



Matthew 1:6b-11

David was the father of Solomon, whose
mother had been Uriah's wife,
7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,
8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
9 Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,

Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,
11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and
his brothers at the time of the exile to
Babylon.

Yesterday we opened our bibles at the beginning of the first book of the New Testament. We were confronted seemingly, with a long, boring list of names. But we resisted the temptation to just jump down to verse 18 where the story of Jesus seems to really start. Instead we asked ourselves the question, why did God choose to start the New Testament with a genealogy? Surely there could have been a more exciting way to begin the first biography of Jesus. But pretty quickly we realised just what a stunning beginning this list of names makes. In fact, there couldn't be a more exciting introduction to Matthew's gospel with

this genealogy basically saying that all of the Old Testament, all of the history of God's people, all of human history is leading up to this very moment in time, when all of God's promises will be fulfilled in the coming of God's great King and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it's clear that there's much more here than first meets the eye. And today's passage is no different. It's a list of kings. They're all kings, you can read about them in detail in 1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles. But the point of this list here is that Jesus is descended from kings. Jesus, the Christ, Jesus the Messiah, remember both those words mean the same thing, one's Greek, one's Hebrew, for the same word, Jesus the Messiah, God's 'anointed one,' is descended from kings. He's from the royal line, he's the son of David, he's God's King who'll reign on the throne of David forever.

Now just to set the scene you have to know that this is dangerous talk. You see around the time that Jesus was born God's people had no king of their own, they're scattered throughout the Roman Empire, Jerusalem's been taken by the Romans – and their king is Caesar. And the Romans had a habit of making violent examples of rebellious people; like lining their highways with crucifixion after crucifixion as an example of the price of rebellion. And so this is dangerous talk, talk of another king, talk of a great warrior king like King David, come to deliver God's people from their enemies, and take back his rightful throne. It's dangerous talk.

But it's not just dangerous talk, it's also depressing talk. Yesterday we saw that names like Abraham and David evoke in the readers' minds God's great promises to his people.

Well today, this list of kings, recalls the history of God's people. And it's depressing. God's people had fallen from the heights of David and Solomon in verses 6 and 7, to the depths of the exile in verse 11. From Solomon's kingdom being the envy of the whole world, then this downward spiral through years and years of disobedience and decline, right down to the point when the unspeakable happened, when the unthinkable happened – when God's people were enslaved by the Babylonians and carted off into exile; no more kings, hopes dashed, God's great promises seemingly forgotten. They'd blown it, all was lost because of they'd turned their back on God.

You see the exile mentioned there in verse 11, from peace on earth in the greatest kingdom on earth under Solomon, down to slavery and exile in verse 11. An exile that God's

people had never really recovered from. It's depressing. And yet this list, this genealogy, in it there's hope. As dangerous as it is, and as depressing as it is there's hope – because God's great King, the rightful King, the King of Kings is finally here. Jesus is here.

You know one of the things that I love about Jesus is that he's one of us. Do you see his family tree here? It's not just filled with holy and righteous people, it's not just filled with perfect people, it's filled with plenty of normal, sinful people. Matthew alternates deliberately between good kings and bad kings, between kings who were faithful to God, and kings who turned their backs on God. And then there's David, who slept with the wife of one of his greatest soldiers Uriah, then killed him; and Rahab who was a prostitute; and Boaz and Ruth who were foreigners. I love that Je-

sus descended from normal people, and that his family is just as messy as most of ours.

And one of the things that I love about God is that he works out his purposes in the lives of real, fallen, normal people, people just like you and me. Just look at this list, many of these people did great evil in the sight of God and yet despite it all, God stayed true to his word by sending Jesus. God took what was bad, and used it for good. He's taken people who were sinful like Rahab and transformed them into extraordinary people, and honoured them by including them in line of Jesus Christ himself. And God has a habit of doing that. He has a habit of taking ordinary people and using them to accomplish extraordinary things, through faith in the Lord Jesus, and through the transforming power of his Holy Spirit.

What extraordinary thing might you be able to accomplish today through faith in the Lord Jesus? He became one of us, he walked amongst us, and he touched the lives of ordinary people, and turned many of them into extraordinary people. For instance, there's this tax collector, his name was Levi. No-one likes the tax man, not today or any day, no-one's ever liked tax collectors and in Jesus' day tax collectors were corrupt and were traitors, they used to extort money from their own people and give it to the Romans. But Jesus, he loved ordinary people, he loved turning ordinary people into extraordinary people, taking sinful people – it was almost like just a look from him, just an encounter with Jesus – and they'd be convicted of their sin, and repent of it, and ask for forgiveness and then be filled with faith and go on to do great things. Like Levi, the tax collector and traitor, Jesus saved him, and he

went on to do an extraordinary thing. Do you know what he did, Levi is his Hebrew name, his Greek name, its Matthew, and he wrote the gospel that's in your hands right now.

Have you encountered Jesus? I mean really encountered him? Because to really encounter Jesus is to be transformed. Jesus transforms ordinary sinful people like you and me and makes us into extraordinary people ... if we only just let him.

Why not take a moment now and consider what it might mean for your life to truly encounter the Lord Jesus – perhaps even for the first time. What might it mean for how you approach this day that he has made? Perhaps there's some sin you need to confess, or perhaps today might mark a turning point in your life. Or maybe your family is messy like

Jesus' family was – how might you stand out amongst them, and lead them to God, like Jesus did in his family? Take a few minutes now to think through this message, think through this passage, meditate over it, drink deeply from the word of God, and then pray that you might be transformed, pray that these words might lead you to go on to do extraordinary things in the name of the Lord Jesus.