



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 1: 1-17

“The Genealogy of Christ”

TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading for this morning is found in the first seventeen verses of the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew chapter 1 verse 1 through verse 17. I am sure you have often wondered how the names in the genealogies should be pronounced, and so I wish you would listen very carefully this morning. We’re giving the official pronunciation of each one of these names [laughter].

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his

brethren;

and Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar; and Perez begat Hezron; and

Hezron begat Ram;

and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon

begat Salmon;

and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed

begat Jesse;

and Jesse begat David the king. And David begat Solomon of her that had

been the wife of Uriah;

and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah

begat Asa;

and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat

Uzziah;

and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah;

and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat

Josiah;

and Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away

to Babylon.

And after the carrying away to Babylon, Jechoniah begat Shealtiel; and

Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel;

and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat

Azor;

and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan

begat Jacob;

and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who

is called Christ.

You'll notice, particularly, in that sixteenth verse, which is very important, that there is a change in the structure of this genealogy. It is not “and Jacob begat Joseph and Joseph begat

Jesus,” but, “and Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom”—feminine—“of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.”

“So all the generations from Abraham unto David are fourteen generations;

and from David unto the carrying away to Babylon fourteen generations; and

from the carrying away to Babylon unto the Christ fourteen generations.”

If you study the Old Testament genealogies more carefully, in the Old Testament you will discover that there are more than fourteen generations in some of these sections of the genealogy. The reason for this, evidently, is that in the makeup of the genealogy, it was Matthew’s desire to construct it in such a way that it would be remembered and also able to be memorized, for we must never forget that the men for whom Matthew wrote did not have books as we have them. And consequently, much of their learning was accomplished by memorizing, and if we could make it simple to memorize, they would have said to us, it’s much easier to learn. And so fourteen of the links in the generation were chosen, and some of the links are links such as might be in your own genealogy, when you are said to be the “son of your grandfather” or your great-grandfather. Some of the links may be dropped out.

May God bless this reading to us of his Word.

“To begin a Gospel with a genealogy, strikes us modern Westerns as very singular,” Alexander Maclaren has said. And then to reach the forty-second link in that generation, and discover that that forty-second link does not have any connection at all with the forty-one links that have preceded it, strikes us as being very irrelevant. Clause after clause, we have the monotonous, “begat,” til finally we read, “Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.”

And furthermore, it seems to us to be rather wretched homiletics to open the story of the Lord Jesus with a lengthy and, I’m sure, dreary sounding, monotonous sounding genealogy. We are taught in homiletics, that one of the important things that you catch the attention of your listeners right at the beginning. And this seems to be about the worst way to catch the attention of an audience that you could possibly could have, to begin with a genealogy. Why, then, did the evangelist Matthew, who wrote this favorite gospel of the early church, dauntingly give us this monotonous list of names to wade through?

Well, in the first place, it would have meant a great deal more to Jewish people that it would mean to us, because genealogies were important to the Jews. They were extremely important. And as a matter of fact, if you would had been a priest, or of the priestly line, you would of

course realized how important they were, because before you could be a priest, you had to produce an unbroken record in your pedigree that showed you were enabled to have this particular office. And furthermore, if you were to marry as a priest, it would be necessary for your wife to produce an unbroken record in her pedigree that stretched back for at least five generations. So it was very important for the Jews that one have a pure genealogy.

Now it is for us, in more informal ways. We're very careful about our families, and it means something to us. If we were having a friendly, informal conversation on a street corner, and a man should pass by, and I should look at him, and there were something about his face that was familiar but I did not know him, I might say to you, “Who is that?” And you might say to me, “Well, that's Bob Smith.” Bob Smith, I don't think I know him. Oh yes, you do, he's the son of the president of the First National Bank. Oh, that Bob Smith. And immediately, I think more highly of the individual, because he's the son of the president of the bank, and furthermore, I know a great deal about him.

Now, of course, you might not have replied that way. You might've said that he's the president of another company, or that he was a worker in another place, and you remember his father is as nutty as a fruitcake, [laughter] and that also might tell me something about the individual. But we do, ourselves, lay a little bit of stress upon family relationships. Now the Jews thought that genealogies were extremely important. And furthermore, the major reason that Matthew had in giving us this genealogy is surely that in this systematic compendium, which is his Gospel, he wished to placard the ancient and regal ancestry of Jesus of Nazareth. And he wanted to point out, in this genealogy, that the genealogy of the Lord Jesus is both pure—that is, it is traceable to the important men of the past with whom he is connected—and, especially, it is a princely genealogy that is related to King David and ultimately to Abraham the father of the faithful.

I think it is evident that as you read through these verses of the genealogy that the Lord Jesus is no isolated figure, that he is no mere innovator. But he is one who can adequately be measured only in terms of what has gone before. So that as we read the story of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, we are to remember that we are reading about a person who is the product of a long line of generations of important men in the history of Abraham and his seed. And we should, in our reflection upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus, never forget that it is designed to reflect the fact that he is no isolated figure.

The other Gospels, some of which do not give us a genealogy at all, are not contradictory to what I have just been saying. Now Mark is the Gospel that gives us the Lord Jesus as the servant of Jehovah busily engaged in doing the work of the will of Jehovah in heaven. One never would expect a servant to have a genealogy of any significance, so it is not surprising that the Gospel of Mark does not contain a genealogy.

In the Gospel of Luke, we do have a genealogy. In the Gospel of Luke, the Lord Jesus is presented as the Son of Man. He is presented in such a way that Luke traces his genealogy all the way back to Adam—something that is possible for each one of us, by the way. He is traced back to Adam who is called the Son of God. That is, the created Son of God. And so, it’s not surprising that in Luke we should have a genealogy.

John does not have a genealogy, and again, we are not surprised, because John is a Gospel that treats the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son. It begins with, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” and so you do not expect a man who writes a Gospel about an individual who belongs to eternity to give us his genealogy. For a man who exists from eternity has no genealogy, for there is no ultimate source of an eternal being. The Lord Jesus possesses self-existence, just as the Father and the Holy Spirit. And so in the Gospel of John, we do not have a genealogy.

It’s evident as you compare these four Gospels that they are not contradictory to one another, but they are complementary. And the purpose of the genealogy of the Gospel of Matthew is to present to us the Lord Jesus as a royal figure connected by blood and by life with the line that has gone before him. Now we shall see that the Lord Jesus Christ’s connection with the regal line is not by blood, because he is connected with Joseph. And it’s Joseph who possesses the regal rights to the throne of David, and the Lord Jesus is not the natural son of Joseph the carpenter.

We want to look first of all at the caption above the genealogy in the first verse. The Old Testament, you’ll remember, begins with the generation of the heavens and the earth: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the New Testament begins with the generation of him who created them, and it is probably Matthew’s intention that we compare the beginning of the book of Genesis with the beginning of his gospel: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” This caption strikes the note of the Gospel which is, the presentation of the Lord Jesus as king.

In the Old Testament, in the book of Zechariah, in the ninth chapter, the prophet writes, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee.” And those words are applied to the coming of the Lord Jesus on the day of his untriumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem. Behold thy king cometh unto thee. We could put those words above the Gospel of Matthew, for they epitomize the thing Matthew desires to present: “Behold, thy king cometh unto thee.” And when the Gospel reaches its climax in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, we read that there is above the cross the superscription:

“This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

So the idea of the Lord Jesus as the King of the Jews—behold thy king cometh unto thee—is the master thought of the Gospel of Matthew.

There are three expressions that deserve emphasis, and they are the three personal expressions of the latter part of this verse. First of all, he says, “The book of the Generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.”

Now I want you to notice, first of all, the term, “Jesus Christ.” I think today, most of us reading the opening words would say, “Well that’s his name, just as my name is Lewis Johnson.” And your name may be James Dean, or James Ribb, so his name is Jesus Christ. And Jesus is his first name, and Christ is his last name, and if he were an ordinary man, which he was not, his son might be named Bob Christ, and so on. But this is not the way we are to read these words. For “Christ,” is essentially a title and not a name at all. His name was Jesus, but he is Jesus “Messiah,” because Christ is a term that means “Messiah.” It strictly means, the “Anointed One,” and we are to read it in that sense. Now later on, in the New Testament, as time unfolds and the church comes into existence, it is then that the name, “Jesus Christ,” becomes something like a personal name for the Lord Jesus. But it is evident that Matthew does not intend for us to understand these words in that way.

Jesus is the personal name. It is derived from the Old Testament word for “to be,” and it is related to the name of the covenant-keeping God of the Old Testament. In theological seminary he is called “Yahweh.” In some of our translations of the Old Testament he is called Jehovah. It is the personal name of the Lord Jesus, and it is the Greek equivalent of the Old Testament “Joshua” which may mean something like “O Lord, save,” or “Jehovah is salvation,” or “Jehovah saves,” simply. So it’s very striking that this name of the Lord Jesus proclaims, in a sense, the gospel. Because that’s the story of the gospel: “Jehovah saves.” Man does not save himself; Jehovah saves. So his first name is Jesus, O Jehovah save.

Christ is the official name that marks him out as the anointed one. In the Old Testament, prophets were anointed, priests were anointed, kings were anointed. This is the anointed great Prophet, the anointed royal priest and the anointed king. And so history and prophecy unite in this prophet, priest and king, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it is very important for us, I think, that we notice that this book gives us the history of a person. So right at the beginning of the Gospel, Matthew would like to have our attention directed, I’m sure, to the fact that Christianity itself presents us, not with a code of morals, not with a system of theology, essentially, but with a person.

We’re not in any way suggesting that when we read this Gospel and read about a person, that we do not have within it a code of morals. We’re not suggesting in any way that in this Gospel

we do not have a system of theology, because we surely do, and of all the Gospels, it is likely that Matthew is the most theological of all of them, but the important thing is that this theology and this code of morals concerns a person, and we should never forget, as we read this genealogy that we are reading the genealogy of a person. And the story of the gospel of the Lord Jesus does not do its work for us unless it leads us to a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

We may know the gospel through and through—its language, its history, its geography, its archaeology and all of the other things that pertain to the study, and important things they are of a gospel or a message like this—and that knowledge may be of deep and absorbing interest to us. As a matter of fact, often, it may lead us astray. But we do not really advance in the knowledge of the Gospel of Matthew until we have come to the end for which the gospel was written. And the gospel was written to bring us a necessary guidance that leads us to Jesus Christ. And if we have not been brought to Jesus Christ in our reading of the Gospel, then it has not served the purpose that Matthew has in writing it. We should not forget, then, that this is the book of the genealogy of a person.

This past week, I opened up a book of quotations from the Puritans, which someone had sent me as a complementary copy. And my eyes fell upon a quotation from one of the famous Puritans by the name of Thomas Watson. And he wrote, “Everyone that hangs about the court does not speak with the king.” How true that is. Everyone who hangs around the court does not speak with the king.

Now what you are this morning are people who hang around the court. And I hope that you have a speaking acquaintance with the king. You see, it is possible to attend meetings like this, to get up at 8 o’clock in the morning. I know your motives may be varied. You may want to be sure to see the game this afternoon at 12 o’clock—that’s all right; we welcome you, too. [Laughter] But, the important thing is that you come into personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

It’s possible to be a regular attender in an evangelical church, such as Believers Chapel, to be actually involved in the ministry, to even partake of the meetings and have a part in the platform ministry, and not have that personal relationship with the king. It is possible for us to hang around the court and not speak with the king. And Matthew, of course, will do his duty in our lives and will perform his work of edification only if he is able to bring us into touch with the king.

He is called the Son of David, next. Now, it isn’t our province this morning, because this will be one of the great themes of the exposition of this Gospel, to speak about the Davidic covenant. But in that Davidic covenant, which we shall unfold from time to time, because it

does come before us in the Gospel, you’ll remember that David was promised a seed, he was a promised a throne, and he was promised a kingdom, a realm. And it is evident that in Matthew’s mind, since the Lord Jesus is the Son of David, that he is that promised seed, and it is he who shall sit upon the throne, and it is he who shall rule in the kingdom, and David shall have his seed and shall have his throne and shall have his kingdom in the greater Son, Jesus the Messiah.

He is called, lastly, the Son of Abraham. Abraham, too, was the recipient of the fundamental, historical covenant of the Old Testament. That fundamental covenant promised Abram and his seed a land. He was promised a name. And he was told that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. And furthermore, this covenant that God made with Abraham was an unconditional covenant. That is, it was a covenant in which God determined that he would do certain things for Abraham, and that he would accomplish his purpose, and that the accomplishment of the covenantal promises did not ultimately rest with Abraham, but they rested with God, so that in this fundamental historical covenant of the Old Testament, we have a gracious covenant in which God covenants that he will do certain things.

And the Old Testament is a record of the links in the chain that ultimately lead to Abraham’s seed, who is also David’s seed, sitting upon his throne in the land, and through whom all of the families of the earth will be blessed. And you can be sure that since God is a God who cannot be frustrated in his promises, but will accomplish them, that we shall see this kingdom in which the Lord Jesus, as the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, sits upon his throne. So we can see from this, then, that our Lord’s connection with the race is both royal and racial, and it shall have a universal outreach.

Well, the contents of the genealogy are also important. Descending from Abraham unto Jesus, via Solomon, Matthew brings us to the Lord Jesus as the legal heir to the throne of David. The structure is very interesting, and I commented upon it as we were reading the Scripture this morning. It is a structure of three fourteens.

Now remember, as I mentioned in the reading of the Scripture during the introduction of our service, that ancient people did not have books such as we have. They were not able to print up something and pass it out. If a person learned, he had to do a great deal of memorizing. And consequently, if things could be arranged mnemonically, that is, so that we might remember them, they would become much more useful.

To give a genealogy in which there were fifty-eight links in the chain might be very confusing. But to give the genealogy in such a way that there were three fourteens—each of the sections having fourteen—would have been an aid to memory, a device to help them to recollect the genealogy.

Furthermore, we need to remember one other thing. The Hebrew people did not have Arabic numerals as we have. They did not have separate signs for numbers at all, so that the numbers of the alphabet did duty for numerals. For example, the first letter of the alphabet was not only the equivalent of our letter A, but it also was a numerical sign meaning 1. So that David's name was the combination of the fourth letter of the alphabet plus the sixth letter of the alphabet plus the fourth letter of the alphabet. The word which begins David's name, our D and the equivalent in the Hebrew, meant, then not only D, but it also did duty for 4. And the [letter] in between did duty for 6, and then another 4. So that you can see that David's name, if you took those signs and looked at them as numbers, came to fourteen: 4 plus 6 plus 4. It would be perhaps clearer to us if we just thought of David's name as composed of three consonants: D-W-D. And they had that value: 4-6-4. So that David's name—and they would have recognized it immediately as they looked at David—they would think, that's fourteen.

So you see, by having fourteen generations, fourteen links three times, there was written over this genealogy the word David in all three sections of it. It was a means by which they could remember, then, the fact that the genealogy of the Lord Jesus is a genealogy that goes back to David. So its structure, then, is designed to help them to memorize.

The first group of names has to do with the first of the ages of Jewish history. The second has to do with the second stage of Jewish history, and the third group has to do with the third stage of Jewish history. In the case of the first of these names, which begin in the second verse, and conclude with the sixth verse, we have here the first stage of Jewish history. And in it, Matthew traces the origin of David's house back to Abraham himself. And the line, itself, illustrates an important principle.

I want you to notice that in verse two, we have the beginning of this line that reaches to the sixth verse to David, and in the sixth verse, after the mention of David, Matthew adds, “the king.” So he wants us to understand that this first stage of Jewish history is designed to illustrate the origin of David's house. One of the striking things about it is the statement of the second verse: “And Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren.”

Now that's a strange thing when you read it if you ponder it for a moment, because was not Reuben the firstborn of Jacob? Were there not three brothers older than Judah, and yet the line is traced through Judah. There were several other possible ancestors, but Judah is the one through whom the royal connection is made. Now that illustrates for us something that is extremely important in Old Testament theology, and also in the theology of Holy Scripture. And of course, it is essentially this, that while in the Old Testament we have prophecies, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be”—prophecies that link the rule with

Judah—naturally speaking, one would not have expected Judah to be the one through whom royalty was to come.

But you see, that is an evidence of something that is written all over the Scriptures, and it is this: that the relationship to the Lord Jesus is not determined by age, it's not determined by human merit. The sole cause of the choice of Judah, and the sole cause of the choice of all who are in the electing purpose of God is his sovereign, distinguishing, electing, gracious will. And so right here, in the beginning, Matthew clues us in to something that will be very important, that Jacob begat Judah and his brethren, and that Judah, contrary to natural expectation, is the one through whom the line is to proceed. Just as we read often in the New Testament, God passes by the first in order to lay hold upon the second, because it is his sovereign, gracious, electing, distinguishing will to put his hand upon certain individuals and use them for his purposes. So written here, right in the beginning of the genealogy of the Gospel of Matthew is the elective purpose of God.

Now the second group of names, beginning in the sixth verse, the latter part of it and going through the eleventh verse, is designed to portray the rise and decline of David's house, and it concludes with the exile in Babylon. And furthermore, there is political and material ruin as well. So Matthew traces through the genealogy the decline of Israel and finally, he ends with the Babylonian exile.

And there begin to appear in the genealogy some names of men who are not of shining character. Someone has said, I have never seen a family tree that did not need some spraying or pruning. And the same is true of the family tree of our Lord Jesus. Not all of these men were men who we could admire. I have also heard of a person who spent five hundred dollars to obtain his genealogy, and then \$2500 to suppress it. [Laughter] Now we do not have any suppression in this genealogy.

One of the amazing things about it is the depths of degradation that is reached in the statement in verse 11, “and Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away to Babylon.” And I'm sure that you will remember that in the Old Testament it was Jechoniah who comes under the curse, and of whom the statement is made, “No one of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David in Israel.” Now that is a startling prophecy, and a startling curse, and of course, were it not for the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, it would be impossible for our Lord himself upon the throne of David, for he is a descendant of Jechoniah, and being a descendant of Jechoniah, he is a descendant of the line upon which the curse is placed, that no one of the seed of Jechoniah—no one who is the natural descendant of Jechoniah—shall ever sit upon the throne of David. But our Lord Jesus comes from the seed of Jechoniah, and it is by virtue of the Virgin Birth that the Lord Jesus is able to sit upon the throne. We shall talk about this next Sunday morning in more detail. But we

have here an instance of the amazing precision of the Word of God, by which the Lord Jesus is enabled to sit upon the throne although descendant of the man upon whom the curse was placed.

The third group of names in verse 12 through verse 16 picture the eclipse of the nation Israel but not its extinction. The tree is hewn down, but in the future, a shoot shall rise from the roots and that shoot shall be the Messianic king. Now in the 16th verse, we read, “And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called the Messiah.” Notice the statement, “Joseph the husband of Mary.” It is not, “And Joseph, the husband of Mary, begat Jesus.” There is no male act of begetting in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus. Specifically, Joseph is not the father of our Lord Jesus in the natural sense. He is the husband of Mary, but he is not the father of the Lord Jesus in the physical sense.

Campbell Morgan says in one of his commentaries, “On the first page of the Gospel, Jesus is presented as connected with a race which, nevertheless, could not produce him. He came into it, was of it, and yet himself was distinct from it.” That is what he is saying when he says, and Joseph was the husband of Mary of whom—that pronoun is feminine—of whom was born Jesus. So, the Lord Jesus, then, is legally of Joseph, physically of Mary. Because he is legally of Joseph who had the legal right to the throne, he is able to sit upon the throne and inherit that throne. Because he is of Mary, he possesses his rightful relationship to David physically through her. So he is truly Son of David, both physically and legally. Physically of Mary; legally of Joseph—he is the one, of whom, was born Jesus.

And incidentally, the Davidic rights of the Lord Jesus were never disputed. No one ever, while he was here, ever stood up, as far as we can tell, and said, you do not have the legal right to sit upon the throne; your claim is a blasphemous claim. They never could do that, for he is the rightful descendant to the throne of David. And of course, since now the genealogical records are destroyed, and since the Lord Jesus had no descendants, it is evident that he alone at the present time has the right to sit upon the throne of David and the records that establish his right are the records of the genealogies of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Let me conclude. The last verse is simply a summary of this record of ancestry. I want you to notice that this Jewish Gospel—for Matthew has been called a “Jewish Gospel”—is a Gospel that has a universal thrust. We should think of the Lord Jesus as the Son of David. But we should also think of him as the Son of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And therefore it is not surprising that at the conclusion of this Gospel, in the last verses of it, we should read of the Great Commission in which the Lord Jesus says, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” The gospel of the king is a gospel for the nations.

Another surprising thing about this genealogy upon which I’ve not commented is the inclusion of some rather striking women within it. Now I want to say right at the beginning that it was not common for Jewish people to include women in genealogies at all. If you’ll go back and read the genealogies in the books of Chronicles, for example, you’ll find that they’re distinguished by the absence of mention of women.

But in the case of our Lord’s genealogy, we have five women who are specifically mentioned, and what a collection of women they were. There is Tamar, seducer and adulteress. There is Rahab, public harlot. There is Ruth, stranger from Moab, a Moabitess who could not come into the nation for generations, a nation which itself had an incestuous origin. And then there is the wife of Uriah, Bathsheeba, also adulteress. What a collection of women: a harlot, a seducer and an adulteress, a stranger from Moab, another adulteress. Four incredible women that are in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus.

The fifth, of course, is the Virgin Mary, the loveliest woman of them all.

You’ll learn from this, of course, that the genealogy of the Lord Jesus is not a genealogy that is uniformly holy, anymore than it is uniformly royal. The inclusion of the women suggests to us the human-ness of the origin of the Lord Jesus. And the fact that the women are included makes it even more so. They are also included. And even though it was not the custom of the Jews to mention the women, these are mentioned.

The men among the Jews, as you know, had a regular form of morning prayer. It was, “O God, I do thank Thee that I am not a Gentile, and not a slave, nor a woman.” And yet in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus we have these five very interesting women.

There is another interesting thing I want you to notice about this genealogy. It proclaims his humanity. All the way through, we have mention of men who are very much as we are. The Lord Jesus is no demi-god. He is a person who possesses a true humanity. And while we also proclaim his deity, we must also proclaim his humanity.

And then one other thing. This proclaims the transitoriness of the human. Last night, thinking about genealogy, I got out my own genealogy. Now it is one that my father paid money to obtain, and as far as I know, he didn’t pay any money to suppress it. [Laughter] Although I’m sure that if more adequate research had been done, he might have been tempted to do it. I looked at my genealogy in which my family is traced back to County Kent

in England near Canterbury. I looked at the list of names, and the brief descriptions of the lives of some of them. And they are just names to me, many of them.

As I looked at those names, I reflected upon the fact that after all, this is what I’m becoming. I’m becoming a name. And as a matter of fact, I’m becoming not only name, but it won’t be long before even the name will be forgotten if life continues as it has. Here were men who were men just as I, but I know them only as Timothy Ward Johnson. He lived at a certain place. As a matter of fact, beyond that, I don’t know my genealogy. My ancestry stops right there, but here they are only names. And I am fast becoming only a name, and soon I will be forgotten, and the same is true of all of us.

And as we look at this genealogy, we should reflect upon the fact that that is precisely our destiny. We shall soon be but names in the memory of our posterity, and then less than names. It brings home to us and points out to us the fact that we are here for a limited time.

There is one other thing that one might ask about the genealogy. Why the delay in the coming of the Lord Jesus? Why forty-two generations—actually, there were a few more—why more than forty-two generations from Abraham to the Lord Jesus? Why wait all that length of time for the thousands of people who have passed off into eternity? Why did God delay? Well the answer, I think, is relatively simple. God did not delay. He was preparing people.

In the Old Testament, we are taught that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. In other words, there was necessary preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus. The law was designed to point out to us our sin, to prepare us morally for the coming of a Savior who is able to save. If the Lord Jesus had come after Adam sinned, Adam would have had no concept—Adam and his seed—would have had no concept, evidently, of the need that existed for a Savior who would save from sin. So in the fullness of time, the Lord Jesus came. It is a testimony to the fact that there is a necessary preparation, morally, for the coming of Jesus Christ. And the Law of Moses was given for that purpose. We preach the righteousness of a holy God in order to prepare men for the reception of a Savior who is able to save them from their unholiness.

There is still another thing. This genealogy demonstrates that grace is not hereditary. You may think that because your father was a Christian, that therefore you receive some special grace from him. It is not so. I wish I had time to speak about four links in this chain. They are very remarkable links, and they each one follow the other. And they are four remarkably different links in the chain. Let me just mention them:

Rehoboam begat Abijah. Now Rehoboam was a bad father. Abijah was a bad son. Then next link is Abijah begat Asa. Abijah was a bad father, but he begat a good son. Asa begat

Jehoshaphat. A good father begat a good son. And Jehoshaphat begat Joram. A good father, a bad son. Four names, four links: one a bad father, a bad son; then a bad father, a good son; then a good father, a good son; a good father, a bad son. And one of the old Puritans said, as he saw this, “I see, Lord, from hence, that my father’s piety cannot be entailed. It cannot be made to descend to me. That’s bad news for me,” he said. “But I see also that actual impiety is not always heredity, and that’s good news for my son.” [Laughter]

Now you know, there is an important principle here. And it of course is the principle that we do not inherit the spiritual condition of our parents. And I want to speak to you, not only to you children but also to you parents. The fact that your parents were godly parents does not mean that you are to be godly. There must be that personal relationship on your part as well. And also, the fact that your parents may have been wild and loose and ungodly does not mean that you cannot be saved. And for your children, particularly in this audience, it is of the greatest importance that you realize your parents’ Christianity is not your Christianity, and that you shall not possess a true Christianity until you yourself have come to personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And this genealogy illustrates that so beautifully.

And finally, this genealogy impressively witnesses that the coming of the Lord Jesus is no unpremeditated accident. There is an overruling providence which inaugurates in the Lord Jesus the time of the fulfillment of the purposes of God. “Some providences,” one of the old Puritans also said, “like Hebrew letters, must be read backwards.” And when we come to the end of this genealogy in Matthew, and we read of Jesus who was borne of Mary, then we see the real purpose of everything that has preceded the coming of the Lord Jesus. And then there is cast over that whole line of forty-two plus generations meaning and purpose. It was all designed to lead to the coming of the savior.

And furthermore, you’ll also notice that not only is it taught here that the Lord Jesus Christ’s coming is no unpremeditated accident, but we are also taught that man’s willfulness cannot hinder the purposes of God. One of the things that we are told in the Old Testament is that the Israelite should not marry outside of Israel, but we see that in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, there is that violation of the Word of God. And furthermore, we are also taught—in the Old Testament as well as the New—that adultery is one of the heinous sins of Holy Scripture. And yet, our Lord Jesus Christ’s coming is related to the act of adultery of David and Bathsheba, because the Lord Jesus has his right to the throne through Solomon, who was the product of that union. Man’s willfulness cannot hinder the purposes of God. How important that is to remember.

We have a sovereign, electing God who elects in distinguishing grace and who accomplishes all of his purposes. And he has purposes, and they lead always to the Lord Jesus.

Gerald Healy has written *The Black Stranger*. It's a story of Ireland in the 19th century. It was a time of economic disaster for Ireland. And Mr. Healy has one of his characters respond to what was done in order to relieve the economic distress. The Irish government set men to building roads that really had no purpose at all except to employ men. And one of the characters comes in, and, having just discovered it, blurts out the words, “They're making roads that lead to nowhere!”

Now in the Scriptures, we have a genealogy that leads to our Lord Jesus Christ. And if we do not grasp the necessity of personal relationship to him, we have missed the purpose of the genealogy.

If you're here this morning, and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you, as an ambassador of our Lord Jesus, to turn to him who alone can save from sin. For he has come in accordance with the purpose of God. He has accomplished an atonement with the shedding of his blood. And he lives at the right hand of the throne of God to give salvation to those who are brought by the spirit to trust in him. May God work in your heart, and may you be brought to him who is the subject of this great genealogy. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Savior of the world, be and abide upon all who know him in sincerity. And O Father, we do ask that if there are some here who have not come to know him who is Son of David and Son of Abraham and Savior of the world, may the Spirit work in their hearts and bring them to Christ.

We pray in his name and for his sake. Amen.