

A FRESH START

Text: Matthew 1:1-17

Read: Genesis 2:4-7; 5:1-5

1: A new beginning

Jesus is the new beginning/creation/Adam

3 x (2 x 7)

2: A new Israel

Son of Abraham

The new Israel

3: A new King of the Jews

Son of David - King of the Jews

What about unmarried parents?

What about post exile?

And so: *Jesus is a new beginning, new humanity, new Israel, new King!*

Mt 1:1-17 rev

Dear Congregation

There was a TV series a couple of years ago called 'Always Greener' or something like that. It was about one family from the city and another from the country that swapped places. They both felt they needed a change, a new start.

And in a much deeper and much more important way, a world fallen into sin needs a fresh start as well. It needs to be made again – remade, as a new creation. And so God's plan is to do just that. His plan is to take the raw materials of a sinful humanity and a creation ruined by sin, and remake them into a creation that's new and perfect.

But how to start? Where to start? And with the ruin of the first creation coming through a man, that's where God started his work for a new creation. And so a second Adam was needed, a sinless Adam. A second humanity was needed, a righteous humanity – the children of the sinless Adam. And then through the second Adam, the whole of creation needed to be redeemed and restored.

But what has all that got to do with this genealogy at the beginning of Matthew? And it's this genealogy that shows us that this new start has come about in ***Jesus. He's the New Adam, the New Creation, the New Humanity, and the New Israel*** that we need, all rolled into one. The fresh start has already come. It's here in the man we know as Jesus.

Point 1

You can start to see that already in the very first words here if you know what to look for. They're the same words that the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, uses to introduce the creation account in Genesis 2 and the first main genealogy of the Bible in Genesis 5 from Adam to Noah. Jews in Matthew's day knew it well. As soon as they read the first words here in Matthew, they would have thought of the words in Genesis 2 and 5.

Our problem is that we often think genealogies in the Bible are hard to read, easier to skip over, maybe even a waste of space. We don't really see the point. But many other cultures understand the importance of genealogies. And the Jews in Matthew's day did too. They understood that one of Matthew's points here was that in Jesus we have a New Creation, we have a New Adam.

And other Bible writers pick up the same point – like Paul. In Romans 5 and 1st Corinthians 15 he writes things like, 'Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.' "'The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ... The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.'

And so if we want to be part of this New Creation that will be freed from the curse of sin and death, then *we want to be united with this New Adam, Jesus*. He's the only way that we can have our sins forgiven and be set free. Whether we like it or not we're connected biologically to the first Adam. He's the one who took us into sin and condemnation in the first place. But in Jesus we find a New Adam who can set us free. If we put our faith and trust in him, commit ourselves to him, live for him, then we are already a New Creation. 2nd Corinthians 5 says, 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!'

Then another way Matthew makes the same sort of point here is through *the structure of this passage* – 3 lots of 14 generations. We read that and say ‘OK, so what?’ And especially when we find out that it isn’t even literally true. He’s missed generations out. There are kings after David that haven’t been listed. And Luke mentions 15 other generations from David to Christ that Matthew doesn’t. In fact, depending on how you count them, at least one of these sections of 14 generations doesn’t even have 14 generations.

And it’s not that the data is wrong – it’s just compressed – some things are skipped over. It was normal in Matthew’s day to skip generations in a genealogy to make a point. And in fact, throughout this whole gospel Matthew likes to arrange his material in groups of 3 or 7. Here he actually has 3 groups of 2x7, or 6 groups of 7. But what is his point?

And with 7 being the Bible’s symbolic number for fulfilment and completeness, Matthew’s point is that in Jesus we’ve found the fulfilment that the Old Testament looked forward to. The purpose of the Old Testament has now been met in Jesus. You could even say that in Jesus the 7th 7 has begun – ultimate fulfilment has been achieved in him.

And we can be a part of that ultimate fulfilment too, if we aren’t already. We can have a part in Jesus. We can commit ourselves to him in faith as the fulfilment of the ages, the one in whom everything is complete. And then he will also complete us. He will begin a new work in us by his Holy Spirit, and we will have a place in his New Creation when he comes again and brings it with him.

Point 2

Then as well as being the New Adam and the New Humanity, this genealogy shows that *Jesus is a true son of Abraham*. Genesis tells us that it was through Abraham that one would come through whom all the nations would be blessed. And so if Jesus is the one Matthew claims him to be, he had to come from the line of Abraham. And here we see in black and white that he did.

And because Jews were so particular about keeping their genealogies accurate, people in Jesus' day could prove that Jesus was descended from Abraham. As Jews read down through this genealogy that Matthew gave them, as they read one famous name out of the Old Testament after another, as they maybe did a bit of their own research, it was clear enough that Jesus was a true Jew, a true son of Israel.

But Matthew's point is even stronger than that. *Jesus isn't only a son of Israel - he's the New Israel*. In verse 2 already, Matthew breaks his stride in his normal pattern here to mention Judah's brothers. Judah and his 11 brothers became the 12 tribes of Israel. Maybe there's a hint here already that Matthew is associating Jesus in some way with the 12 heads of the tribes of Israel.

Especially when in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus chooses his band of disciples. Is it a coincidence that he chooses 12? Or is he presenting himself as the New Israel, and his 12 disciples as his 12 spiritual children who would become the foundation of the new spiritual Israel.

As well as that, *what's the message he preaches to the physical kingdom of Israel?* In chapter 4 he starts his preaching with, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' His call to physical Israel is that they repent from their sin and enter his heavenly kingdom.

And again, other New Testament writers pick up this theme as well. Paul in Romans 9 writes, 'It's not the natural children [of Abraham] who are God's children, but the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.' Peter in his letters uses God's description of Old Testament national Israel at Mt Sinai to describe New Testament believers – a 'chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, a people belonging to God'.

Matthew's point is that as well as Jesus being the New Adam and the New Creation, he's the New Israel. And we can enter his kingdom. We can be citizens of the spiritual Israel that will be saved, through faith in him. Old Testament Israel was a dismal failure when it came to representing God to the nations. But Jesus as

the New Israel won't fail. In fact he's succeeding right now through everyone who puts their faith in him. This is the Israel that will find themselves on the New Earth as the New Jerusalem that has been saved from the final destruction. And we're a part of this New Jerusalem too, if we have given our wholehearted commitment to Jesus.

Point 3

Then one other point Matthew makes in this genealogy is that *Jesus is the True King*. Later in the gospels you discover that he was crucified for the crime of being King of the Jews. The sign above his head as he died stated that he *was* King of the Jews. And Pilate was being sarcastic putting it like that, but it was actually true. Jesus is the true King of the Jews.

And so to prove that, it's made clear in this genealogy that *he's a son of King David*. You could only be anointed King of Israel if you came from the line of David. And so David is a key figure in this list. Jesus is descended from David.

Of course, one sticking point would have been that *his parents weren't married at the time of his birth?* His legal father was Joseph. His mother was Mary. But they weren't married when he was born. Shouldn't that affect his right to the throne? And people would have asked those questions in his day. It was probably a fact some people held against him his whole life. Why should they believe that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit?

And Matthew answers those kinds of concerns by breaking from his normal pattern here again to highlight a number of other questionable relationships and births in the line of kings blessed by God. And so Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bath Sheba all get a mention. At least 3 of them were Gentiles. Tamar slept with her father in law because he wasn't keeping marriage commitments he owed her. Rahab had been a prostitute before joining Israel. Ruth was from Moab, a nation that had been forbidden by God from entering his assembly. And Bath Sheba had been seduced by King David while being married to Uriah. But in spite of all that, God

had included these women in the line of promise. He used one of these marriages to provide an heir to David's throne. Was the fact that Mary was unmarried and unknown really such a big hurdle to Jesus being heir to David's throne?

Even more importantly, *Jesus was in the line to the throne – he was a crown prince*. After all, not all descendants of a king have a right to the throne. You have to be a crown prince. And Jesus was. He was a rightful heir to David's throne.

I remember reading somewhere once, that through an irony of history a whole line of people have missed out on the British throne. Some time, hundreds of years ago, a crown prince chose to abdicate his position, or something like that, and so the whole line of his descendants ever since have missed out. You can actually track down through the family trees and discover who would be on the throne today if things had gone a bit differently back then. From memory, he lives in Jerilderie in Victoria, right here in Australia.

You can be physically descended from royalty without having a right to the throne. But Jesus was the rightful heir to David's throne. If anyone was going to accept the position in his day, it should have been him.

And so, in Jesus, Old Testament history had reached its appointed goal. The period of preparation was complete. The period of fulfilment had begun. Jesus is the Davidic king in whom God's promises to David in 2 Samuel 7 are fulfilled – that his house and kingdom will endure forever, that his throne will be established forever. Jesus is the true and eternal king.

And all of this means that we need to commit to him as our king, to submit to him as our king. I know that in our day and age people don't especially like to submit to authority, but that's beside the point. He is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords. Our place is to simply be what he wants us to be, and do what he calls us to do. He is the king, and through faith in him we are his people. Our place isn't to question him. Our place isn't to resist him. Our place is to live for him in everything.

Conc

And even with Christmas coming closer, this probably isn't the message of Christmas that we're going to hear in the shops and the streets. We might not see a whole lot of it in the papers or on the television.

But this is the real message of Christmas. It isn't as romantic as a baby born in a stable on a silent night. It isn't as contemporary as a baby born to unmarried parents in poverty surviving only on their love for each other. But it is the real message of Christmas.

Jesus is a new beginning for the world, a new Adam, a new humanity. He's a new Israel. He's a new King of Israel. And we can be a part of this new beginning, this new humanity, through faith in him.

Even though we may often skip genealogies in the Bible, there is a message in this genealogy for us. And it's to put our faith in Jesus as a fresh start for the world, a new beginning. The call here is to live with him as our King.