

Three Kings

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[0 : 00] Today's reading is from Matthew chapter 1, which is on page 965 in your Bibles.

So it's Matthew chapter 1, verses 1 to 17. This is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Peres and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.

Peres the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Aminadab, Aminadab the father of Nashon, Nashon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife. Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Ammon, Ammon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah, and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

[1 : 54] After the exile to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abihuud, Abihuud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Elihud, Elihud the father of Eliezer, Eliezer the father of Matan, Matan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

Thus there were fourteen generations in old from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

This is the word of the Lord. Great, good morning all, lovely to see you all this morning.

My name's James, I'm on staff team here, and let me add my welcome to Martin and to the band. Calypso Carol, great song, fantastic, do it every year maybe, yes, no, maybe not.

Some nods at the back. And I was particularly enjoying the Christmas jumpers this morning, and the kids slot, the poop humor, that's about my level. So I was enjoying that quite a bit. And great jumper, where's Craig Bathgate in the back there, great jumper.

[3 : 23] Right, let me pray for us as we start. So, Father, we thank you for this time together as a family, Father. And we thank you for your word that can make us wise in salvation, that points to your great king, your son, Jesus.

In Jesus' name, amen. Great, so it will be enormously encouraging if you could keep your Bibles open. And there should be some sermon points coming up in the slides behind me that might give you a stare, or certainly a bit of hope that we're reaching the end at some point.

Well, that was my best gag this morning. I wasn't expecting that. Right, great, let me start. So as we approach Christmas, I wonder how you're feeling about Christmas. What your feelings are, perhaps excitement.

Remember Elf, Santa's coming. Favorite gag, favorite movie ever. And then maybe dread. Nervous about how the family dynamics are going to be.

So I've got this great friend, and he tells me that he's managed to bond with his father-in-law by always bumping him to him over the dishes over Christmas dinner, because they all make a beeline for the dishes to avoid all the family shenanigans.

[4 : 42] And that's how he's got to bond with his father-in-law. Maybe you're just exhausted from the year, and you want to get through it, get through the season, and move on.

Get 2018 behind you and move on to 2019. Well, another way might be to think about Christmas is what is going to give you hope at Christmas?

What is going to give you hope in 2019? And the answer that we find in our passage this morning, in this long genealogy of quite confusing names, difficult to say, Esther did very well there, is that our hope for Christmas in 2019 is found in God's King, the Messiah.

So Christmas really is a time of kings and queens, isn't it? So we remember Christmas Day, you might sit down and watch the queen's speech, or something like that.

And then we have the nativity, and the nativity's filled with kings, isn't it? So we have the wise men, sometime called kings, and they're going in search of a king, a great new king.

[5 : 56] And then there's that bad king, King Herod, who's trying to thwart them, trying to ruin the plan. And the search for a king in which we can place our hope is really the story of human history.

We're all looking for a ruler that can guide us and give us hope. And so every four years, we go to the polls, we make our votes, and we're looking for a leader that can lead us.

And then every four years, we get disappointed again, slightly, because those leaders never really fulfill those expectations. And the Bible is all about finding that true king that is going to give us hope and help.

And so next term, if you're around next term, we're going to be looking at the book of 2 Samuel. And Samuel is all about finding the king, the people looking for a king.

And, well, let's face it. When it comes down to it, what is it that causes the tension and the issues at Christmas and those family gatherings?

[7 : 03] What is wrong with the world today? Well, it's me wanting to be a king where God should be king instead.

It's me wanting to not wash the dishes when I really should. It's me wanting to rather watch Die Hard on Christmas Day rather than Life is Beautiful or something else.

And so bad kings, when we set ourselves up as kings, are hopeless. But having God as king is the only real hope for the world.

And that bad kings are hopeless is made clear from the middle section of this genealogy that we've just looked at this morning. So if you're taking notes, you might be on to our first point there, and that is the dysfunctional king.

And we're looking at verses 7 to 11. So in these verses, we really have a list of all the kings of Judah in Jesus' genealogy. And what we notice about this list of kings there is some of them are good, some of them are bad, but together they paint a picture of what a dysfunctional king looks like, what one dysfunctional king looks like, and what it looks like when we ignore God and set ourselves up as king instead of God.

[8 : 38] Well, let me try and prove the case to you to convince you of what I'm saying here. So you'll notice there in verse 7, we have Rehoboam. Rehoboam, for your Bible swats, I'll just remind you, you might not remember.

Rehoboam is the king who is so harsh with the people, who ignores God's will, that he causes the kingdom, the Hebrew kingdom, to split into two kingdoms.

And it's enormously distressful for the people, and it's terrible for them. And then we look a little further, we find Uzziah. Uzziah, well, for the most part, he is a good king.

He's really good. He does some really good stuff. But the issue with Uzziah is that he is, well, he's too good at doing good things, and so he becomes proud. And so he thinks he can worship God in his own way and heads into the temple, ignoring all the priests.

And what happens? God says, no, you can't worship me in your own way. And he afflicts Uzziah with leprosy. And so you can go to the Mount of Olives today in Jerusalem, and you'll see this little stone tablet there that says, here lies the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah.

[9 : 51] Do not open. Don't dig here. And then a little note later, we see Hezekiah. And you might remember the great story about Hezekiah, about how he prays faithfully to God for deliverance, and God magnificently delivers Hezekiah from the Assyrians.

Assyrians, I think that's right. But ultimately, what happens with Hezekiah is, despite all the good things that he does, is he relies on his political alliances, his wheeling and dealing, his scheming, rather than on relying on the Lord.

And ultimately, he paves the way to the exile into Babylon that we read about there in verse 11. And then, well, let's look a little further.

We're getting a bit darker, and that's, we're looking at Manasseh. And well, if ever there was a king to make, to be a monster under the bed, to petrify you at Christmas, it is Manasseh.

He's as bad as they get. He's the kind of guy who, well, he did sacrifice his own son, burnt him to pagan gods to bring about what he wanted.

[11 : 06] And he sets up idols in God's temple. And because of his wickedness and rejecting God, the one true God, the people are exiled into Babylon and put away from God, outside of God's presence, outside of hope and happiness.

And what we notice is, well, if we're honest, if we look at ourselves and look at our hearts, we're all a bit like these kings, aren't we? In some ways, we're good. We do good things, don't we, sometimes?

Sometimes we're wise, like Isaiah and Hezekiah. We are faithful. Sometimes we do pray to God. But in other ways, we're utterly ruthless and wicked, if we look at our hearts.

We're like Manasseh in some ways. And in other ways, we're just, well, we're just indifferent to God. We're kind of like, well, God, I know He's there. He's got my back.

I'm kind of faithful. You'll look after me in the end. It'll all work out. And because of this, we are all dysfunctional in trying to be kings of our own lives because we reject God's rule and reign over our own lives.

[12 : 21] Well, you might be sitting there, you might be thinking, well, James, I'm not quite convinced of what you're saying there. I'm a good guy. I'm a good person. Well, speak to me in a week after Christmas and let me know how Christmas went.

I'm sure in a lot of ways, Christmas will be filled with great joy and happiness. But I'm sure there'll also be times when you'll find yourself muttering outrageous things under your breath.

And there have been some mutterings under breath this week in Parliament if you've been following those shenanigans. You might find yourself muttering stuff like, they're such a cheat at Monopoly.

I can't believe it. Why can't my brother or my sister just be a normal person? They're so dysfunctional. Hello? They could at least wash up the dishes after dinner.

I've cooked the whole dinner. I've peeled the potatoes. Why can't they just wash the dishes? It's easy, isn't it? But in this passage, Matthew goes on to show us what it is like for us to have God as our king.

[13 : 31] And this is our second point there. And I've entitled it The Christmas King. We look at verses 12 to 17. The Christmas King. Why I've entitled it The Christmas King? Well, because it's Christmas.

Firstly. But also, it's at Christmas that we see all the things about God as our king that we celebrate in having God as our king and that we celebrate at Christmas.

Why it's such good news for us to have God as our king. That is, God comes to be in us and among us as our king with us.

He comes down to save us. He fulfills all his promises. He does all the things that he says that he's going to do.

All the hopes and fears of all the years. And in this point, I'm going to focus on one verse really and that's verse 16 where we read, and Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

[14 : 47] So just a couple of observations to make from these verses as we zoom through there. So what is it going to look like to have God as our Christmas king? The first thing that we notice is God as humble.

God comes in humility. So previously in verses 7 to 11, we had this long list of dysfunctional kings who all try to be king in God's place, who all say no to God, and what do we have?

We have God coming in humble circumstances. And notice how our verse begins there, and Jacob, the father of Joseph.

Who is Joseph exactly? Well, that's exactly the point. Joseph is not a king. He's a nobody from nowhere's will. He's a carpenter or a builder.

He's a lad. He doesn't have a degree. He's not a professor. He's not a wise man. He's just a regular Joe. And it's from those humble circumstances that the God's king comes.

[15 : 54] So, and then what are we going to notice? What is it going to look like to have God as our Christmas king? Well, that God comes in humility, but next, that God comes among us.

So notice there in verse 16 how the verse describes Joseph not as Joseph's Jesus' father, but as Mary's husband.

And we really, at this point, we're thinking about what Emily so well taught us there about the incarnation. Jesus coming, God coming as a man amongst us.

And so Matthew later goes on to describe how Jesus is born of God's spirit. Jesus is God in person. He is God incarnate.

God is his father. You see, Jesus is, if you watch movies, he is real life Percy Jackson, if you read the books.

[16 : 58] He is the son of the one and only true God. Jesus never claimed to have the words of God. He claimed to be God.

Fully God and fully man. And that is the whole point of Christmas. that God has come as a man amongst his people to be their king.

Well, what does that mean for us? That means that Jesus' words are God's words. And that when Jesus says that the Bible is authoritative and is his word, then it is because, well, Jesus is God.

And it means that we can't say things like, well, I believe the Bible, I trust it, it's just that bit I'm going to ignore. Or that bit can't be relevant today because, well, we're modern people.

The Bible is God's words. God has said it. God has and it means that we can't say stuff like, I like to think of God as, and insert whatever he wants you there, because God has made himself known in his son who has come to be amongst us.

[18 : 21] It means that if we know Jesus, we know exactly what God is like. To have access to Jesus is to have access to God the Father.

And it means also that God must have had a very good reason for coming to be amongst us. So why did God come down to earth as a baby that we remember every Christmas?

Why did he come down? Was it to uplift the poor? Perhaps, maybe. But in many ways, Jesus was ambivalent to the poor.

So Jesus said, you will always have the poor. Was it to be a good moral example or a teacher? Perhaps.

But Jesus also said, where I'm going, you cannot follow. Now, God came in his son, Jesus, to save us.

[19 : 27] God saves. So what is it going to look like to have God as our Christmas king? Well, that God comes in humility, that God comes in Jesus as God amongst us, that God comes as our savior.

And this is literally what the name Jesus means. God saves. If you can read it, you should get it. Jesus is God saves.

So you might remember the movie The Incredibles 2. Has anyone seen it? Maybe. It's not a brilliant, there we go, hands up, fantastic. It's not a brilliant movie. I wouldn't recommend it on the whole heart.

But there was one thing that struck me about the movie. And that was, you've got Mr. I'll give you the plot line. Mr. Mrs. Incredible, they're incredible. They're superheroes. They've got all these superhero powers and they go around saving the world from certain doom.

But they find themselves in a hopeless situation. And what happens is they end up having this baby and it's this baby that turns out to be the most incredible of all the Incredibles and has all these amazing and zany superpowers that it manages to save the world through.

[20 : 43] And that's a lot like what Christmas is. Jesus comes as a baby, a cute little baby who seems cannot speak, cannot read a story, eats lots, poops lots, wheeze lots, but has ultimately come to save the world.

And so what is our final thing? What is it going to look like to have God as our Christmas king from verse 16? And we've noticed there that God comes in humility among us, he comes as our savior, and he comes as the promise keeper.

And so we have that in the last verse, the last phrase there in verse 16, and it's repeated from verse 1 there, Jesus the Messiah.

And the Messiah is really the Hebrew word for God's king who is going to come to keep all of God's promises that he had ever given to his people.

And to make this point clear, we're really going to turn to look at the first verse of our reading this morning, and that's verse 1 there. And so this is our third main point, the promise keeping king, looking at verses 1 to 6.

[21 : 58] So we've got verse 1 there, this is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. So what is it going to look like to have God as our promise keeping king?

The first thing to notice there is that it is going to look like a new creation. So recently I've been walking around Glasgow, it's been raining lots, and in my mind's eye I find myself drifting back to my upbringing, my teenage years on the beach in South Africa, beautiful sunshine, I'm thinking what am I doing here?

It's raining all the time, I should be on the beach sunning myself, and that's where I go in my mind's eye, I keep on going back there. And that's what he's kind of saying in his opening verses of this thing, this is the genealogy, it's like going back to the Garden of Eden.

You see, where he writes, where they've translated, this is the genealogy, this translates literally as the book of the origins, and that's the exact phrase that Moses uses in the book of Genesis to describe the creation of the world.

and it's also the phrase that the Hebrew people gave for the book of Genesis. It's the book of the origins. So having God as our promise-keeping king is to be recreated, is to go back to be recreated to a new creation, except it's going to only be even better.

[23 : 34] It's going to be like going to the beach and not have to worry about aging lines and saggy skin from sun. It's going to be better than anything you've ever imagined.

So think about all the things that are wrong in the world today. Politics, crime, the inflation in Venezuela, a million percent inflation in Venezuela this Christmas.

Can you imagine that? Bonkers. You think about all the things that have gone wrong in your life, whatever it is, all the disappointments of all the year, God says in Jesus, I'm going to make all things new and they're going to be even better than they were in the Garden of Eden.

It's going to be like the Garden, but even better. And so where is our hope to be found at Christmas? Well, often Christmas is presented as a time for giving.

And that's good, that's right, isn't it? But it's presented as our hope is found in our giving to charity.

[24 : 42] So we think of those great Christmas singles, Band-Aid, Do They Know of Christmas? More recently, anyone know the number one Christmas single this year? Maybe.

Yeah, We Built the City on Sausage Rolls. And all the gifting from that, made up by this lad called Lad Baby, is going to charity, which is good.

But that is not going to save us. where's our hope to be found in Christmas? It's to be found in Jesus. And so the challenge for us this Christmas, and looking ahead to 2019, is do our good deeds, our charitable efforts, do they outstrip our efforts and our devotion to Jesus?

Are we prepared to run a marathon? Is that your New Year's resolution for charity? but you find it difficult to pray with God's people at Central Prayer at St.

Silas on Wednesdays, the first Wednesday of each month? What's harder? What are you putting your efforts into, and what does that show about where you've put your hope?

[25 : 57] Do we find that we speak volumes about the hangars in Burma, but we never utter a word to our friends about our real hope of salvation, Jesus?

See, where we put our time and our effort and what we speak about shows where we put our hope and where we find our hope. So what's it going to look like to have God as our promise-keeping king?

Well, it's going to be like a new creation. It's going to mean having all God's promises kept. And this is, notice what Matthew says there.

He says, Jesus the Messiah, in verse 1, the son of David and the son of Abraham. So what is Matthew saying there in those titles there?

He's saying that if you're a Jewish and you're waiting for God's promise-keeping king to come, the Messiah who would fulfill all the Jewish hopes, who would be the king sitting on at David's throne, in David's line, then Jesus is your man.

[27 : 07] But he's also saying that if you are Jewish or non-Jewish and you're waiting for all the promises given by God to the Father, to Father Abraham to be fulfilled, of being God's people, in God's place, under God's rule, with every tribe, tongue, and nation, and having your faith credited to you as righteousness, so that you never have to slave away to be right with God, so that you never have to be unsure about where you stand with God, then Jesus is your man.

And so it means these things. But it also means this, that when something bad happens in your life, something that's not your fault, and you say, God, you promised to care for me, why did this bad thing happen?

It means that God has kept his promise to care for you, and to look after you, even though your circumstances look bad.

Are you going to believe your circumstances, or are you going to believe what God has said, and what he has done in sending Jesus, that he is keeping his promises to you?

God always keeps his promises. So what might you fight over Christmas? My dear, you promised to take out the trash, you promised to do the dishes, but you haven't done it.

[28 : 40] Why don't you just do what you say? That can never be said of God. God always does what he says. So what is it going to look like to have God as our promise-keeping king?

It's going to be a new creation. It's going to mean having all God's promises kept. And then thirdly, it's going to be a welcome for the unwelcomed. So I wonder if you'll just turn and just consider the five women that we see in this genealogy.

So it's Tamar, Ruth, Rahab, Mary, and then Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah.

Matthew draws attention to these in that he mentions these women where Luke hasn't. So Luke gives a big genealogy of Jesus.

Luke doesn't mention these women, but Matthew draws attention to them, and he mentions them because he wants us to notice him, because he wants us to notice something about what it's going to look like for us to have God as our king, and what God's kingdom is going to look like.

[29 : 57] And the first thing to notice there, just two things to notice, is that two of these women were completely outside of God's people. They were pagan worshippers, as it were.

They were as far from God's kingdom and God's people as anyone could ever be. So we think of Ruth, the Moabites, and we think of Rahab, the Canaanites.

They were clueless and hopeless in their ignorance and sin. They were happy worshipping their pagan gods, but yet somehow, in God's providence and kindness and wisdom, they have found a way into God's people and have been included amongst God's people.

And the point of this is that in Jesus, God fulfills his plan to be a blessing to all people, no matter where they are in the earth, in Jesus, everyone is blessed when they come to the Lord, trusting in Jesus as their king.

You see, Jesus is good news for all people. Do we believe that? That Jesus is good news? He is the best news for all people.

[31 : 18] Do we believe that? And the second thing to notice there is that all of these women in the courts of public opinion, perhaps not always the best courts, are sexually immoral.

So we notice Tamar, she seduces her father-in-law. Rahab is a prostitute. Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, commits adultery. Ruth lies at Boaz's feet, perhaps a euphemism, whatever else that may mean for indiscretion.

And then Mary, in the court of public opinion, is pregnant before wedlock. But all of them have been included in Jesus' family tree.

All of them have been included in God's family in a really intimate and special way, being the descendants of Jesus our Lord and the King of the universe.

And the point that Matthew is making is this, is that no matter what has happened in your life, no matter what you have done, you're welcomed into God's family.

[32 : 32] It is an extraordinary and radical forgiveness and inclusiveness that only God can give. And it's the kind of radical welcome that is the real miracle and blessing of Christmas.

It's so radical that it should literally flip your life upside down in 2019. So, as we look forward to Christmas, as we look forward to 2019, where are our allegiances going to lie?

Who's going to be king at Christmas and 2019? Is it going to be yourself? Am I going to watch bad guys for the third time? Or am I going to hand the remote over to someone else?

Is it, or is it going to be Lord Jesus? Are you going to accept Jesus as your king at Christmas in 2019?

Are you going to seek to serve him with your full heart, putting all your hope in him, trusting him as a savior, trusting that in him all God's promises have been kept?

[33 : 43] Well, what about you? I don't know. It might be that you've come here this morning and you've never placed your trust in Jesus fully. Perhaps today is a good day to trust Jesus as your king for the first time.

Maybe it is that 2018 has just been a really miserable year. It hasn't been brilliant. And if you look back at yourself honestly over the year, you think, well, I haven't really done brilliantly this year.

In a lot of ways, I've lived for myself this year. Maybe it's 2019 and Christmas is a good time to put your hope in Jesus as your king.

To trust that he has forgiven and forgotten everything that you have done that you are ashamed of, that you think could cut you off from God's presence. Maybe you've been coasting along a bit.

You're kind of there or there about. Maybe there's some positive changes that you could make in the following year about where you put your time and your effort that could firmly show your devotion and allegiance to Jesus as your king.

[34 : 55] Maybe it's committing to a yearly Bible reading plan. Maybe it's coming on a men's night away. Maybe it's going to central prayer. Maybe it's just drawing alongside someone in need and saying, let's pray together.

Let's read the Bible together. There's lots of ways that we can serve King Jesus in 2019. There's lots of ways that we can show that our hope is in Jesus in the year to come.

Why not give that a thought in the final moments of service and as we head out and chat over coffee and whatnot afterwards and as we celebrate communion later.

Let me pray for us. So Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you that in Jesus you have come among us as a king.

We thank you that in him we find our only true hope. please help us to live our lives in devotion and obedience to King Jesus in whom all your promises are yes and amen and have been kept.

[36 : 11] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.