

Awakening Wonder | Matthew 1:1-17

Sermon Title: Promise Keeping God

Intro:

Mercy Church! It's great to be with you this week, the first week of our Advent series. During advent, we take time as a church to look at and celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. For many, Christmas is their favorite time of the year. Some of you even dare to start playing Christmas music before thanksgiving. Haha. But seriously, Christmas really does things to people. I've met so many people that absolutely love the Christmas season. But for most of us, if we pay attention to what people say they love about Christmas it's usually stuff about being with family, or the feeling of nostalgia, and hot cocoa while sitting by the fire. Rarely, do I come across someone who gets in awe of the Christmas season simply because of Jesus. Christmas is kind of like growing up near the Grand Canyon. You're so used to looking at it that it can lose its wonder and grandeur. Admittedly, this is me! I have such a hard time getting excited for Christmas. Almost my entire life I have some sort of a disconnect of what I know to be true in my head, and allowing that truth to go down to my heart. Maybe you feel the same.

I also know that Christmas time, while it should be the season of Joy can often be the time when we feel sadness, frustration, and disappointment. I know that we have members this year that are without a loved one for the first time during Christmas. I know that others of you will go home and be reminded of the disfunction that has taken a hold of

your families. Reminded of another year being single, or being really close to retirement only to look back and just feel disappointed. My hope for you today and in is that this advent series you will be in Awe of Jesus. Please be honest with yourself right now, If that's now where you are, my prayer is that as we dive into this advent season, you will be enveloped by God's goodness toward you and you will be awakened in wonder at the birth, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

So, to start this morning, we will be in Matthew 1:1-17. What we're going to see is that **Our God is a promise keeping God.** We're going to see this in a text that I imagine almost all of you skip when you read Matthew. It's the genealogy of Jesus. Let me assure you church, this genealogy is amazing. Matthew, who is primarily writing to Jews, is showing his Jewish audience where the Messiah Jesus came from. In this genealogy, Matthew is telling the amazing story of God's faithfulness to all the nations of the earth.

**1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:**

**From Abraham to David**

**<sup>2</sup> Abraham fathered<sup>[a]</sup> Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, <sup>3</sup> Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram, <sup>4</sup> Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, <sup>5</sup> Salmon**

fathered Boaz by Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse,<sup>6</sup> and Jesse fathered King David.

### From David to the Babylonian Exile

David fathered Solomon<sup>[b]</sup> by Uriah's wife,<sup>7</sup> Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa,<sup>[c]</sup><sup>8</sup> Asa<sup>[d]</sup> fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram,<sup>[e]</sup> Joram fathered Uzziah,<sup>9</sup> Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah,<sup>10</sup> Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon,<sup>[f]</sup> Amon fathered Josiah,<sup>11</sup> and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

### From the Exile to the Christ

<sup>12</sup> After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,<sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor,<sup>14</sup> Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud,<sup>15</sup> Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob,<sup>16</sup> and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Christ.

<sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon,

fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations.

Some of you might be asking yourself, why in the world would Matthew start here? It is curious, especially in light of how other Gospel's start. The book of John starts with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Luke starts off with Luke saying to Theophilus, "I'm writing this so that you may know with certainty of the things about which you've been instructed." And Mark, Ha, Mark doesn't waste any time and says, "Jesus Christ is the son of God." But not Matthew, he starts with a Genealogy. What's this about?

Church, let me assure you, Matthew is not trying to win an award for the most boring intro to a book of the Bible, he's being very specific and purposeful. If you know anything about Jewish history, Jewish people were sticklers about knowing genealogies because their identities were determined by familial connections, and since Matthew is primarily speaking to a Jewish audience right here he is appealing to this to show them where the Messiah came from.

In this genealogy, Matthew is telling the amazing story of God's faithfulness to all the nations of the earth. Matthew is showing them that the God is a covenant making/promise keeping God and Christ is the fulfillment of all of God's promises to his people. That's what the whole book of Matthew is about.

I think verse 17 helps us put handles on this entire genealogy. Let's read it again, <sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Christ, fourteen generations. We see here the story of God's people, summarized. The story of an adulterous, wicked, and forgetful people and a promise keeping God. We could spend hours going through all these names, and what we will see is that God kept his promises to them even though they always broke their promises to him. Matthew's whole point in this genealogy is to show us that Jesus is God's fulfillment to the promises of a lot of people. And as you can see it focused this genealogy on covenants or promises that God made to Israel. So, we're going to walk through these three sections and show you what Matthew wants you to see. That Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to his people.

### **From Abraham to David** *(Put slide up as I go into this section)*

Let's start with Abraham. Matthew starts this genealogy by going from Abraham to David. It goes chronologically from Israel's beginning to the rise of Israel's greatest king. In the beginning, God makes a promise to Abraham that he's going to make him into a great nation, and that through him, that he

would be a blessing to every family on earth. This should make sense to us, because God has been all about filling the whole earth with worshippers from the beginning of time. He told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and to multiply" and he also told Noah the same thing... Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with worshippers. But, instead of doing that the people tried to make a name for themselves. They wanted to build a great city to their name rather than following God, so God confused their language and scattered them all over the earth. And it was from this very people, God called Abraham. From disfunction and ruin and curse, God called the Father of Israel.

Here is what God said in Genesis 12:1-3, "1 Then the Lord said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you."

This may not sound like much at face value, but this is what led the Apostle Paul to cry out in amazement in Romans 11:33 about "the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God." So we see that God promised land, that he would have offspring (Genesis 12:7), God was going to establish his people in the "promised land."

And a few chapters later, God did one of the most amazing things in all of the OT. After he made this covenant promise to

Abraham he told him that he would keep his promise, even if Abraham and his offspring didn't keep theirs. You see, around the time of Abraham, when people made covenant agreements with each other often took place in the form of the two parties walking between animals that had been sacrificed. By doing this, each person was saying, "If I break my word in this covenant, may I be cursed like this dead animal."<sup>1</sup> With the covenant with God and Abram, God caused Abraham to sleep, and God came down in the image of a smoking firepot and flaming torch and walked through the separated animal halves by himself. God was communicating to Abraham that regardless of whether or not Abraham and his offspring were faithful to him, he would keep his promises. This was God's decision and he would uphold both ends of the covenant no matter how what happens.<sup>2</sup> This is amazing, right?

Overall, what we see in this promise to Abraham is the gospel itself. We see God promising to be faithful even though his people wouldn't be. This promise also points us to Christ saving people from all nations. Paul said this in Galatians 3:7-9: 7 You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham's sons. 8 Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed through you. 9 Consequently those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Multiply, Chan.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Amen. So, what Paul is saying is that anyone who has put their faith in Christ is the fulfillment of this Abrahamic covenant promise. Anyone who is a gentile (which is most of us) is this fulfillment. So, we see that Christ is the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. Church, our God is a promise keeping God.

But, getting back to the genealogy, we see that in this first section, that this was Israel's story beginning with Abraham, through Israel's greatest King. King David was the man that welded Israel into a nation, and made them a power in the world.<sup>3</sup>

### **From David to the Babylonian Exile**

In this second section, we will see it go from Israel's greatest king all the way down to the exile in Babylon. This section tells of Israel's shame, tragedy, and disaster. But, before Israel ended up in exile, God made a covenant promise to David. It was a promise built upon the promise he already made to Abraham.

We see God's covenant promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. We don't have time to go through every verse, but God's promise to David was very similar to Abrahams. God promised to make David's name great (v7), to plant Israel in the land of Canaan (v. 10), and to raise up David's offspring and to keep David's line on the throne. All of these promises are really important, especially the idea that a ruler was going to come from the

<sup>3</sup> Barclay, 13.

line of David and that this ruler would put the kingdom of Israel – and all of the kingdoms of the earth – back in order. This prophetic language is captured in Isaiah 11 where Isaiah describes the king as a “shoot from the stump of Jesse upon whom the Spirit of the Lord would rest.” Jeremiah 23:5-6 describes the king as a “Branch” from the line of David who will “reign as king and deal wisely” and whose name would be “The Lord of the righteous.” Ezekiel 34 describes the coming king as a perfect shepherd for the people.

Matthew wanted his hearers and for us to see that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to David. Interestingly enough, Matthew started off this book by saying, **1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.** What he was announcing right off the bat to them was that the Kingdom was at hand. This was John the Baptist’s cry to the people. He said, repent for the kingdom was at hand. Matthew saying that Jesus Christ being the Son of David in verse 1 was him shouting to the people and to us that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promises to David. He was showing them in the first words of this gospel that our God is a promise keeping God.

### **From the Exile to the Christ**

Ok, so we’ve seen the first two parts of Israel’s history, we’ve seen Abraham to David, and David leading up to Israel’s exile. Now let’s look at the exile to Christ. At this point, Israel grew so wicked that God sent them away from the promised land into exile. Israel has had king after king that wanted to follow themselves rather than God, so because of their disobedience,

God sent them into exile and away from the promised land. God told Israel at the end of Deuteronomy that they got special access to Him since they were his people, but if they didn’t serve their God, then they would end up serving their enemies. Which is exactly what happened.

This might sound harsh, but Israel was a wicked people! They always forgot the Lord. He would send prophets & Judges and leaders to rescue them and then they would forget him. He would bless them and they would trample on his blessings to serve other gods.

But, no matter how unfaithful Israel was, God was still working. Israel was an adulterous people, BUT they were still God’s people and he was going to fulfill both ends of the promise he made to Abraham & to David.

And It was right here, while God’s people were living in exile, that God a new covenant promise to Israel. And these promises are amazing! This new promise to Israel is one of the clearest explanations of the gospel in all of scripture, and it’s right in the middle of the Old Testament. Church listen to this... Ezekiel 36:22-39 **“Therefore, say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Lord God says: It is not for your sake that I will act, house of Israel, but for my holy name, which you profaned among the nations where you went. 23 I will honor the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations — the name you have profaned among them. The nations will know that I am the Lord — this is the declaration of the Lord God — when I demonstrate my holiness through you in their sight.**”

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24 “ ‘For I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries, and will bring you into your own land. 25 I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances. 28 You will live in the land that I gave your fathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will save you from all your uncleanness... -- Ezekiel 36:22-29 (CSB)

Church, God knew that his people couldn't live up to their end of the promise. Why? Because of they were sinners. The Old Testament law was to point them and us to the fact that our sin renders us incapable to doing right. What we need more than anything is new hearts! And that's what God promised. He would give us a new heart and put a new spirit within us, that he would remove our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh. And just like he told Abraham that he would hold up both ends of the promise, he tells Israel and us in verse 27 that he will place his Spirit within us and cause us to follow him.

And he ends with “you will be my people, and I will be your God.” Church, this is who our God is... he is a promise keeping God.

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So, what does this have to do with us? How can we apply this passage to our life?

1. In Christ this genealogy is our family history, so get to know your family!

About a year and a half ago, we had a Cuban Pastor come to Mercy and preach. And while Pastor Dariel was in town, he stayed in my house and we were talking about something in the Bible and he mentioned an obscure OT name. Seriously, it was such an obscure name. At first, I thought he would just assume that he would chalk up my not knowing this obscure OT name to me not speaking Spanish very well but I wasn't so lucky. After talking about this obscure name he realized I had no clue what he was talking about and I knew the exact moment realized I didn't know what he was talking about. Y'all, we were in my living room and he leaned over to me and said, “Scott, don't you know your OT genealogies?!” I was like haha... yeah silly me, you know. But no, this man was dead serious. He was gravely concerned that I didn't know my OT genealogies. And then he said something I'll never forget. He said, “Scott, how are you going to remember your family history if you don't know your genealogies?”

If you are a Christian today, you need to understand that this is your heritage. The story of Israel found in the OT is our history and we have to remember it. Unfortunately, too many Christians are unhitching the OT from the NT. As I heard one pastor say, “the worst page in all of the Bible is the bland page

between Malachi and Matthew. It breaks the Bible apart. It takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian.<sup>4</sup>

And one of the greatest dangers of being a Christian that only reads the NT is that this theme of God being a promise keeping God will largely be lost on you. You will operate throughout your walk with the Lord looking through a lense of skepticism. You will always be looking for reasons to not trust God and you're waiting for what seems to be evidence of him forgetting you. A Christian who doesn't know Israel's story will be a person doesn't know that God holds up his end of the promise even when we break ours. This person will fight to not believe the lie that God has forgotten you. Christian, please read the OT.

2. This genealogy shows us that God is sovereign, so trust that past grace is promise of future grace.

If this genealogy shows us anything it's that God is in control. As you might have guessed, these three lists of 14, 14, 14, were not comprehensive lists of everyone in this family line it was a selective list to show us Israel's history. And when you look at some of the names you see God redeeming and giving purpose to thousands of years of pain. I mean name by name you could go through and see God working in and through the pain of his people.

God being a promise keeping God should be a comfort to everyone in this room. When you think about the grand scale

of all that God orchestrated to save humanity it is truly staggering. And if that's true, then no suffering, pain, or hardship is outside of God's power to redeem! Because of how we see God's sovereignty in this genealogy it gives new meaning to verses like Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." Or James 1:2, "Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing." Because God is sovereign, we can trust that God's past grace is promises of future grace.

3. This genealogy points us to our need for a savior.

It points is to our need for a savior because things were so bad with humanity that God had to send a savior. You and I are more like Israel than we might think. Like Israel, we have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Church, this is we we should all be in awe of Christmas. God sent his son to die for us! Jesus dying for the sins of the world is the greatest promise that he has ever kept. And maybe today you needed to be reminded, through a genealogy no less, that God always keeps his promises.

I don't know where all of you are this morning. There might be some in here that don't know Jesus and have never given their lives to him. Maybe you think you've messed up too much. If that's you, let me share a quick story about my own personal

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<sup>4</sup> Alstair Begg, sermon on Matthew 1:1-17.

genealogy. Share story about my family... Share the gospel...  
close in prayer

Close in prayer and share the gospel!

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