



### **WHAT KIND OF KING?**

Over Advent this year, we're going to be looking at a certain family tree (hence the above nod to *Who Do You Think You Are*).

Why? What have you done to deserve such treatment? Well, this is no ordinary family tree. It belongs to the most important person ever, and it says something about Him, about us, and about His mission – and ours.

Without further ado, let's turn to ...

#### **Matthew 1:1-17**

If you were writing Jesus' life story, how would you begin? You'd go for something gripping or exciting, right? Like Joseph discovering that Mary is pregnant (and he's not the dad), or Joseph desperately searching for a place for Mary to drop her sprog. All pretty dramatic stuff.

So why on earth does Matthew begin with a list? In many cultures, such lists can be of enormous significance, e.g.:

- There are people in China who can trace their ancestry back to Confucius, 2500 years ago. According to the Guinness Book of Records, the Confucius Genealogy, now in its 5<sup>th</sup> edition, contains over 2 million names.
- Ancestry is important in sub-Saharan Africa, too. I had a Ghanaian friend who was technically a king but was never able to fulfil the role, as the coronation involved ancestor worship, and as a Christian, he couldn't do it.

- Then there's the Hindu caste system. A person's caste is dictated by the caste their family belongs to, going back generations. There are 4 castes in all (excluding untouchables), and it impacts pretty much everything.

So, the identity of your parents and your grandparents and even your great-grandparents can say a great deal about *you*. And perhaps we can all relate to this, to some degree. Perhaps that's the reason for the popularity of TV shows like *Who Do You Think You Are*, and why so many of us are digging out old photos and going online and tracing our ancestry back through the decades.

Similarly, this family tree says something massive about Jesus – and it begins with the 2 names we find in vs1:

**1) Son of David.** Jesus is a descendant of one of the most famous Jewish kings of all time, King David, who lived around 1000 BC. God Himself made a promise that one of David's descendants would sit on his throne, for ever (1 Chronicles 17:11-14). Not only that, but He would eventually reign over the rest of the planet, as well.

So, for 1000 years Israel waited for this King – the Messiah or 'Anointed One' in Hebrew. And what Matthew is saying is: "He's here! Jesus is it!" That's why Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of King David – not because Caesar Augustus decreed it, but because *God* did! And why Jesus was worshipped by both Jewish shepherds *and* Gentile wise men. Basically, He's the King of the world. But -

To be a part of His Kingdom, we have to allow Him to be another kind of king: King of our lives. We have to allow Him to take His rightful place, and dwell in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17). And that means we have to vacate that throne, and hand it over to Him. We have to allow His Kingdom to be a part of us. Now.

So, Jesus is Son of David: born to *rule* the world.

But He's also:

**2) Son of Abraham.** Jesus was also a descendant of a Middle Eastern chieftain called Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, who lived around 2000 BC. God promised Abraham that through his offspring all the nations, all the families of the earth, would be blessed (Genesis 22:15-17). And that promise was passed on to Abraham's son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob, Jacob's son Judah, etc.

What kind of blessing is God talking here? Love? Joy? Peace? Hope? All of the above! But first-and-foremost, He's talking reconciliation – the healing of our relationship with Him. Because the world is a screwed-up place, full of screwed-up people, we've all sinned against God, and we all need Someone to make things right again, between us and God, us and each other, us and our world.

Who is that Someone? That 'offspring of Abraham'? It's that same name again – the one at the end of this list. In Jesus, God came to reconcile us to

Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), and He did it by being born in a stable and 30 years later dying on a cross and rising from the dead.

Because Jesus is also Son of Abraham: born to *reconcile* the world.

### **Adding It Up ...**

Now some people will say, "I don't need Jesus." Because we like to think we're 1) ok, and 2) in charge. But Matthew's response is, "You need Jesus more than you realise."

And he says it using numbers.

This may seem a bit strange to us, but in Hebrew thought, numbers have associations we don't necessarily think of today, e.g. 1 = unity; 2 = division; 3 = deity; 4 = the natural world; 5 = a handful; 6 = humanity; 7 = perfection; 8 = new beginnings; 9 = rebellion; 10 = totality; 11 = transition; 12 = God's people.

Now if you count the number of names in Jesus' family tree, you'll notice something interesting:

- Abraham to David: 14 names.
- Solomon to Jeconiah (listed twice): 14 names.
- Jeconiah to Jesus: 14 names.

In total, 42 names, 42 generations. Why 42? Because  $6 \times 7 = 42$ . 6 = humanity, 7 = perfection, so Matthew is saying: "Jesus is the perfect human being." And that's what gives Him the right to rule the world, and the right to die for the world – because Jesus is no ordinary man. He is God with us – hence the quote from Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:23):

*"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel" – which means, "God with us."*

I.e. we might not be perfect – but *He* is. And that's why we need Him, as Saviour *and* King (and not just 'friend').

The question Matthew poses is: have we handed our lives over to Jesus? Our thoughts; our words; our actions? Our hopes; our plans; our dreams? Our personalities; our temperaments; our attitudes? And have we cried out to Him, to save us? From the things we shouldn't have done, but did? From the things we should have done, but didn't? From the things that alienate us from God?

The message here is that, in Jesus, there is the power and authority, reconciliation and blessing, we need. So, let's pray.

To the One who is Son of David. Son of Abraham.