

A Surprising Ancestry

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[0 : 0 0] This morning we begin our Advent series, and welcome to Advent, this wonderful time of the year where we are looking forward to Christmas and are thinking about food and presents and for some of us holiday plans and seeing family that maybe we haven't seen for a long time.

And in many ways, Christmas can get taken over by all these things, right? I want to encourage us, and especially those of us that are Christians, not to miss the depth and the complexity and the richness and the profundity of Christmas.

Not to get carried away by the shopping and the carols and all the other things on the side, and to miss the wonder of Jesus in this season. I have a friend who this last year wrote and published his first novel.

But before he did that, he took a writing course at university. And on this writing course, they told him, when you write a novel, if your first three sentences don't grip your reader, you're never going to get it published, and you're certain your book will never be read, right?

Somebody should have told Matthew that bit of advice. Matthew starts off the most widely read book, the most translated book in the entire world, the book that's been published and produced and sold more copies than anything else in the world, with this long list of 42 names, half of which we can't even pronounce.

[1 : 2 4] And you might think, what a way to begin a book of the Bible. What a way to begin the New Testament. And yet, hidden in these 17 verses are a couple of gems, of diamonds, that will help us understand so much of what the entire Bible, the gospel, is all about.

Why the gospel, why Christmas really is a season of good news, of great joy. And so, let's dive in. Now, Tim Keller, in his book called Hidden Christmas, he makes a very simple but important observation about the way that Matthew starts his gospel.

And he says that Matthew doesn't start his account of Jesus the way most people start a story. When most people start a story, you say something like this, once upon a time, right? Or in a castle far, far away.

Or there was once a man that had 12 fingers and 12 toes. Or whatever it is, okay? And when you hear that, what do you think? You think, this is going to be an interesting story. Maybe a great adventure.

But it's probably not true. But Matthew doesn't start off in any of those ways. Matthew starts off, how does he start off with? He starts off with the facts. He says, now this is the genealogy of Jesus.

[2 : 3 0] Now, if English isn't your first language, genealogy is a big word that just means lineage, the bloodline of your descendants, your ancestors. And so Matthew starts off with the facts.

He says, this is how it began. This is the story. This is the fact of how Jesus came about. And the reason he's doing that is because Matthew's not just trying to give us a good story with a moral to observe.

Matthew's not saying, let me tell you a story and there's a good principle or for some good advice for how to make a success of your life. He's coming with an announcement. He's coming with some news.

He's saying, here's something I want you to sit up and take note of. Not just good advice. Here's some good news. And what is his good news? What is his announcement that he wants us to take note of? Well, there's at least three things in this passage that we see this morning.

The first one is this. Matthew's going to tell us that Christmas is all about the good news of God's incredible faithfulness. The good news of God's incredible faithfulness.

[3 : 27] Look at how verse 1 starts off. He goes like this. This is the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Now, remember, who's Matthew's audience here?

He's writing to, obviously, first century readers. But he's writing specifically. Hey, sorry to interrupt sentence. Sam and Jackie, welcome. It's great to have you guys.

I don't know if it's your first Sunday, but they've just had a baby, Emily. It's great to have you guys. Oh, there she is. Nika has stolen Emily already. And wonderful to have you guys back here.

Sorry about that mid-sentence. I just saw you guys. Welcome to have you back. Okay, so as we were saying, Matthew is writing to first century Jewish men and women. He's not writing to Gentiles.

He's specifically writing to those that are familiar with the Old Testament scriptures, those who had known the story. And so he's going to say a whole lot of things that aren't in detail, but to the original audience, it's like a footnote or a hyperlink.

[4 : 25] They would have known the back story behind the sentence that he throws out. And he starts off with this list. And in this list, or let me say, in ancient times, a family's lineage, a family's genealogy, their long family tree, was a very important part of one's identity.

Okay, these days we're a bit more individualistic. And so I think, you know, my grandparents, that's their life. I'm going to be my own person. But in ancient times, your family history and your family name and your family lineage spoke a lot about who you were.

It spoke to your identity. It was a statement about who you were. And in many ways, a genealogy like this was somebody's resume. You come and you apply for the job and say, so who's your father?

What's your family name? It gave you credentials. It spoke about whether you were a trustworthy person or not. Now, you don't need to raise your hand here, but a hypothetical question.

How many of us here, in applying for a job, have, you know, slightly tweaked or exaggerated our resumes in the past? Okay, you don't need to put up your hand. Thank you, Harry.

[5 : 35] Maybe you haven't been completely dishonest, but maybe some of the lesser parts that you don't want, you know, just put in size three font at the bottom as a footnote, and your better accomplishments are kind of bold.

Or you kind of put your resume in such a way that it sheds a positive light in you. Now, in the ancient culture, people did that as well. But the way that they did it, they did it with the genealogies. They would leave out certain names that were embarrassment.

They would highlight other names. In fact, King Herod, who was the king of Israel at that time, the Romans had kind of made him king, he was so embarrassed by the fact that his genealogy included Jews and non-Jews.

He was half Jew, half Edomite, that he had the official records destroyed in the temple in case anyone else kind of claimed a pure pedigree and therefore the right to the throne. And so his pedigree, his genealogy was a statement about who he was.

It was his resume, his credentials. And so Matthew starts off his gospel with Jesus like this. And he's giving Jesus credentials. You see, Jesus was, at this time, he was well-known.

[6 : 37] He had done some miracles. He had got a crowd, a gathering. People would have known about this Jesus of Nazareth. But who was he? Was he just this right-wing political leader? Was he a radical that could get a crowd going?

What were his credentials? And so Matthew writes this to say, this Jesus of Nazareth wasn't just this flash-in-the-pan kind of guy out there that could gather a crowd.

He wasn't just this strange political figure. Actually, Jesus' heritage is every bit as Jewish as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus' credentials is that he's the real deal.

Jesus has walked, in a sense, every step of the way with the nation of Israel through his lineage and through his ancestors. And so before Matthew even gets to the manger or the stable or anything about Christmas, Matthew's establishing that Jesus is a profound statement of God's faithfulness.

Okay? So he's establishing Jesus' credentials. But there's something else going on here. Because in the Old Testament book of Genesis, in the original languages, the book of Genesis isn't called Genesis.

[7 : 41] It's actually called the book of genealogies. Because there's so many lists of names in there. And so when Matthew writes and he says, this is the genealogy of Jesus, to the average Jewish person in the first century, that would have rung a bell and said, hey, that reminds me of the book of Genesis.

And what happened in the book of Genesis? Why is Matthew taking them back there? Well, a couple of things. Right in the beginning, we hear about God's creation. God made the world perfect and beautiful.

And he makes the pinnacle of creation mankind and womankind. And he makes us in his image to reflect his glory and to reflect his beauty. And then he says to mankind and womankind, I'm entrusting creation to your care for stewardship.

I want you to look after it. And so in the Garden of Eden, we encounter this place of incredible peace and justice and righteousness. Mankind looking after one another and God's creation.

The Bible word for this was shalom. A place of wholeness and well-being where there was no injustice, no hatred, nothing wrong with the world. The place of incredible peace and righteousness. But it's not long after that that we encounter the fall.

[8 : 45] Mankind, we decide to go our own way. We decide to be our own God. And we decide to say, actually, God, we don't need to follow you. We'll be our own God. And we pursue our own glory. And things start going from bad to worse.

In Genesis chapter 4, we have Cain rise up and he kills his brother Abel. There's then incest. There's fathers sleeping with their daughters-in-law. Things just go bad and worse and worse. In chapter 6, we get Noah and the flood.

And eventually, things are getting so bad that in chapter 11, the people, in fact, the urban city dwellers, the educated, sophisticated, much like us Hong Kongers, we band together and we say, let's build a tower to the skies and make a name for ourselves.

Let's build a tower that will demonstrate we are like God. We've got this thing together. And so, they build this big tower called the Tower of Babel. And that doesn't end so well. God disperses everyone and there's hatred and there's angst and there's fighting and there's misunderstanding and things just aren't going well.

And all this is because of the fall. And then after that, Genesis chapter 12, God finds a man. And he's not a particularly wealthy man or rich man. He's just an ordinary man. His name's Abraham.

[9 : 54] And God calls him and he says, Abraham, I've got to make a promise. In fact, what the Bible calls a covenant. And his promise is this, that God says, Abraham, though you're imperfect, though you're sinful and you make mistakes, by my grace and my kindness alone, I'm going to bless the whole world, all the nations through you and through your lineage.

Through you and your descendants, all the nations of the world will be blessed by me. Now, this is an extravagant promise because when God says, I'll bless you, when we think of blessing, we sometimes think prosperity and a good job and money and kids in the right school and a good house.

But when God's saying, I'll bless you, he wasn't just talking about land and resources. God, in effect, was saying, the thing that went wrong in the Garden of Eden, the fall, I'm going to reverse that.

Through you and your descendants, I'm going to start to make right everything that was wrong with the world. You see, because of the fall, the world was fractured. It wasn't completely broken, but it was fractured, like a piece of glass that's been shattered.

It wasn't all on the floor, but you couldn't see clear the world was not the way that God had intended it to be. And so God makes this incredible promise to Abraham that through Abraham and his descendants, God is going to bless the world.

[11 : 06] He's going to reverse the fall. And so in the New Testament, the apostle Paul says that God preached the gospel to Abraham, saying through you and your descendants, I'll bless the world. Through one of your lineage, I will turn around everything that's gone wrong with the world, and I'll start to make it right again.

And so Matthew starts off his gospel with this, Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham. Son of Abraham. And then Abraham dies, and he passed on the promise to his son Isaac, and Isaac passed on to Jacob, and Jacob has 12 children, and the promise gets passed on.

And throughout the Old Testament, the promise is that through you people, there's going to become one who will put right everything that's wrong with the world. And eventually his promise gets passed on, and there's high moments, and there's low moments, and there's good times and bad times.

And eventually the climax is this king. He's the first true king of Israel, and his name is David. And David is an amazing king. David, he wasn't perfect. He made some mistakes. Like Abraham, he wasn't particularly special.

He was just a shepherd boy. But God chooses him, and he becomes the greatest king that Israel have. And it's during David's rule that Israel flourishes. There's peace. There's prosperity.

[12 : 13] There's security. Things are going right. Israel is not at war that much anymore. And it's during David's rule and reign that Israel flourishes. It's during David's rule that Israel is a light to the Gentiles.

It's during David's rule that Israel most experienced the shalom and the peace that they lost in the Garden of Eden. And during David's rule, David shows incredible kindness and grace to his enemies, to people that have wronged him.

He invites them back. And so to David, God makes the same promise as he did to Abraham. He says, one of your descendants will come after you. I'll raise him up to be a king like you, and he will come from your bloodline, and I'll establish his kingdom forever.

And so in answer to the question, Matthew is answering this question, who is this Jesus guy? Is he just a radical? And Matthew answers the question and says, this Jesus Christ is the son of Abraham, the son of David.

Friends, you see what Matthew's telling us here? You see what he's saying? He's saying, this Jesus is the one that has been promised ever since the time of the beginning of the world. This Jesus, the Christ, is the promised descendant of David.

[13 : 21] He said, this Christ through whom the whole world will find their blessing. This is the Christ through whom the fractured world is being put right again. Friends, sometimes it seems like God's promises are slow and take forever to come to us.

Sometimes, imagine the people of Israel, right? God gives them his promises, and then David is king, and things are going right, and things start to deteriorate. And year after year after year, they're crying out, God, where are you?

We thought you'd promised us goodness. We thought we were your special people. And God says, I'm sending the one. And then they wait longer, and then they die, and the next generation, God, where are you?

And generation after generation has been waiting for the promise. And then after the exile, they come back, and for 400 years, God is silent.

Not a prophet, not a word, nothing. And the nation of Israel is wondering, where are you, God? Have you forgotten us? But maybe all those promises, we can't really depend on you.

[14 : 25] Friends, Matthew's telling us that at Christmastime, the story of Christmas, is that though it may take a long time, though it may seem slow, though it may seem like God has forgotten us, God delivers on his promise.

All those promises that God made thousands of years ago to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, the people of Israel, and to David, and to kingdom after kingdom after kingdom, all those promises God delivered on his word.

Tim Keller says it like this. You cannot judge God by your calendar. He may appear slow, but he never forgets his promises. He may seem to be working very slowly, even forgetting his promises.

But when his promises come true, and they will come true, they always burst the banks of what you imagined. In the book of Isaiah, there's this one instance where the king of Israel's name is Ahaz, and Jerusalem is surrounded.

The enemies are all around, and he's in deep trouble. There's a siege going on. They've got no hope. The enemy is there. If you go right, the enemy is there. If you go left, the enemy is there.

[15 : 32] And so Ahaz cries out and says, God, where are you? Have you forgotten us? And God sends him a word. He sends Isaiah the prophet. And Isaiah comes to him and says, Ahaz, God hasn't forgotten his word to you.

And so he says, God will give you a sign. And this is the sign. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. And his name will be Emmanuel, which means God is with us.

Friends, Christmas is the time when God delivers on his promise. Christmas is a profound statement of the faithfulness of God. Friends, I don't know what challenge you're going through. I don't know what difficulties you face, but the baby from Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David, promises that though it may appear slow, though there may be twists and turns, and though it may not work out exactly as you wish, when God promises not to leave you or forsake you, he delivers on his word.

This is Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David. Good news of God's great faithfulness. Okay? First thing. Second thing is this. The good news of God's incredible grace.

Now, second time for confession. Okay? How many of us, when we read the book of Matthew, and you start verse 1, the book of Jesus, son of David, son of Abraham, and then we get to the names and we skip them all and go to verse 18.

[16:53] Anyone else? Okay, a few more hands, right? I get that temptation. I've done that as well. But in this list of names, we actually discover something incredible. In fact, in this list of long names, we discover the very heart of the gospel, the whole message of what the New Testament is all about.

See, in ancient genealogies, the record of ancestors would always include the fathers, never the mothers. Okay? So it always could, you know, this man fathered this guy, then he fathered this guy, and then he fathered this guy.

And so ancient genealogies never included any mothers in the list. But Matthew includes four mothers in addition to Mary. Okay? But as we dig a little deeper, we discover there's something interesting about these mothers.

All four of these ladies are not just, it's not just unusual that they're included. That as well. Matthew, in fact, goes out of his way to include them. But there's something unusual about each one of them. Each one of these ladies is a non-Jew.

Okay? Outside of the covenant people of God. Or one of them may have been Jewish, but married a non-Jew. But something even more than that, all four of these ladies have some scandalous story involved in their lives or their marriage or sexual relationships that make them ashamed to their family.

[18:06] Some reason why you wouldn't want them in your family tree. Some reason why you'd want to, you know, put them in front three in the bottom of your resume. Right? And yet Matthew goes out of his way to include them.

Let's look at them. Let's look at verse three. Now, just by the way, the ladies aren't the only scandalous one in the list. Okay? The men are pretty dodgy themselves as well. But that was to be expected.

But the ladies, it wasn't expected. And so let's pick up on it. Look at verse three. Matthew says this. Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar. Now, Matthew's writing to this Jewish audience.

And the average Jewish man or woman, these words would be absolutely shocking. Because the story behind this is this. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob has 12 sons. The fourth one is Judah.

And Judah's the one chosen by God through which the Messiah is going to come. And now Judah has three boys. The first one is called Ur. Ur marries this lady called Tamar.

[19:02] And then Ur dies. And so Tamar, who is a non-Jew, she's a Canaanite, she dies. Her husband dies and leaves her widow but also childless.

And so she's got no one to look after her in her old age. She's got no one to continue the family line. And so she thinks, I need a son. I need a child. But there's no one around to marry her.

And one day, her father-in-law, Judah, passes the village where she lives and goes on to the next village. And she hears that Judah passes by. Now Judah, as her father-in-law, should have taken responsibility for her.

He should have brought into the family and taken care of her. But he doesn't. So Judah doesn't behave that very justly either. But Tamar, this Canaanite, dresses up as a prostitute and waits on the side of the road for Judah to come by.

And Judah comes back. And she's got a veil so he doesn't know who she is. And she seduces him to sleep with her. And Tamar then falls pregnant with these two twins. And so here is Tamar, who falls pregnant by seducing her father-in-law, pretending to be a prostitute.

[20 : 08] And through this family line comes the Messiah. Now Matthew could have just written and said, you know, Judah was the father of Perez. And Perez was the father of Hezron. And just kind of like skipped over the whole incident.

But he doesn't. Look what he says. He says, Judah fathered Perez by Tamar, his daughter-in-law. And he's telling us something here. He's bringing attention to the fact that Tamar is involved in Jesus' lineage.

And then look at verse 5. It says, Matthew tells us Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab. Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth. And Obed was the grandfather of David. Here we have two more women, Rahab and Ruth.

Now Rahab was also a Canaanite. She lived from Jericho. She was also a prostitute. Remember, she was called Rahab the harlot. That was her name. And Ruth, we know, was a Moabite. She wasn't a Jewish lady.

And the Moabites were the enemies of God's people. They worshipped Chimesh, the child sacrificing God. And so here you have two more non-Jewish people that are brought into God's family tree, the lineage of Jesus.

[21 : 10] But then there's one more. Look at verse 6b. It says, and David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah. Now here Matthew doesn't even name her. Who's the wife of Uriah?

Can you remember? Bathsheba, right? Okay, so if you need a church, the story is this. King David, the greatest king that Israel ever had. He was great, but he wasn't perfect.

One day he's kind of established his kingdom. He's the king of Israel. Things are going well. There's peace in Israel. There's a little bit of war on the borders. And so he sends his army to the border to go and deal with that skirmish.

But he's at home. And he's walking on the rooftop of his palace. And he sees down below, on the roof of one of the houses down there, there's this young lady taking a bath. And she looks really beautiful.

And so he thinks, I want her. And so he sends a messenger and says, hey, who lives in that house down there, just by the way? And they say, oh, that's Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. Now David knows Uriah.

[22 : 08] He's in the front lines of the army. And so he calls Bathsheba, summons her to his palace. And being king, he gets what he wants, right? A few weeks later, months later, Bathsheba sends a message to the palace saying, pass this on to David.

And the message says, I'm pregnant with your child. And so David quickly comes up with a plan. He says, hey, bring Uriah back from the front lines. And he says, Uriah, you've been fighting very hard.

Why don't you go to a date night with your wife? Take her out for a nice meal and spend the evening with her. And he's hoping that then he will sleep with his wife. And then when she's pregnant, everyone will say, oh, it's Uriah's son, right?

But Uriah says, hey, I can't go and spend the night with my wife when all my men are camping out in the field. I'm more honorable than that. And so he sleeps outside of his house and he doesn't go to his wife Bathsheba.

And so David says, oh, this plan hasn't worked very well. And so David sends a message back with Uriah to the general saying, make sure that Uriah gets killed in battle. And so Uriah goes into battle.

[23 : 09] All his friends retreat, leave him on the front, and he dies in battle. And David then marries Bathsheba. The child that Bathsheba is carrying dies soon after childbirth. But they have another son, and that son is Solomon.

And it's through Solomon that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, comes. It's through Solomon that this tangled, twisted, gnarled family tree of Jesus continues.

And so on one hand, we have here David, this greatest king of Israel ever, during his reign flushed. But also through David, this conflicted man that also murders this guy and sleeps with his wife.

And what Matthew is telling us here is that even the very best men are only in the family tree by God's grace. And so Matthew here is including all this in Jesus' resume.

And it would have been so easy to skip over. But on one hand, he's building a case for Jesus' own mother, Mary, this unwed teenage mom, saying, listen, don't count her out too quickly because Jesus' heritage includes all these other people.

[24 : 07] But on the other hand, Matthew is telling us something. And what's Matthew trying to tell us? Why does he include all this in Jesus' resume? What's going on here? Well, he's telling us that at the heart of the Christmas story is a Savior who came for sinners.

He's telling us that the heart of the Christmas story is God who came into a broken world, a broken world that didn't have it all together. That Jesus came to be with people who had messed up and made mistakes and made poor choices.

That throughout Matthew's gospel, he's going to tell us again and again and again that Jesus, though he's king, though he's the long-awaited Messiah, though he's the ancient of days, he's the promised one from thousands of years ago.

That Jesus is the one who's come to welcome to himself broken sinners like you and a broken sinner like me. That those, Jesus would later on say, those who are well have no need of a physician.

Those who have got it all together, hey, you probably think you don't need me. I've come for those that are hurting. I've come for those that are broken. I've come for sinners. Friends, right at the beginning of Matthew's gospel, Matthew's giving us the gospel.

[25 : 14] That Jesus came for you and I. My virtual friend, Tim Keller, says it like this. Matthew's telling us that no one, not even the greatest human kings like David, do not need the grace of Jesus.

And that there's no one, not even the worst human being, who can fail to receive the grace of Jesus if there's repentance and faith. In Jesus Christ, king and prostitute, male and female, Jew and Gentile, one race and another, moral and immoral, all sit down as equals.

Equally sinful and lost, equally accepted and loved. And friends, that's why Christmas is the announcement of the good news of great joy. The angels came to tell us it's the good news that all of us, all of us, every one of us, no matter what your pedigree or your history or your heritage or your ancestors, whether you come from royalty or you were born under a bridge, doesn't matter who you are, that all of us, Christ has come to rescue us and to redeem us.

Christ has come to take a fractured, broken world and to bring healing and restoration. Christ has come to the darkest parts of our world and our hearts and come to shine his light. Friends, the story of Christmas tells us that though all of us in various ways and forms have sought our own glory, sought to be our own gods, though all of us love and serve and trust the variety of gods, Jesus came for us.

Jesus came to rescue us. Jesus came to bring us into his family. There's an amazing verse in the Gospels where it says, To all those who receive him, Jesus gave the right to become sons and daughters of God.

[26 : 54] And then in Hebrews it says, Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers. Jesus is not ashamed to include broken men and women like you and I in his own family tree. And throughout the Gospels we see Jesus associating and welcoming with the broken and the hurting of the world.

And he says, come, I include you in my family. Jesus came for those of us whose sin is obvious and blatant. And he came for those of us whose sin is private and well hidden.

Jesus came for those of us whose brokenness is on display for all to see. And he came for those of us who hide it so well. He came to bring us into his family.

And by including all these non-Jewish people into his list, Matthew is telling us that Jesus is fulfilling exactly what he said to Abraham all those years ago. That it wasn't just the nation of Israel.

To the ends of the earth, in the farthest corners of Hong Kong and South America and the Amazon of Forest, in the urban cities of Shanghai and Beijing and Delhi and London and New York, in the backwaters of Accra, Harare, Cape Town, Madagascar.

[28 : 04] Jesus has come to bring healing and wholeness to all the world. And so Matthew ends off his gospel like this with Jesus' great commission. Go therefore into all the nations of the world, telling them about the wonder of my love.

Friends, the story of Christmas is the good news of God's incredible grace for sinners like you and I. Third thing and last is this. It's the good news of great rest. So Christmas, the good news of God's great faithfulness, the good news of God's great grace, the good news of God's great rest.

This is a little technical. You need to think about this one. You need to put your thinking hats on. You ready? Okay, thank you, Claire. Verse 17. Let's go to verse 17.

Last verse says this. So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations. And from David to the deportation to Babylon were 14 generations. And from Babylon to the Christ were 14 generations.

Okay? Matthew's making a big deal of this 14 thing. Okay? And if you just have an English or a Chinese Bible, we might miss the significance of it.

[29 : 09] There's something about 14 that Matthew's onto. Okay? And we know this for two reasons. One, because Matthew hasn't actually included every generation. He's actually skipped a couple of generations.

When you read the Old Testament, you see there's a few more layers in between some of the names. And that's fine because where he says, you know, so-and-so was the father of so-and-so, that word father can also mean ancestor.

So Matthew's not lying. But he's specifically arranged his writings so that there's 14 names, 14 names, 14 names. Okay? Why is he doing that? But there's something else.

Because in Hebrew, each letter has a numerical value. Okay? So, for instance, let's just pretend the English alphabet. A would be 1. B would be 2. C, 3. D, 4.

Et cetera, et cetera. In the Hebrew alphabet, every letter has a numerical value. And therefore, every word has a numerical value. Okay? You following? It's called a gematria.

[30 : 02] Okay? This word has a numerical value. The word David, which appears many times in our list. It keeps on coming up. The word David has the numerical value of 14. 4, 6, 4.

Okay? Why is Matthew onto this thing about 14? What's so significant about 14? Well, the number 14 doesn't mean too much in the ancient Israel. But the number 7 does.

Right? Remember in creation, God makes the world in 7 days. And on the 7th day, he rested. Throughout the Old Testament, the number 7 always speaks of completion.

Of finality. Of achievement. Of rest. The end of 7, things come to its fulfillment. A place of rest. So, God creates the world in 7 days.

And on the 7th day, he rested. In the Old Testament, there's a law that said, Farmers, you can plow the land for 6 years. And then on the 7th year, you let the land rest. Farmers and the land must rest from their labors.

[30 : 58] And then there's this law that said, After 7 periods of 7 years, After the 49 years, On the 50th year, the year of Jubilee, All debts are canceled. Properties returned.

No one works. It's the year of Jubilee. And so, throughout the Old Testament, There's this constant number 7 that reoccurs. And 7 is constantly talking about achievement, Finality, the end of a series, A period of rest.

Now, what's going on here? Matthew gives these 3 lists of 14. Another way of reading it is, Matthew gives 6 lists of 7 names.

Right? And then finally, He comes to the 7th, Beginning of the 7th list. And there's just one name. And who is that name? It's the name of Jesus.

What's Matthew saying to us? He's saying that all the promises That started way back there, The covenant promises which God made In the desert places To this moon-worshipping pagan called Abraham, All the promises that God passed on To his descendants, And one day the entire world would be blessed.

[32 : 03] All the promises of God Which he kept on repeating and reiterating Time and time and time again. The promises that God said over and over again That one day will come a Messiah. One day there'll be somebody who will deliver you.

One day there'll come a king Who will sit on the throne And he will rule and reign forever. For generation after generation after generation, God's been promising And eventually, He delivers His promise.

And that person is Jesus. And so what Matthew is saying Is that finally after all these promises, The completion of the promises Are found in Jesus. This Jesus of Nazareth, This is Him.

This Jesus lying in a manger Will come our true and our final rest. That finally in Jesus We will find shalom once again. You see what Matthew is saying?

That in Jesus we find our rest. Now friends, What does this mean for you and I? It means that you and I Don't need to strive And work And struggle And fight To find our rest.

[33 : 03] We don't need to secure That hedge fund That final retirement package In order to find our rest. We don't need to find that spouse In order to find our rest. That the world promises That if only you have a child You'll be completed.

If only you get married You'll be completed. If only you can land that job Or you can get that title You'll finally be somebody. And Matthew is telling us That those things That you're looking for Those things that That we think this will complete me.

Those things that we think I'll finally be somebody. Those things are found Not in a title. They're not found in a family. They're not found In a bank account.

They're found In the person Of Jesus. And furthermore He's telling us That all our fears And our uncertainty Christmas promises That in the midst of all those things We can find our rest.

Because the history of all the world Including your life and mine Is in the hands of Jesus. We may not always understand it. We may not always get what we want.

[34 : 02] It won't always be easy. But Christmas promises That finally our hearts Can find their rest. Because Jesus Is the promised one In whom all things Find their completion.

In him They find their rest. Friends, this is the story of Christmas. This is what Christmas is all about. Matthew is telling us Before he gets to a manger Or a stable Or three wise men He's telling us That the good news of Jesus Is the good news Of God's incredible faithfulness.

Though it may be slow Though it may feel like God might have forgotten us That God will deliver on his word. And when he does It will burst the banks Of our expectation. Matthew is telling us That the good news of Christmas Is the good news Of incredible grace.

That the most broken And unwelcome And particularly shameful people God welcomes into his family And says come I've come for people like you. And Matthew is telling us That the story of Christmas Is the good news Of God's promised rest.

That in Jesus Our hearts can find What they were made for. Remember the words of Augustine Our hearts were made for you And will always be restless Until we find our rest in you. Matthew has come to tell us That that rest is found In no other Than the baby from Bethlehem Found in a manger.

[35 : 15] Let's pray together. Amen. Oh Lord Jesus Christ We love you And we need you. We worship you And adore you.

God in this strange passage Of many names Lord you are telling us That about your incredible Gospel of grace. You're telling us That you came for The sinful of the world You came for us.

You came to put right All that is broken. God I pray that this Advent season We will hear your message. I pray God That this Advent season We will come to discover The wonder And the richness And the complexity And the depth Of the gospel.

That God in you Jesus We will find our ultimate rest. God this Advent season May we not Be so busy Running after cooking And food And parties And presents And gifts And family.

May we quieten our hearts And still our hearts And find our rest in you. As we go into 2019 God may we go With our hearts at peace Knowing that you Jesus Are all we need.

[36 : 21] We pray these things In your wonderful And powerful name. Amen.