

Matthew 1:1–17 // “The Unexpected Expected” // The Whole Story #22

(On the day of Jesus’ resurrection) two of Jesus’ disciples were going to a village named Emmaus.... and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened... Jesus himself drew near and walked with them. But their eyes were blinded from recognizing him.

And he said to them, “What are you talking about?” And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened?” And he said to them, “What things?”

And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said

that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:13-27 ESV)

What an **incredible, impromptu sermon** this must have been, as Jesus went through the entire Old Testament and showed how **every story**, every **picture**, every **promise**, every **regulation**, **ritual** and **command** pointed to him:

- He was the **faithful husband** in Hosea, refusing to give up on his people even after they had betrayed him again and again.
- The **obedient prophet** who, unlike Jonah, **preached salvation willingly** to God’s enemies; and instead of being resentful of God’s mercy toward them, ~~he wept tears of compassion for them,~~ voluntarily plunging himself into the sea of God’s judgment to save them.
- He was the **Suffering Servant of Isaiah** wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;
- ~~The **weeping prophet**, like Jeremiah, who not only told us what we ought do, but imparted to us the Spirit that would give us the ability to do~~
- The **faithful Shepherd-King**, like David, who defeated the giant of death all alone while we stood on the sidelines and watched.
- The **kinsman Redeemer** of Ruth ransoming his family;
- The **Passover lamb** presented by Moses,

Works Consulted:

Steven Furtick, “There’s Been a Change of Plans”

Craig Groeschel, “Christmas 2015 (Luke 2)”

Leonce Crump, “Unexpected King: The World Is the Prize”

Tim Keller, “The History of Grace”

Sally Lloyd-Jones, “He’s here!”

- The **despised brother**, like Joseph, who transformed his betrayal into salvation for his treacherous family;
- The **miraculous son of Abraham**, providing himself on the altar of sacrifice in our place,
- the **Ark into which we flee for shelter** from God's judgment,
- the **conquering descendant** promised to Adam and Eve who would crush the deceiving Serpent underneath his feet.

All these things were fulfilled, so beautifully, by Jesus, yet most people—even disciples like these two—still missed him.

PRAYER / Matthew 1

- TRIP: 2 SECTIONS. S. Africa (bush, Adon got bit by a jaguar)
- Turkey: shared Christ more in a few weeks than here all year
- Rest...

Matthew 1: opening. Though Jesus came according to prophecy, many, like these disciples still missed him...

His manner of coming was so unusual, so unexpected, that they didn't recognize him **even when he fulfilled all the symbols** and performed all the miracles!

Which is **why the manner in which Matthew opens** up the New Testament so important, because Matthew, in a sense, gives us Jesus' resume. He shows **why Jesus came** the way that he did; why he is **uniquely qualified** to be our Savior.

But most of us **plow right over Matthew's introduction** without realizing what he is doing: **[1:1] The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

[2] Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, [3] and Judah the

father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, [4] and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,

[5] and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, [6] and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, [7] and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, [8] and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, [9] and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, [10] and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, [11] and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

[12] And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, [13] and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, [14] and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, [15] and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, [16] and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

[17] So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Amen? Amen. Let's close in prayer. Just kidding.

Alright, be honest, how many of you zoned out during that? (smh: *And you call yourselves "committed Christians."*)

- No, I know that was unusual and none of you stayed with me.

But I read it because this genealogy is the key to understanding who Jesus really was, and why he had to come in the confusing way that he did.

Notice, vs. 1, that Matthew calls his Gospel, “**the book of the genealogy.**” ([1:1] *The book of the genealogy* of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham). **IOW**, his whole Gospel **the explanation** of this genealogy!

First, let’s look at the organization pattern: [17] So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

- **3 sets of 14 generations.** “14” is of course two 7’s, and 7 is the biblical number of completion, or **perfection**.¹
- *(It’s pretty obvious that some generations are skipped, btw, and this was a commonly accepted practice in presenting genealogies.)*
- **Matthew presents it this way to show that God has super-imposed his perfection, his perfect 14 (if you will) onto world history, shaping entirely and perfectly around Jesus.**
- **History is HIS STORY.**

Which is #1:

1. Though it often doesn’t seem so, Jesus is the center of history

- **When Matthew wrote this, none of the major actors in world history were paying attention to Jesus.**
 - He was born to an **obscure family** in a small, **backwater**, Middle Eastern country. **Nobody in Rome or Athens**—where the action was—took any notice of these things,

and when Jesus died, very few people outside of Israel had even heard of him.

- **Yet Matthew shows** you that despite what it looks like on the surface, God is guiding all of history according to his perfect 14, with Jesus at the center.
- **And that means that the powers of the world—those who think they control everything—are really an illusion.**
- In that day it seemed like **Rome was in charge.** Matthew says, “No, this is the center. Everything Rome does feeds back into this.”
- **Let me give you one quick example of that:**
 - One of the details that most people know about the birth of Jesus is that Mary and Joseph, Jesus’ earthly parents, had to travel back to Bethlehem right before the birth of Jesus, because Rome had decided to count and tax the entire Empire, and **they wanted everyone to go to their home city** to be taxed, and that was their home city.
 - But **Luke explains** to us that **God’s purpose** in that was so that the prophecy about the Messiah being born in Bethlehem would be fulfilled.
 - **So think about this:** God taxed the whole world to move two people 90 miles so we’d have further proof God was behind the birth of Jesus.
- **It looks on the surface like Rome, or Washington** is in charge. But that is an illusion. **Proverbs says**, “*The king’s hand is like a river in the hand of the Lord, he turns it whatever way he chooses.*” **And he chooses those things** in the pursuit of the Great Commission.
 - **Y’all: stop freaking out about this election. Crazy pills.** “Oh, we’ve got **2 terrible candidates** to choose from: a phony and a liar. And I’m not sure which one is which. It’s the end of the Republic.”

¹ William Hendriksen, *Vol. 9: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, Baker New Testament Commentary, 110.

- **Elections are important.** But God is not dependent on Washington to fulfill his purposes. He **weaves all of this** back into his perfect 14 so that at the end, Jesus reigns.
- **A sign of Christian maturity** is when you understand that in everything God does—whether in the **major movements** of world politics, or even the particular details of your own life—he is **doing this**:
 - **When I was overseas, one of our missionaries** said, “The great test for this generation is whether they will recognize God’s hand in the refugee crisis as his re-arranging of the nations for the purposes of the Great Commission.”
 - And then he quoted **Acts 17:27**, “... he determined the allotted periods and the boundaries of the dwelling place of the nations on earth, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.”
 - That’s not a political statement about what our government should do. I am not saying, “Throw out our immigration system and let everyone in.” Our government is charged with keeping things orderly and safe.
 - I am saying, “Can **we, as the people of God**, recognize the hand of God in what is happening, and know what we are supposed to do?”
 - One of the things we did overseas was work with Syrian refugees, and one of the Syrian refugees our teams work with over there said: “I thank God for the war and the many terrible things that happened in my life because God used them to bring me to a saving knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Maybe we couldn’t get to him in his country, so God brought him out to a place we could get to him. **Will we recognize in this moment what we are supposed to do?**

- **Or in the details your life:** What if you saw that in everything that happened to you, God had a purpose for the GC? **Surely if God directs the allotted times and dwelling places of the nations**, he does that in your life, too.
 - Maybe you **got assigned to a job** you didn’t want. Sure, you can be unhappy about it, but you can still look for what God wants.
 - Or **maybe your house** didn’t sell because God still has purposes for you where you are.
 - The **pain gave you the ability to relate to others** in that same situation, to share Jesus with them in a more meaningful way.
- **The blessings of your life...**
 - Retire early...
 - Made you wealthy! With these things come responsibility to the GC.
 - The skill you have—how is it to be used for the GC?
- **AGAIN: A sign of spiritual maturity is when you begin to view everything in your life**—every blessing, every teardrop, every heartache—through the lens of how it can help the Great Commission, the mission of Jesus.

Which brings me to point #2...

2. God is working even in the chaos and the junk of your life

- This **genealogy is unusual** because typically genealogies **only list out the fathers’ names—all that is essential for the record**—but Matthew fills this genealogy with the names of women, as well as these little **details which seem superfluous**.
- For example, **vs. 3, “Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar”**? **Only Perez is essential** for the genealogy. The reason he mentions Zerah and Tamar is he wants you to **think about that story**.
 - **Do you know this story?** It takes place in **Gen 38**:

- A man named Judah had 3 sons, and one of them was married to a woman named Tamar.
- Well, **this son of Judah dies** before he can have kids, and in those days if a guy died and left his wife without kids it was the obligation of the deceased's brother to marry her and give her children.²
- **The next oldest brother was named Onan** and he begrudgingly took her as his wife, but evidently he didn't like her or didn't want the hassle of kids, so he refuses to have kids with her, and God strikes him dead for that—colorful and disturbing, I would not suggest you read it for family devos...

DRAMATIC BIBLE

- So now, legally, this girl Tamar is supposed to be given to **Judah's 3rd son**, but Judah starts thinking, "She's been married to 2 of my sons, and they are both dead now... I wonder if this Tamar is cursed?" And he doesn't want to lose his last son, so **he stalls** on getting his son to marry her, for years.
 - Well, figures out Judah is stalling, so she takes matters into her own hands. So she dresses up like a prostitute (puts on tight jeans and clear heels) and goes and hangs out at the bar where Judah frequents... and then she waits until his judgment is impaired and seduces him to sleep with her. Judah is so crunk he doesn't recognize her. She gets pregnant with **Perez and Zerah**, the two guys mentioned in this genealogy.³
 - Well, **3 months later she starts showing** and Judah, who has no idea it's his babies, of course, orders that she be stoned because obviously she's been

sleeping around... and so they drag her out and she says, "I have here the belt of the man whose babies these are" and Judah is like, "**Hey...**" and then things are awkward.⁴

- How do you think things were around the table at Thanksgiving dinner *that year*? *BTW, are you feeling better about your family now?*
- This is **some messed up stuff**.
- **Yet God arranges even all of that into his perfect 14.** And I share that because I want you to see that he is working in your life, too, even when he seems absent.
 - Some of you have **some messy dysfunction** in your life, and, let me be clear, **I'm not saying God** was pleased with the pain that has come into your life—he was broken-hearted by it; he is a perfect Father, and just like it would anger me for someone to hurt one of my children, it angers God when someone hurts his.
 - **But what you should see is that God has one over-riding purpose in your life**, and he stamps his **perfect 14** on the chaotic mess of your life with Jesus at the center.
 - **We often compare life to a tapestry... feels chaotic. God flips it over, perfect picture with no strand out of place.** He does that with the genealogy that leads to Jesus, and the one that leads from Jesus.
 - **People say, "It doesn't make sense now."**
 - **Charles Spurgeon, a 19th century British pastor**, compared that statement to a person who pops their head into a theatre in the middle of a stage play, watches 2 minutes of it, throws up his hands and says, "This is stupid. It doesn't make any sense." Of course it doesn't make sense. You only

² Deut 25:5–6.

³ Paraphrased from Genesis 38.

⁴ Genesis 38:1–30

saw 2 minutes, and that 2 minutes needs to be interpreted in light of the whole.” **Your adult life is what—50, 60 years?** Don’t you see that it will only make sense in light of the whole?

- **I’m 43**, which means that I’ve seen like 1 millisecond of a 5-hour movie. I can’t expect to explain, from that one millisecond, how it all ties together. But Matthew shows you that it does.

3. The gospel is for the outsider

- **Another thing you notice about this genealogy** is how many people are listed **who have very embarrassing stories**. The kind of people you don’t want others to know are in your family.
 - **GREEAR**. I’ll tell you about those. But there are some other things I have learned about my genealogy I don’t bring up immediately. For example, many people ask me why my last name, GREEAR, has an extra vowel. They always point it out like I’ve never noticed it. I always tell them the extra vowel was a sign of Scottish royalty. But that’s not true. I had a friend who worked at ancestry.com and they figured this out for me. They said that my first ancestor entering the US was Shadrach Greer in 1735 and he spelled his name normally, GREER, but **somewhere down the family line the extra vowel got added without explanation**, and **this most often indicates someone** who changed the spelling of their name to avoid the law.
- **He mentions 4 women**, most of whom had a shady past.
 - We’ve already talked about **Tamar**, vs. 3, the seductive daughter-in-law who sounds more like a character from a made-for-HBO drama than a great granny of Jesus.
 - **Vs. 5: Rahab**. Another prostitute, and a Gentile, that God saved from Jericho.
 - **Ruth**. Remember her? The Moabite homeless girl. She’s in this list.
 - Vs. 6: **David and “the wife of Uriah.”** That’s odd. He doesn’t even mention Bathsheba’s name—he writes “the

wife of Uriah” because he wants us to remember the story where David slept with one of his best friend’s wife and then had him killed to cover it up.

- And **what is even more striking about this is that in those days**, your genealogy was like your **resume**. So back then (like today!), résumés were fudged to include the best parts and to omit the unflattering details.
 - (You know, there is an art to writing a resume where you brag without looking like you are bragging.
 - **No one explained that to me, btw**. The first time I prepared a resume, I thought it was supposed to be an essay about how awesome you were, a record of all your awesome deeds. 17 pages long, with everywhere I’d spoken, everything nice someone had said about me. Miraculously I got the job. You guys hired me! Still here.
 - “That made quite an impression. We passed it around the office and everyone laughed about it.”)
 - Well, in those days, **they had less shame**. And so when you became a ruler, or you were campaigning for the job, you’d publish your resume to show how your bloodline qualified you for it by being nothing but a string of awesome.
 - **We have a great example from the time of Jesus—Herod**, who was the king when Jesus was born, published his genealogy, but it was missing anyone who was at all shady.
- **Matthew, perhaps in response to Herod**, includes a bunch of people in Jesus’ genealogy that would not have helped his case for being King.
 - It’s filled with **moral failures**, and mess-ups. The **broken and the weak**.
 - Those outside the **circles of power**. **Moral outsiders** like Judah, a drunk with a penchant for prostitutes, and **David, whose lineage to Jesus included an adulterous affair**. He’s

got **ethnic outsiders**, like the Gentile, Rahab. **Social outsiders** like Ruth.

- **And that is supposed to send you a message:** Jesus came to include you, no matter who you are, in his family.
- These names are included in the line that leads to **Christ so that you can know that your name can be included in the line that leads from Christ.**⁵
- **Christ coming as perfect King would have crushed us.** Had he **come first as a judge to repay all evil**, that would have left us all without hope.
 - **But a Christ coming with the blood of adulterers and murderers and Gentiles flowing in his veins can identify with us and save us.**
 - **(He shared in our humanity**, says Hebrews... he took our sins and our sorrows...)

That means 2 things:

- Even if **your personal history**—the story of your life—is filled with embarrassing mistakes. God can still redeem it all into his perfect 14.
 - You **may think your life is over—divorce is final, job loss, kicked out of school, kids won't speak to you**, but this genealogy shows you Jesus may have just begun his best work.
 - **He specializes in the broken, and the weak...** he can help YOU.
- Second, **it shows us, Summit Church, that our message is for the outsider.**
 - We **don't want to be a church that puts on a better show than the church down the road and attracts bored Christians**. We want to be a church that preaches Christ to

⁵ From David Platt's sermon on Matthew 1:1–17, "The King and His Kingdom."

those society overlooks, **which is why we do things like SERVERDU.**

4. **Jesus is our long-awaited rest**⁶

- I showed you at the beginning that this genealogy is **3 sets of "14."**
 - I know it's been a while since you have been in **math class**, but 3 14's is the same as 6 sets of 7's; which makes Jesus the **7th 7.**
- **7 is the most significant biblical number;** is the number of completion. It signifies "rest."
 - God **rested** on the seventh day.
 - Every seven years in Israel, according to Leviticus, **the farmland** was supposed to rest—to lie fallow so the soil could replenish its nutrients.
 - And then on the **year of the 7th seven,** the 50th year, was to be a **Year of Jubilee.** A special time, in which all debts were forgiven and all indentured servants were freed.
- When Matthew shows you that **Jesus comes as the 7th 7**, he is trying to say that **Jesus is the ultimate year of Jubilee.**
 - He is ultimate rest.
 - In him all debts will be forgiven; all slaves will be freed.
- **He came to set prisoners free.**
 - **We have people here under bondage**—addictions they can't shake.
 - **Some overwhelmed by the burden** of trying to please God, or to prove themselves to others.
 - **Some feeling crushed by the burden of trying to sustain themselves, to carry themselves, to make life work.**
- Jesus proclaims in Matthew, "**Come unto me, all you who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**"
- This is **what I wish** I could help some of you see. You think the opposite: Christian is heavy burdens—my job is to make you feel guilty about not doing it better.

⁶ Tim Keller, sermon on Matthew 1:1–17.

- NO, it starts in rest. **You don't have to earn God's love:** it's given to you as a gift purchased by Jesus.

- **Yes, you work as a Christian, you are busy, you work hard,** but not in order to earn God's love, but as a response to it, and that's a totally different motivation.

- **And then, see, when you know you have his favor, you are relieved of the burden of always having to prove yourself:**

- **Early on in my ministry** I realized I was tired: I had spent my whole life trying to earn applause from various groups of people. It was only when I found my identity in Christ that I was able to rest from the perpetual pursuit of the praise of others.
- **2 Olympic divers:** "Were you confident coming into this?" Yes, because our identity is in Christ. In another interview one said, "What gives me confidence as a diver is that I know what happens from that platform doesn't determine who I am. When I walk up there, I am a child of the King, and when I get up out of pool, whether it was after a belly flop or a perfect 10, I am a child of the King."

- **And then, even more:** When you know that you are his favored child, the worries of the world lift off of your shoulders.

What then shall we say to these things? exalts Paul, *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

- **Won't the one who knows how many hairs are on your head, the one who watches over the sparrows, not care for me?**

- **Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come, Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven**

and home, When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He: His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

- **Oh, the freedom of the children of God! Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you REST.**
- **This is what some of you most need: REST.** Rest from **trying to find acceptance**; rest from trying to **prove yourself**; rest from **bearing the weight** of the world on your shoulders. It is in Jesus.

Lastly... (big point for today)

5. God's ways are unexpected, but they are wonderful

Nobody saw this coming. They wanted a mighty conqueror; a judge who would end all oppression. **But if that's how Jesus had come,** he could not have helped us. He would have crushed us.

He came in a totally unexpected way—but that was not for our frustration, but our salvation.

And here is what I want to ask you: If **that's what God did back then,** isn't it possible that **when God does something unexpected in your life today,** it may not mean that he has forgotten you, or neglected you; it may be that he's working on a **better, grander plan** you don't see yet? Doesn't the coming of Jesus teach us at least this?

- **Isa 55:8–9,** ways higher than yours. Originally about salvation: God would not save us in the way we expected, but that's because his ways are higher and better. That continues in how he continues his work in our life.
- **When God does something unexpected in your life today,** it may not mean that he has forgotten you, or neglected you; it may be that he's working on a **better, grander plan** you don't see yet? Doesn't the coming of Jesus teach us at least this?

((Let me ask: How many of you are a **planner? Full on,** OCD planner. I make a plan to plan kind of planner.

- **Raise your hand if you like to call yourself spontaneous.** You think you're adventurous, but **you're the ones us planners will have to be taking care of** when you're old.

I am a planner. I actually hate to plan; but I hate even more not having a plan, so I plan. And I hate it when things don't go according to plan.

In a sense, I think we're all like that, whether we are planners or not. Doesn't *the phrase, "There has been a change of plans" just make you cringe?*

- We were **going to go out to dinner tonight**, but there's been a change of plans.
- I used to hate hearing that phrase **from my parents**: "I know we'd said that we were going to go to Disney World over spring break, but there's a been a change of plans."

But here's what I want you to think about: some of the greatest things God did in the Bible happened when he deviated from the expected plan.

- Just think of Mary. She was **not planning to be pregnant. She was planning to get married.** She was planning for a wedding; God was planning to change the world. His plan was better.

In the same way, God pursues a plan in your life, often in unexpected ways. But his plan is always better.

Here's the big point. Think about your life as being like this genealogy.

God is weaving it all into his perfect 14, with Jesus at the CENTER!

There is a genealogy that leads to Christ... filled with dysfunction, chaos, bad luck... but God wove it all into his perfect 14, with Jesus at the center.

In the same way, there is a genealogy that leads FROM Christ... it also is filled with dysfunction, chaos, bad luck... but God weaves it all, just as infallibly, into his perfect 14, with Jesus at the center.

(You see, Matthew shows us all these things at work in the line leading to Christ so we could equally assured of them in the line leading from him.)

So, again: God is at work in your life, arranging it all into his perfect 14, with Jesus at the center.

- **Everything in your life before you meet Jesus (B.C.)** is to reveal him to you. Do you recognize that? *Have you received him?*
- After you become a Christian (A.D.), **everything in your life is to reveal Christ through you to others**—are you trusting him in that, and yielding yourself to him for that?

