genesis 38:13–18), and Rahab was a prostitute. Ruth was not even a Jew; she was a Moabite. Bathsheba was the woman David seduced while he was king of Israel. So, the lineage of Jesus of Nazareth included Jews and non-Jews, people of questionable moral character, prostitutes, and kings. Nevertheless, he is the fulfillment of the prophetic promises of the eternal God, the King of kings who ascended the throne of David and reigns forever (Psalm 89:36; 132:11; Isaiah 9:6–7). In an earthly sense, he had "descended" from representatives of the very type of people he had come to save.

**1:7–10** *<sup>7</sup>Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, <sup>8</sup>Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup>Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup>Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah.*

Following Solomon, Matthew continued to show the lineage of the Messiah, with twelve more of Jesus' ancestors. A tale of woe shadowed these kings in the Old Testament history as the kingdom forgot God and crumbled, succumbing to its enemies. Nevertheless, God had made his covenant with Abraham and renewed it with David:

*“I will give you peace with all your enemies. I, the LORD, tell you that I will make a house for you. <sup>12</sup>When the time comes for you to lie down in death with your ancestors, I will send one of your descendants, one who will come from you. I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup>He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup>I will be his Father, and he will be my Son. If he sins, I will punish him with a rod and with blows inflicted by people. <sup>15</sup>But I will never stop showing him my love as I did to Saul, whom I took out of your way. <sup>16</sup>Your royal house will remain in my presence forever. Your throne will be established forever.” <sup>17</sup>Nathan told David all these words and everything he had seen. (2 Samuel 7:11–17)*

Despite the steady decline of David's kingdom, despite the fact that the nation split in two and operated as the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah), God's Word to David was that his kingdom would be established forever. Despite both good kings and profoundly evil kings, God's promise could not be deterred from its charted course. As an heir of Abraham's covenant and the rightful heir of David's covenant, Jesus was in the lineage of David and, therefore, approved to be God's Messiah.

**1:11–16** <sup>11</sup>*Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers. They lived at the time when the people were exiled to Babylon.* <sup>12</sup>*After the exile to Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel,* <sup>13</sup>*Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor,* <sup>14</sup>*Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud,* <sup>15</sup>*Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob.* <sup>16</sup>*Jacob was the father of Joseph, who was the husband of Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called Christ.*

Judah, the southern kingdom that represented the covenant with God's chosen people (*1 Chronicles 5:2*), disintegrated and succumbed to the superior power of the surrounding nations. The Hebrew people descended into despair, seeking desperately the earlier relationship they had enjoyed with the living God (*2 Kings 24:14–17*).

With the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the capture of Jechoniah (also known as Jehoiakin), the kingdom of Judah came to an end. Jeremiah prophesied the end of Judah, portraying a bleak picture for the nation's future: "This is what the Lord says: Write this about Jehoiakin: He will be childless. He won't prosper in his lifetime. None of his descendants will succeed him as king. They won't sit on David's throne and rule Judah again" (*Jeremiah 22:30*). The throne of David has never been occupied since the time of Jechoniah's capture. The throne of David will never be occupied until Jesus Christ returns to ascend the throne as the King of kings.

The Hebrew people continued to exist for the next four hundred years only at the permission of some foreign potentate; they were always a subject people. Yet there were notable moments during this time, such as the rebellion of the Maccabees, when Israel appeared to regain some of its autonomy.

As Matthew recounted the genealogy of Jesus, he also reminded the Jewish reader of Israel's volatile history, swinging from independence to slavery to independence, and finally returning again to

subjection. Despite this history, the royal lineage continued through each generation to Joseph.

Perhaps the most significant point in this passage is found in verse sixteen. At this point there is an important change in the manner in which Matthew presented the genealogy of the Christ. In every case in verses one through fifteen, without exception, Matthew stated that the father produced the child. However, when he arrived at the person of Joseph, he avoided saying that Joseph was the father of Jesus. Rather, Joseph is presented simply as the husband of Mary, of whom the Christ was born. This seemingly minor change is more fully explained by Matthew in verses eighteen and following, because, as far as Matthew and the rest of Jesus' disciples were concerned, it was the pivotal revelation concerning the history of the Messiah.

The name *Jesus* was a common name among the Hebrew people. This name goes all the way back to Joshua, the successor of Moses who led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. Later, this name developed into the name *Jeshua*. The name means "Jehovah saves." But even this common name was further defined by Matthew. This particular *Jesus* was also called the *Christ*, that is, the *Messiah*, God's Anointed One.

***1:17 So there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 generations from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations from the exile until the Messiah.***

We do not know why Matthew chose to divide his genealogy of the Christ into these three time periods. The Jewish people loved the working of numbers and interpreted many events of their history using a mathematical equation that served to confirm the Lord God's continued support of his chosen people. However, the significance of this numerology was lost to succeeding generations. Nevertheless, the divisions follow the formation of the Hebrew nation from its birth to its zenith as the most dominant nation of its time. The second time period follows that brief, bright moment of their history to their

downfall at the hands of the Babylonians. The final period of Christ's genealogy is unremarkable, the nation never regaining its previous prominence. It was still a subject nation serving its more powerful enemies; this time, it was in the grasp of the Roman empire. It is easy to see why much of the nation of Judah searched desperately among its ranks for signs of the promised king who would save the nation and restore it to a position of power and prestige among the other nations of the known world. They searched their Scriptures for the promise of the Anointed One of God.

### Notes/Applications

The apostle Matthew bridged the gap between the Old and New Testaments by tracing Jesus' genealogy from Abraham through David to Joseph. In so doing, he pointed to Christ's genealogy as evidence of Christ's identity as the fulfillment of God's prophecies.

Other biblical writers also trusted in God's promised. As Old Testament writers saw their world unraveling generation by generation, it must have been difficult to maintain faith in the God who promised an eternal kingdom to David. To maintain their perspective, they repeatedly returned to the promise and, thereby, found encouragement and strength to endure their present trials. Psalm 132:11 states, "The LORD swore an oath to David. This is a truth he will not take back: 'I will set one of your own descendants on your throne.'" Additionally, as the southern kingdom of Judah faced the overpowering armies of Nebuchadnezzar about 140 years after the northern kingdom fell to Assyria, Jeremiah wrote,

*'The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will grow a righteous branch for David. He will be a king who will rule wisely. He will do what is fair and right in the land. 'In his lifetime, Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. This is the name that he will be given: The LORD Our Righteousness.'*  
(Jeremiah 23:5–6)

Later in the New Testament, Luke employed the same strategy as he wrote his gospel, making the claim that the Old Testament Scriptures testified to the fact that Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of David. He also confirmed this conviction as he wrote the book of Acts, recording for all of history the life of the early church and the work of the apostles. In his gospel, Luke wrote:

*The angel told her, 'Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>You will become pregnant, give birth to a son, and name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be a great man and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>Your son will be king of Jacob's people forever, and his kingdom will never end.'* (Luke 1:30–33)

Later in the first chapter, Luke wrote, “He has raised up a mighty Savior for us in the family of his servant David” (Luke 1:69).

We see that God kept his promise to David, thereby keeping his promise to all believers so that we, too, could know Jesus Christ as God's Anointed One, the King of kings.