

Lesson 1: King Of Promise, King Of Grace Matthew 1:1-17

Memory Verse: "...you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21b).

Text: ¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: ² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. ⁴ Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵ Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her *who had been the wife* of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. ⁸ Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. ¹² And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴ Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶ And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon *are* fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ *are* fourteen generations.

Monday

“What do you think when you hear the word cherub?”

I asked my wife that question as I was preparing to write this study. Laughing, she immediately said, “Fat babies with wings. You know Emma (our adorable two year old daughter) with wings.”

That is, unfortunately, the common contemporary American view of cherubs, and that’s exactly what made my wife laugh. It’s the kind of thinking you get when your theology is influenced more by Hallmark Cards than the Bible. Much to my wife’s amusement, I said in a sermon once that “We’d do a whole lot better to think about angels as F-16s rather than thinking about fat babies.”

In 2nd century Rome, however, there were no Hallmark cards, Precious Moments or pictures of fat baby angels. And when someone used the word “cherub” it immediately conjured up fearful images of fiery beings, dangerous flashing swords, thundering barely contained glory and movement like lightning blazing furiously across the night sky. In other words, they thought about the biblical images of the cherubim.

When the church of the 2nd century described the Gospels as “cherubic,” they didn’t mean that they were “cute,” “safe,” “feel good” documents that were sanitized down to something we could easily understand, make light of, or even control. No, they were referring to the mighty angels described in Ezekiel chapter 1, whose appearance was like “burnished bronze” and “coals of fire” with eyes everywhere, going in power wherever the Spirit wanted them to go, whose wings were like the “tumult of an army.” Even more specifically, they saw in the Gospel the four faces of the visions of Cherubim in Ezekiel and Revelation. Matthew was associated with the lion; Mark with the ox, or calf; Luke with the man; and John with the eagle. To them, this meant that Matthew revealed Christ as the Jewish Messiah, the Coming King, who was the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Mark revealed Christ as the servant, symbolized by the beast of burden. Luke shows Him as the Son of Man, the perfect man, laying hold of our humanity and giving Himself for our redemption; John displays Christ as the Son of God, symbolized by the majestic soaring eagle. The Gospels, then, reflect a mighty fourfold glory of Christ, even as the cherubim before the throne of God reflect His glory. Jesus is King and Servant, Man and God.

Many contemporary commentators pick up on this idea, though they naturally shy away from the word “cherubic.” For instance, MacArthur writes in the introduction to his commentary, “In presenting the sovereignty of Jesus, Matthew begins his gospel with the genealogy of the Lord – going back to Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people, through King David, Israel’s model king. In presenting Jesus’ servanthood, Mark gives no genealogy at all, because a servant’s lineage is irrelevant. In presenting Jesus as the Son of Man, Luke traces His genealogy back to the first man, Adam. In presenting Jesus as the divine Son of God, John gives no human genealogy or birth and childhood narratives. He opens his gospel by giving, as it were, Jesus’ divine genealogy: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1).”¹

There is much validity to this ancient idea. As I said in the introduction, the purpose of the Gospel according to Matthew is to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth is our Sovereign Ruler, the promised Messiah, the Son of David who died for our sin and is destined to sit on the throne of the coming kingdom. He is the One to whom we all owe our undivided loyalty, the King who is Immanuel, God with us. We cannot pass over the emphasis in this Gospel on the Kingship of Christ. All of the parables except three refer to “the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew has no fewer than thirty-one passages specific to his gospel that deal with the subject of the King and the Kingdom. He clearly sets forth the Lord Jesus Christ as Yahweh’s Divine Promised King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to whom belongs “the scepter” of power and authority and the “obedience of the people” (Gen. 49:10).

In Psalm 2, God declares, “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord said to me, You are My Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of Me, and I will

¹ MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Matthew 1-7*. Chicago: Moody, 1985, pp. xi-xii. See also, Griffith-Thomas, W. H. *Outline Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961, p. 14.

give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.” Psalm 24 calls this coming one the “King of glory” and “the Lord of hosts.” Psalm 45 says of Him, “Your throne oh God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom,” and states that we are to “worship Him.” Psalm 72 says of the great coming King that “all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him,” that he will “deliver the needy,” “will save their souls” and that “His name shall endure forever.” Matthew announces His arrival, reveals His stunning authority and royal majesty, and predicts His coming again to rule and reign.

Whether you recognize His royal authority today or not, the Lord tells us plainly, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18), and there is coming a day when “every knee” will bow and “every tongue” confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:10-11). Far better, I think, to bend the knee now and to embrace His majesty with love and devotion, than to live as a rebel and be forced to do so later. You will never find a more compassionate, beautiful or powerful sovereign. He has already poured out His life’s blood that we might come to Him in peace. He has been the lamb of God on our behalf, and one day He will be the Lion of Judah, either in your defense or as your enemy.

So I invite you to journey with me as we begin this marvelous record of the life of Christ, and I invite you to worship with me as we make our way. Let us bend our knees today. Let us embrace the King of kings as our own personal Sovereign. Let us lay before Him undivided hearts of passionate loyalty. Let us love Him.

We will begin looking at verse one tomorrow. Spend some time in prayer write now. Ask God to open your eyes in this study to the matchless glory of Christ. Write your prayer for this study on the lines provided, and starting tomorrow, let us begin looking together at the majesty of The Lion.

Tuesday

All of us admire faithfulness. Even if we find it to be lacking in our personal lives, we have, I think, an inherent respect for loyalty and promise keeping. It is an ideal that we appreciate and admire and that we hope for in our own friends, family and acquaintances. As I am writing this, my parents are approaching their fiftieth wedding anniversary. I’m proud of that for their sakes. They had a lot of difficult years. There were a lot of problems in our home as we were growing up, but my parents persevered. Not once, did I ever hear the “D” word mentioned. It was never an option. There was never an expectation that my parents would do anything other than work things out. You see, they made promises. They took vows before God, and that meant something.

When I was practicing law, I was constantly having to talk to someone about divorce, at least once a week. Except cases where there was clear cause for divorce (a rarity), I would gather the facts and then begin to turn the conversation around on the client after the initial vent was finished. “What about your promises, your wedding vows?” I would ask. That was when their eyes would hit the floor. “You don’t understand,” was the typical response. “I don’t understand about problems in marriage?” I’d say. “You’re dead wrong. But even if I didn’t, that’s not the issue. The issue here is not your spouse, the issue is you. You are at fault as well. You haven’t been the person you should be either. The real issue is you, your relationship with God and your responsibilities before Him. You made promises to God and while that may not seem like a big deal to you, it’s a very big deal to Him and to your children.”

The conversation usually went one of two directions at that point. Contrition or tears could hit, and the client might end up listening. I would be able to steer the person into counseling. (This was, thankfully, a common response. I had no interest in running a divorce mill out of my office). Otherwise, the client might bow up and become defensive. One client, I remember, got all red-faced and told me, “I didn’t come here for a sermon.” My response was immediate, “You’re welcome to leave any time you want. I want your case like I want a migraine. But as long as you’re in my office, I’m going to tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear.” The guy left and told our conversation all over the community. It had the opposite effect he intended. My consultations increased significantly. The other attorneys heard it, laughed, and began routinely asking advice on how to confront their own annoying divorce clients. Why? Because we all knew that their “differences,” weren’t truly “irreconcilable;” and we were just flat sick at heart over the continual parade of victimized children and godless, selfish, even mercenary unfaithfulness.

People admire loyalty and faithfulness. We long to see it in action. We like to hear stories about it. The media likes to glorify unfaithfulness, to put it on big screens and fill our minds with those ideas. But unfaithfulness, in real life, is extremely ugly, destructive and ultimately dissatisfying. And no matter what spin Hollywood tries to put on it, we have an innate understanding about this. This comes from God. And praise God, He is wonderfully faithful.

Matthew 1:1-17 speaks of God’s glorious grace and faithfulness. He is the God who keeps His promises. Indeed, all the genealogies of Scripture speak volumes about the promise-keeping faithfulness of God, this one certainly no less than the others. They are written for our joy and encouragement, and there are four basic lessons about the coming of the Lord Jesus that I want to bring to your attention this week from our text. I believe that if we grab hold of them, they will help us to worship and open our hearts to Him in faith and prayer. The first lesson is this:

1. The Lord Jesus came to fulfill the promise of God (v. 1). That is, the Lord came because God is faithful. Verse one says that Jesus, the Messiah (that’s what Christ means) is the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

This opening statement is absolutely filled with meaning for those familiar with the Old

Testament. When mankind originally sinned and rebelled against God, rejecting His authority and His rule over our lives, putting self in the place of God, we broke our fellowship with Him, brought down His judgment, curse and the penalty of death and separation from Him. But God, in His mercy and love made a promise to Eve in the garden that one day there would be born a seed, a son, who would make reconciliation between God and man. He would do so by crushing the head of Satan, humanity's new master, even as He, Himself, received a mortal wound (Gen. 3:15).

In the first eleven chapters of Genesis, we see the desperate need of men and women for the coming of the promised Seed. Then, God came to Abraham out of all the people on earth and entered into a covenant with him. Abraham is told that one of his descendants will be the promised seed, singular, an individual, through whom all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. We learn later in Genesis that this seed will be a blessed and glorious King. From Abraham sprang the nation of Israel, and out of Israel came Christ.

In the time of Jacob, God revealed that the seed, the promised Messiah, would come through the tribe of Judah. And then when David was born, God anointed Him king over the nation of Israel through the prophet Samuel. God came to David and entered into a covenant with Him, promising that from His line the Messiah would come, saying, "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-13). The Jews rightly understood this as a reference not to Solomon, but to the Messiah, the promised Seed of Abraham who would crush the head of Satan and make a way of reconciliation between man and God. He would have dominion and an everlasting kingdom.

At the time of the Lord's birth, the faithful were waiting for the Christ, the Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25), the promised Seed. So when Matthew opens his Gospel record with the words, "Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," he is telling us that this Jesus in the One about whom all of the promises were made. He is the blessed hope of the nations. He is the King that was to come and make atonement for our sins that we might come to God in peace. In Him is true hope for all the nations, for all people, for every one of us.

The verse tells us that God is faithful to His promises. He will make good on every word that He has ever spoken. Though the promise may seem long in coming and the fulfillment seem improbable or even impossible, God is faithful. He has always proven Himself faithful.

What are some promises of God you can think of off the top of your head? _____

What promises have you seen God fulfill in your own life? _____

Do you believe that God will be faithful to His word? _____ If yes, are you willing to give over your worry and rest in His word? If no, what is hindering faith in your heart? _____

Spend some time in prayer right now, either celebrating and praising God for His faithfulness or laying your struggles before Him, or both, as you have need.

Wednesday

There is, when we come to the genealogies of Scripture, a tendency to skim or even skip them completely. I know that I've done that a fair number of times as I've sought to read the Bible through once each year. The problem, though, is that there is a wealth of helpful and refreshing truth contained within the genealogies. Each one of them tells a different story. You see, the genealogies of Scripture are in general what we call "selected genealogies" rather than exhaustive genealogies. The Biblical authors, in keeping with the accepted conventions of their day, selected which ancestor's to include and leave out according to the message they were trying to convey in the genealogy.

For instance, we understand from the books of Joshua, Judges and Ruth that Matthew skips over approximately 300 years between Salmon and Boaz in verse 5. In verse 8, Matthew skips over three names between Joram and Uzziah, specifically Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, who were the intervening ancestors and kings as we know from 2 Kings and Chronicles. This practice does not in any way impact the truthfulness or accuracy of the genealogy for two very specific reasons: 1) The Greek term Matthew uses, translated "begot", is γεννάω (gennaō), which does not imply an immediate father-son relationship, but was used to mean, "was the ancestor of" or "became the progenitor of"; and, 2) Every one of the original readers knew exactly what Matthew was doing. They knew he was writing in accordance with the accepted convention of his day. The earliest Jewish Christians were intimately familiar with the Messianic line and the Old Testament history and many of them had the genealogy committed to memory. (When they memorized Scriptures they would memorize the genealogies before John 3:16. Think about that). There was, therefore, no danger of the readers being misled or misunderstanding Matthew's purpose. The danger of misunderstanding only comes at the point of translation into English and from a lack of knowledge regarding the Old Testament.

But all of this begs the question, "What then is the Holy Spirit seeking to communicate to us with this particular selected genealogy?" The answer brings us to the next three lessons from this text about the coming of the Lord Jesus. The first lesson was that the Lord Jesus came to fulfill the promise of God. The second lesson is this:

2) The Lord Jesus came as the recognized King (vv. 2-16). He came as the recognized King of Israel and consequently of all nations. Matthew presents for us the line of royal succession for the nation of Israel from David through Joseph to Jesus. It is the line of the crown that went through David's son Solomon and ends at the Lord, the adopted and acknowledged son of Joseph.

Now if you're paying attention, you'll notice that the genealogy presented here is different from the one presented in Luke's Gospel. Luke presents an ascending line starting from the Lord Jesus and going back through David's son Nathan, to David and then to Abraham and Adam. There are two immediately possible ways to understand the difference between Matthew and Luke. The first and most generally accepted by contemporary Biblical Scholars is that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, and that Luke gives the genealogy of Mary, but simply inserts Joseph's name instead of hers, because it was not customary for a woman's name to ever appear in a Jewish genealogy. Her husband's name would be used instead, even if it was the woman's genealogy being discussed. Thus, the Lord Jesus was both the legal heir to the throne of David through Solomon to Joseph, His legal father, and the blood heir of David through Nathan to Mary, His mother. The second way to understand the difference, the one held by most but not all of the Church Fathers, was that Luke does give Joseph's genealogy, but Matthew gives the line of succession to the throne, and that on the failure of the direct line, Joseph became the next heir. So while Luke gives the private genealogy of Joseph, Matthew gives the line of royal succession, which defaulted to Joseph. Once again the verb "begot" would not preclude this because of the extremely broad Hebrew usage of this term to include even extended family.

There are other possible explanations, but they are much too complicated to discuss here, and the simple truth is that the question won't be finally answered until heaven. But that's okay, because it doesn't really matter to Matthew's message. I think the first explanation is slightly more preferable for linguistic reasons, but whichever way you view it, the point is that the Lord Jesus was the next in the ancient line of kings, the heir to David's throne. That's what Matthew is concerned about.

For the Jewish people, identification of their tribe and line of descent were all important. Genealogies determined the right to one's land, the right to enter into the temple for worship, and for Levites, the right to serve as a priest. We learn from Josephus, the 1st century historian, that in New Testament days, Jewish families kept detailed and highly valuable records of their ancestry. The official records for descent were kept in the temple and updated each time a new child was presented. Travelers to and from the diaspora were solemnly charged with bringing records of births and these were painstakingly recorded in the temple. When records became old, scribes were responsible for making meticulous copies. For some, this was their sole duty in life.

However, in A.D. 70, when the Roman general Titus burned and cast down the temple at the end of the second Jewish war, all of the genealogical records of the Hebrew nation were utterly destroyed. No genealogies exist today that can trace the ancestry of any Jew now living back to their original tribe and family. The significance of that for you and I and for any Jew living, who

still hopes for the Messiah, is that the Lord Jesus is the very last verifiable claimant to the throne of David and to the Messianic line. No one since could ever hope to validate such a claim. Do you think that's accidental? If Jesus came as the recognized King of the nations, Does He have royal glory in your own heart? _____ Why or why not? _____

What should you do today to show that the Lord Jesus is the recognized King of your life? _____

Thursday

We have seen two lessons concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus in the first verses of Matthew so far this week. The first is that the Lord Jesus came to fulfill the promise of God. The second is that the Lord Jesus came as the recognized King. There is a third lesson:

3. The Lord Jesus came to manifest the grace of God (vv. 2-16). The most prominent feature of Matthew's genealogy of the Lord is in showing the line of royal succession. The second most prominent feature is the inclusion of four women. It was extremely unusual for a woman's name to be listed in a Jewish genealogy or for any reference to a woman to be made at all. Yet, Matthew does this, and he not only does it, but he decides to refer to the women, who were the most notorious. They were not the morally upstanding Sarahs, Rebekahs and Leahs, but Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. Further, three of them were Gentiles and Bathsheba would have been considered as a Gentile by her marriage to Uriah the Hittite.

Why does Matthew do this extraordinary thing? The reason is simply this. All four of these woman were loved by God, forgiven and received into the community of grace. Beyond that, God gave them the exalted privilege of being in the royal line leading to the Messiah, specifically to show that the coming King would be a King of grace.

The first woman mentioned is in verse 3, Tamar. Tamar's story is told in Gen. 38:6-30. She was a Canaanite woman, who was successively married to Judah's sons Er and Onan, whom the Lord killed for their wickedness. She was then promised to the third son Shelah. When Judah failed to keep his promise and marry her to Shelah, Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute, and seduced her father-in-law, while he was traveling. Afterwards, she gave birth to twins Perez and Zerah, and was able to raise up an inheritance for her dead husbands. Despite prostitution and incest, God's grace fell on her, and Tamar was included in the line of the Messiah. Her story shows us that the grace of God and the message of the Gospel is for sinners. God's grace is for sinners.

The second woman mentioned is in verse 5, Rahab the harlot. Rahab was an inhabitant of doomed Jericho. However, she hid and protected the two spies sent by Joshua to spy out the city. She did so because of her new found faith in God (Josh. 2:1-20; 6:22-25; Heb. 11:31). This

faith, itself, was a gift of God's grace (Phil. 1:29), and her story shows that God's grace reaches even to the worst and lowest of sinners on the basis of faith. The gospel of grace comes to sinners on the basis of faith.

The third woman mentioned is Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite woman. She was excluded from the kingdom of Israel and God's covenant community by her birth into the Moabite people. Deuteronomy 23:3 says of the Moabites that they were forbidden from entering into the assembly of the Lord to the tenth generation. Ruth was, as far as the typical Jew was concerned, a permanent outcast, that is until the Lord gave her a new identity and a new family relationship through the provision of a Kinsman-Redeemer, Boaz. An entire book of the Old Testament is devoted to her story. Boaz, of course, is presented by the Spirit as a type of Christ, who is the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer. He became our kinsman in the incarnation and has the power to redeem us by virtue of His position in the heavenly kingdom. Ruth represents all of us, who are born as sinners and cut off from the assembly of the Lord. She was brought into the royal line by grace, and the lesson of her life is that the grace of God gives a new identity, a new family relationship.

The fourth woman mentioned is the "wife of Uriah," Bathsheba, in verse 6. Bathsheba committed adultery with King David (2 Sam. 11); and while he was the instigator, she was a completely willing partner. Bathsheba, even though she was a member of the covenant community, along with David, committed a gross sin, betrayed her husband, Uriah, who had become a mighty man before God, and most importantly she betrayed God, Himself. And yet, God did not forsake her, but in order to comfort her after the death of her child conceived in the adulterous affair, he gave her another son, Solomon. Further, in His marvelous grace, God blessed Solomon, choosing him for the royal line and including Bathsheba as a mother in the line of the Messiah. Her life teaches us that the grace of God, makes us a part of the family of God forever. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful" (2 Tim. 2:13).

So in the lives of these four women included in the genealogy, we see the wondrous truth that God's grace extends to sinners on the basis of faith, giving them a new identity and family relationship, which is forever. **Grace is for sinners. Grace is given on the basis of faith. Grace gives a new identity. Grace is permanent.**

Each of these truths are taught specifically throughout Scripture, but the inclusion of these women in the genealogy of the Lord brings them to our minds in bold living color, if you will. And there are others included in the genealogy that highlight grace. Manasseh is mentioned, that terrible murderer of children, who in the end found great mercy when he repented and cried out to God with a broken heart. His name is given, even though he was more wicked than three preceding kings whose names have been dropped. Jeconiah is mentioned. He was cursed by God in Jeremiah 22:30 and went childless into shame and exile because of his sin. But then in captivity, he was released and restored and became the father of many (2 Kings 25; 1 Chron. 3; Jer. 52), a cursed man who got a new start, a new birth, a new beginning. Dead at the end of the second list in the genealogy, given a new birth and beginning at the head of the third list.

Zerubbabel is mentioned, the man that God calls the signant ring on His hand because of his faith, which resulted in a beautiful, unwavering obedience. Grace, Grace, Grace. Jesus is a King of grace.

Have you seen yourself as a sinner? Have you seen in yourself a Ruth, cursed and cut off from the people of God in desperate need of a new identity? _____

Have you been broken over the past? Have you forsaken sin and in faith turned to the one true and living God as Rahab did? _____

Having been broken, having believed and received a new identity are you resting in the permanence of God's grace, not as an opportunity for further sin (Rom. 6:1-2), but as a source of great consolation and joy? _____

Do you rejoice in the grace of Christ? Why? _____

Will you tell someone today? Spend some time in prayer. Ask God for an opportunity. Spend some time praising God for His grace.

Friday

So far this week. We have seen that the Lord Jesus came to fulfill the promise of God, as the recognized King, and to manifest the grace of God. There is one final lesson I'd like to point out from verse 17:

4. The Lord Jesus came to display the perfection of God (v. 17). Verse 17 says, "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations."

This verse sometimes presents some special problems for some people. First off, the word "all" can cause confusion, because Matthew plainly leaves out multiple generations and then repeats Jeconiah twice, once at the end of the second fourteen and again at the beginning of the last fourteen. The answer to the confusion, however, is very simple. As one commentator puts it, "...as always, so also here, the word *all* must be interpreted in the light of its context; hence, the meaning is: all the generations covered in this record of ancestry."²

² Hendricksen, William. *The Gospel of Matthew, in New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973, p. 129.

I've never read a commentator, not even a liberal one, who didn't give this same explanation. As a student of Scripture, you should remember that "all" like "everyone," "everything" and "whole," is one of those special words that often means "all" of a particular subset or group. For instance, if I'm leading a committee meeting and you walk in last and hear me say, "All the people are here," or "everyone is here," do I mean that "all the people" in the world are there, or even "all the people in the church" are present. Of course not. I simply mean, "All the people" of that particular group are there, or maybe even the smaller set of "all the people I expect." Or if my office burns down and somebody asks, "What happened to your books," and I say "They're all gone." Do I mean all the books I own, or all the books that were in my office? The answer's obviously the second. The point is, we speak this way "all the time" (pun intended), and Scripture also speaks in the way that is common to man. It is completely disingenuous and contrived for a person to criticize and reject Scripture or cry, "Look, here is an error, right here in Matthew 1:17!" simply because Matthew was speaking in the common vernacular and usage of his day. And yes, it was very common for a Jewish writer in the first century to say, "So all the generations ..." and be referring to the generations recorded in the specific table referenced.

But I don't want to get bogged down. Just understand that for all the attacks people level at Scripture, in verses like this, the answer is usually found in the original language, and it is usually quite simple and sitting right in front of your face.

What then, is the significance of the numbers? Hebrew and Greek, unlike English, are languages that use the letters of the alphabet as the written characters for numbers as well. The characters do double duty. The name David, for instance, when you add the letters together, adds up to fourteen. The number three in Scripture is the number of God. Four, was used symbolically to refer to "fullness" as in the fullness of the earth or the heavens (e.g. Jer. 49:36; Dan. 8:8; 11:4; Zech. 2:6; Mark 13:27; Rev. 7:1). Now, if you take three and four together, their sum, seven, when used figuratively, conveys these meanings emphatically. Special meaning was attached to the number seven by the Jews and also, you might be surprised to discover, by Semitic cultures generally, the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and even the Germans. It is the number of perfection. Hence the statement about, for example, the "seven Spirits of God" in Revelation 3:1 or the "sevenfold Spirit of God" is not a literal statement about numbers, but about God's perfection.

The Jews were very attuned to the symbolic use of numbers because of their language. And Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, selects this genealogy and puts it together in three fourteens, not just for memory purposes, but to say something very specific about the Lord Jesus. He is making a statement about Christ.

Three times fourteen, equals six sevens. The birth of Christ, referred to in verse sixteen, – Matthew very carefully words verse 16 to indicate a virgin birth, which he will specifically discuss beginning in verse 18 – introduces the seventh seven, which is a very emphatic statement about the absolute perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, God with us.

All Jews, and very likely most Greeks, who read verse 17 would understand immediately what

Matthew was doing in his obvious overflowing love and devotion to Christ. David is fourteen. Matthew takes three fourteens, the number of God, to introduce the seventh seven, the perfect King, the perfect Son of David, who is God with us (v. 23). This is an unashamed, bold, and unequivocal statement of the Apostle about the absolute perfection of Jesus Christ, his God and King. Verse 17 is a statement of sheer adoration from a man who walked three years on this earth with the Lord, witnessed His resurrection and would later die for Him.

Do you, beloved, find in your own hearts this same kind of overflowing adoration for Christ? Is He for you the pinnacle of perfection, beauty and glory? Why or why not? _____

If Christ is the absolute perfection of God for you, how should that impact your life? How should your life look? How should it be different? Is there anything that needs to change today?

For the next 28 chapters, Matthew is going to simply burst forth in praise after praise after praise of the Lord Jesus. He will do everything in his power to put on display the perfection of glory in Jesus Christ. Are you ready for that? Does it ring in your heart? Are you ready to enter into the praise of this radically transformed apostle? Spend some time in prayer. Ask God to show you His perfection in Jesus. May it transform your life and your soul. May it sink down to the very depths of your being and leave you rejoicing and shaken. Let this word be a sword that pierces your heart.