

The End of the Ages Has Dawned in Christ

Matthew 1:1–25

Doug Van Meter

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

**"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Emmanuel"**

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(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

(Matthew 1:1–25)

Introduction

As we draw closer to celebrating the advent of Jesus—his birth into this world—the question must be asked, what is the significance of Jesus? Is his life on the same level as Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck? Or perhaps, his story is similar to that of Thor, son of Odin? Better yet, was Jesus the forerunner to Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Theresa?

What is the significance of Jesus?

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ is put forward in a rather different light. For the apostle Matthew, Jesus is said to be the *apex*—the *centrepiece*—of all of history, of all that God has done with humanity. Matthew shows that *the end of the ages has dawned in Christ*.

But just how does he do this?

Well, Matthew’s Gospel begins with a genealogy—a list of names. You might be thinking, “Well, that is anticlimactic!” This is no way to begin a story. Where is the tension? Where is the rising conflict?

And when we drop down and see the list of names—some familiar, some strange—we are certainly tempted to see this as a part of our Bibles that we want to skim over and move straight to the action, as it were—the accounts of Jesus walking on water and feeding thousands.

However, I would suggest to you that something rather *particular* is happening here at the beginning. The Gospel of Matthew is not simply a book of historical data detailing the life of Jesus. Instead, it “is a message that is staking and making a claim upon its hearers” (Pennington). What is written here cannot be regarded as “mere” historical data or only the backdrop to what we have in the letters of Paul, or even what we find in the rest of the Gospel of Matthew.

The Gospels are written not to “flatter us that they may please us and enchant us,” but instead “to subject us” (Pennington). That is, the story of Jesus is meant to be *heard* and *heeded*; it is written not just to *inform*, but to *transform*. Yes, the story of Jesus’ life *is* historical, but it is also “history-making and history-transcendent.” (Pennington)

And so, as we unravel the text before us, may our hearts be softened to what God has done in Christ.

The Story of Israel: Creation, Covenant, Kingdom, Exile

The story of Israel, revealed in this opening chapter, is the story of creation, covenant, kingdom and exile.

Creation

The point of the genealogy is to tell *the story of Israel*. And this is our first point: Understanding the significance of Jesus requires us to know *the story of Israel*. What begins to unfold before our eyes *is the script of Israel*—her story, from Abraham to Christ. And vv. 1–17 gives us a nice sandwich of this story. If you look in your Bible, v. 1 and v. 17 seem to mirror each other, with three characters standing out: Jesus, David, and Abraham. The point of this mirror—this sandwich—is to emphasize and draw our attention to what lies in the middle. *That* is what Matthew wants us to take notice of.

But before we get there, it is important to notice the subtle, yet very intentional, detail of Matthew. Verse 1 reads: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

The first five words literally read, “The book of the genesis.” You see, while the script of Israel unfolds, Matthew supplements it with another parallel and overarching script—the story of Jesus, which more clearly begins to unfold in vv. 18–25.

But, in stating “the book of genesis,” Matthew certainly evokes in our minds and calls to attention the place and time where everything all started: the very beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, as we read in Genesis (2:4; 5:1). This is the first of four realities in Israel’s history—that of creation.

For Matthew, the birth of Christ far more than another step or point in history. Instead, the birth of Christ is likened to the beginning of something new, a new start, a story of renewal, of change, of making all things new.

But, you may be asking, what would this man Jesus be making new? Why is there a need of a new start, of renewal?

Well, the Bible is unashamedly clear that God created the heavens and the earth for his own glory and enjoyment. The initial creation was the first canvas, the first act on the stage of history, that God chose to display his own glory—all his beauty, worth, power, and holiness.

One of the chief ways in which God displayed his glory was in creating man and woman in his own image and likeness. These two words don’t necessarily speak to the fact that we have emotions or that we’re intellectual—not that these things are excluded. Rather “image” and “likeness” speak of *kingship* and *sonship*—meaning that we are royal vice-regents, meant to rule with God, in the context of a familial relationship—in covenant with him.

Yet, as the story goes, Adam and Eve rebelled from God’s rule and set themselves up as so-called lords over creation. They committed treason. And all who followed in their lineage are sons and daughters of treason. The covenant relationship with God, fractured. The shared rule with God was disposed, and replaced by our own pride and arrogance. This is the former *creation*, the backdrop to God’s dealing with Israel. What follows in the biblical narrative is God restoring his reign and covenantal relationship with the sons of men.

But just how did he do this?

Covenant

Matthew's genealogy enlightens us: He tells us that Jesus is "the son of Abraham" (v. 1).

Who was Abraham? In the book of Genesis, God called Abraham by his grace and made certain promises to him: to make his name great, to give him a land to dwell in, to give him innumerable offspring, and to bless all the nations of the world through his offspring. It's the idea of "I will be your God and you will be my people." This is the oath or covenant that God made with Abraham, the man of faith.

And so, for Matthew to tell us that Jesus is the Son of Abraham is to evoke and remind us of the covenant that God had made and promised to Abraham: that in him all the nations would be blessed. God sought to restore the covenantal relationship with his people. This is the second reality of Israel's story—that of covenant.

Kingdom

The third reality of Israel's story is the promise of a king. Jesus is said to be "the son of David" (v. 1).

Who was David? Through Abraham's offspring, God set up a monarchy, a *kingdom*, in which he made certain promises to David: the promise of an eternal kingdom, one in which righteousness and justice and mercy would flow from the throne. It was a promise to restore God's reign to the earth.

And so these twin ideas of kingdom and covenant is what pieces the story of Israel together.

Exile

Sadly, this is not the whole story of Israel, is it? As noted above, the characters of Jesus, Abraham and David serve as the top and bottom of the sandwich of Israel's story. Although marked by covenant and kingdom promises, the story of Israel is marked by other events.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah.

(Matthew 1:2–6)

What is Matthew doing here?

First of all, it would have been very strange for a genealogy to entail the names of the women. But there is more to it than that. What do we know about these women?

Tamar's story is one of shame and neglect. In Genesis 38 we read of Judah—the son of Israel—who impregnated his widowed daughter-in-law, Tamar, with twins. Yet when he learned that she

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was pregnant, he sought to burn her to death, not knowing that it was himself he who had gotten her pregnant. The hypocrisy was of another level.

In Joshua 2, we read of Rahab who herself was a Gentile prostitute living in the city of Jericho. But she helped two spies of Israel spy out the land before they besieged the walls. And so the Lord spared her life from the destruction of Jericho.

Ruth too was a Gentile—a Moabite—who accompanied Naomi back to Israel as a widow.

And notice Matthew's words in v. 6: "David was the father of Solomon *by the wife of Uriah.*" The name of the woman is not even mentioned. Why not? I'd suggest Matthew's point here is to emphasize the gross reality of what happened: *This was adultery.* David, the king, committed adultery with the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba) and ended up killing Uriah because Bathsheba was pregnant. It's a dreadful story of pain, lies, abuse of authority, treason, and fornication.

And this is not to even mention the awful, godless kings who ruled on Yahweh's behalf in this genealogy.

What is Matthew's purpose in all this? Surely it is no way to prepare the story for Jesus? What kind of messed up family tree is this?

What have here is not a sloppy piece of history and biography. Matthew is trying to make a point. This is the story of Israel. Israel was to be a nation of priests and kings to God. To them belonged the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

And yet, theirs is a story of grief, pain, suffering, persecution, sexual immorality, abuse, prostitution, lying, deceit, idol worship, the slaughter of innocent, fear, neglect, and murder. So much so that they found themselves in *exile*, driven away from the Lord and his presence. They were pushed into captivity and expulsion—forsaken by God because of their sins (see v. 11).

For Matthew to highlight and even mention the stories of Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and the exile in Babylon is to air the dirty laundry of this nation. This was a people that needed saving from their sins. Yet the inclusion of Gentile women and irregular marriages also foreshadows the universal spread of God's blessing to even include those outside of Israel.

But here lies the point of the story of Israel: They were a people in distress and despair, exiled by God for their sins, in no better place than where Adam and Eve found themselves: cast out of the garden, away from the presence of God. And yet they awaited the promised king and the blessing of Abraham.

Dear friends, your trials and sins are not unlike the story of Israel here. Those abusive relationships of your past, those who slander you at work, that sin that you cannot put off—all of these are the result of a fall and rebellion against God. Our idolatry separates us from him the life giver and brings destruction. Your exile from God will remain, so long as you are harbouring sin. What sin is docked in your harbour?

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But what hope is there for us and for the restoration of Israel's plight? For it is supposed to be from Israel that the blessing of Abraham to the nations is to come. What we need to see is that God is doing a work even amidst the suffering and sin and the evil that swarms around us—even the evil that shapes history. Even this is not beyond God's purposes.

The story of Israel is full of tension. On the one hand, God has guaranteed covenantal promises to his people; on the other, he also requires an obedience that they cannot supply.

God has promised to set up a kingdom—coming from the lineage of King David—that will have no end, which will be an everlasting kingdom of peace and prosperity. And yet the story of Israel points to *failure*. It points to disobedience and to the rule of God disposed.

This is the context for what Matthew is about to unfold for us. Here lies the backdrop for the new stage, the new play, a new script, one in which all that has come before finds its culmination. The seeds that God planted in all of history, finally blossomed and flowered in the person and work of his Son, Jesus.

The Story of Jesus: New Creation, Kingdom, Covenant, and Restoration from Exile

Let us now consider the story of Jesus. This is our second major point.

New Creation

Corresponding to the story of Israel, the story of Jesus is the crescendo to the slow-brewing and ever-growing symphony of God's dealings with humanity.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Emmanuel"

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

(Matthew 1:18–25)

As noted above, the birth of Christ is a story of renewal. Verse 1 speaks of a new creation. The first of four realities of the story of Jesus is that *he begins a new creation*—a new day has dawned in Christ.

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We read that Mary is found to be with child before their marriage day—something miraculous and impossible, unless she was unfaithful or engaged in immorality. And this is Joseph’s first thought.

Verse 19 tells us that Joseph, out of his sense of justice and goodness, resolved to divorce her, not wanting to put her to shame.

Even here, we can already sense the in-breaking of a new creation in the very lives of Mary and Joseph. What had characterised Israel’s history and story is strongly contrasted with Joseph’s interactions with Mary. Instead of neglecting and abusing this woman—like Judah did to Tamar, or David to Bathsheba—Joseph sought to not put her to shame, to not expose her vulnerable situation, but to instead act justly—with care and uprightness of heart.

I wonder, what do we do in situations where we have power and authority? Do we abuse that authority? Or do we use it to cultivate others and invest in others? What is our concern for the shame and honour of others? Or are we intent on raising up our own honour at the *expense* of others’ shame?

Also, what is our temptation in moments when things aren’t exactly how we had planned them? Or what is our response to circumstances that we do not quite understand? Do hard circumstances provide us with excuses for our sin?

Friends, Joseph is here worthy of imitation. His actions mirror the radical change God is about to affect in the story of Israel.

By God’s grace and kindness, an angel alerted Joseph to the unique situation at hand: “Joseph, son of David, *do not fear* to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

What a reassurance! Friends, do you see the kindness of our God? His gentle and reassuring word to his people? “Do not fear, son of David. This woman you are engaged to is carrying *the* Son of David.”

That Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit is to state a miracle. Yet, the miracle was not some sort of party trick where God is saying, “Look what I can do!” Neither is it or random test for faith, “Do you believe in something *this* crazy?” No, this is another Genesis all over again. This is a Spirit-of-God-hovering-over-the-waters moment. It is a Sarah’s-barren-womb inauguration—all things becoming new. God had once again created *something* out of nothing—*ex nihilo*. From the emptiness of Mary’s womb comes the fullness of God’s *presence*.

Here is the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ: because in the person of Jesus, God’s presence will once again dwell with man. We read in vv. 22–23: “All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).”

In the first creation, God’s very presence dwelt among Adam and Eve in the garden. But their fall and rebellion brought about separation and exile from God, much like the exile Israel experienced: It is ultimately “sin which separates man from God’s presence.” (France, 84)

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You see, the significance of Jesus' birth is that God will at last *dwell* among his people again. The effects of Eden are reversed—man and God once more together.

In the story of Christ, his birth ushers in a new age, a new beginning, one in which all of God's interactions with humanity are being rewritten. It is a new creation, a new cosmos, and with it, *a new humanity*—Christ, himself, being the firstfruits of this new humanity.

Friends, it is not the change of a job, or the change of a spouse, or the sudden arrival of better circumstances that your life hinges on—your life hinges on Christ and your *response* to him; *the end of the ages have dawned in Jesus*.

Yet there is more to the story of Jesus. This brings us to the *second* reality of the story of Jesus: the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham.

Covenant

Matthew tells us that Jesus is the Son of Abraham (v. 1), which is to state that he is a *true Jew* (France). As I said earlier, God had made certain covenant promises to Abraham. At the heart of the promises made to Abraham is the sense, the idea of: "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (cf. Genesis 17:7–8).

The good news of Jesus is that the promises to Abraham are finally fulfilled in Christ! In Galatians 3:16, the apostle Paul reflects on this truth and tells us: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ."

The point is that when God promised to bless the nations through Abraham's seed, he was to do so *through Christ*. *Christ is the blessing of Abraham to the nations!*

Furthermore, the sign and the presence of the Holy Spirit (vv. 18, 20) is no random detail. It speaks of a new age, of *the* promises to Abraham as fulfilled. Again, in Galatians 3:12–14 Paul tells us that,

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—so that in Christ Jesus the *blessing of Abraham* might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the *promised Spirit*—through faith."

Did you catch that? The blessing of Abraham to the nations/Gentiles *is* the Holy Spirit to be received by faith.

Friends, it is no mistake that the Holy Spirit has a part in this virgin conception and in the birth of Christ. The presence of the Spirit of God lets us know that all that God has promised to Abraham has found its fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus Christ: Jesus is the blessing of Abraham.

It is fundamentally through Jesus that God can be our God and that we can be his people. The presence of the indwelling Spirit assures us of this and points to a new age—a Messianic age—with blessing and a new covenant relationship with God, sealed with his own blood—and not just to Jews but all people!

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Christian, what a comfort it is to know that God gives to us his very own Son. “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:32)? God is a covenant-keeping God: faithful, true, steadfast and abounding in mercy. God has given you his Holy Spirit as a *seal* of his promises yet to come.

What are you tempted to confuse God’s blessing of the Spirit with? Does your understanding of “feeling blessed” hinge on your company’s successfulness? On how many children you have? On how many followers you have in Instagram? Friends, these things will pass away. The blessing of the Holy Spirit is here to conform you to the image of Christ.

Instead of talking about work failures or successes, or of children’s awards or Instagram stories, why don’t you instead look to encourage others about the work of the Spirit in their lives, to look for evidence of God’s Spirit and grace at work in them?

So, God in Christ will dwell among his people, and they will receive the blessings of Abraham—the promised Spirit in Christ.

Kingdom

However, there is a third reality to the story of Jesus: God is also ushering in a new kingdom. We read in vv. 22–23: “All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us).” Again, Matthew would have us know that what was taking place was not some unexpected series of events. Instead, it was the careful and perfect timing of God’s unfolding plan, fulfilling what was previously spoken by Isaiah.

This is our all-knowing and all-wise God. Nothing escapes his notice. God did not miss that unfair word from your boss. He sees those who have brought shame to your name. He knows the pain in your body. He is all-powerful and all-knowing. But he is also the *good* King.

That Mary was to conceive by the Holy Spirit was spoken about by the prophet Isaiah. These verses here appear in Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah’s prophecies came at a desperate time in Israel’s history. It was against this background of the apostate and God-hating King Ahaz that these words appear. And in this context, the promise of a virgin conception was to speak of a day in the future when *the light of the coming perfect King would arrive*, a day in which the days of King David would again be known by all, a day in which righteousness and justice would again rule.

For Matthew to quote Isaiah here is to *apply* this to Jesus. The birth of Christ marks the dawning of this new King and his rule. The good news of the gift of Christ is that God is now restoring his heavenly reign on earth in society and in our individual lives (Pennington).

With a new world order—a new cosmos—comes a new rule, and this time it is God himself in human flesh.

The rest of Jesus’ life testifies to God’s kingdom breaking into the fallen and formerly rejected rule of God among his people.

We read in 2 Samuel 7:12–13 of the promise of God made to David:

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When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Furthermore, in Isaiah 61, we read of a day when good news will be preached to the poor, where the hearts of the broken-hearted will be bound up, liberty will be proclaimed to the captives, and it will be the year of the Lord's favour.

Friends, this description of a new kingdom begins to unfold in Christ. The reign of God is at last here.

The story of Jesus is that God is restoring his reign from heaven to earth and from creation to new creation. That Jesus could heal all who came to him and subdue the forces of darkness speaks to his power over both physical and spiritual realms. He is the King.

Friends, we live in the already-but-not-yet. God's reign in Christ has begun. It's been started, yet we are still leaning forward, peering over the edges of our seats, awaiting with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God (Romans 8:19). The Christian life is a waiting game, but it is an exercise in moving and leaning toward Christ in expectation, in faith. All of human history is a walk down the wedding aisle, where we anticipate our eternal marriage with him.

So the story of Jesus brings a new creation: God dwelling with man. It speaks of covenants fulfilled and blessings to the nations, a new King and the rule of God in Christ and, finally, with this, God ushers in restoration from exile. This is the fourth reality of the story of Jesus.

Restoration

If we remember Matthew's presentation of Israel's story, the main point that he makes is the reality of Israel's *exile*—as a result of their sin, specifically, their idolatry. Because of their rejection of God and worship of idols, the living God drove them into exile. They, who were supposed to be light to the nations, were removed altogether as witnesses.

But now the true light had come.

God's kingdom and covenant now converged, coming together into the person and work of Jesus—the obedient Son and Servant of the Lord. It was Israel's hardened heart and sin that drove them into exile, separating them from God's presence. And it is for sin that Christ came. Jesus came to bring out of exile all those who would trust in him—a new exodus, if you like: out of bondage to sin and into the presence of God.

We read in v. 21: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." The name of Jesus means "Yahweh saves." And praise God that this is true of Jesus!

Friends, the story of Israel serves to ready us for Christ, to set the stage for God's final act—the redemption of his people from exile and saving from sin.

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You see, Jesus would go on to live a perfectly obedient life. He would go on to be tempted by Satan and yet rise as the obedient Son. He is the last Adam. He would go on to be the offspring of Abraham that would bring blessing to the nations, turning the hearts of men and women back to God. He would go on to walk before God and bring light to the nations. He is the true Israel. He would rule and exercise authority over creation and the demonic world. He is the true heir to David's throne. He would speak of glorious truths and reveal the Father. He is the prophet greater than Moses. Where all of humanity had failed, Christ was victorious.

The good news for us is that we can be saved from our sins. Jesus taught that we must “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

As I have already observed, the gospel is not simply a matter of historical data or information detailing the life of Jesus. No, instead, it is a message that is staking and making a claim upon its hearers. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message to be headed, and to be *obeyed!*

Jesus calls all of us—men and women, young and old, educated and uneducated, black and white, rich and poor—to turn from their sins and turn to God, in faith, trusting in the work of Christ on the cross. Jesus calls us to trust in his death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Christ became a curse for us, removing the status of exile and stranger and treason that was against our name. And when we place our faith in him we are united with him and receive the indwelling Spirit.

In Jesus, God offers us a transferal: from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son; from the line and lineage of Adam—a lineage of treason against God—to a line of a faithful and obedient Son, Jesus the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah and King. It is a new age, in which God is reconciling all things to himself through Christ, under his restored reign and under a new covenant.

Friends, if you have not considered the significance of Jesus' life before, please don't leave this study without contemplating the great gift of God in Christ: that your sins may be forgiven. What matters is not your ethnicity or lineage, but how you respond to King Jesus. Turn from your sin and be united with him, and you will be received as sons and daughters—with new citizenship—one that extends to include not just Jews. They shall be “his people.” Jesus would go on to *redefine* who the people of God are. In his own words, he said that his mother and brothers are those who do “the will of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 12:50).

Today, the people of God—this new creation—are expressed and seen in the visible church—local churches. Every local church gathering is like an embassy of heaven on earth. We are the citizens of heaven, of the new creation, living in such a way as to reflect heaven and the new earth itself.

We are known for our love for one another, a people who are able to forgive one another, a people who are passionate for the spread of God's good news. Our relationships with one another will be what lets the world know that we belong to him. In the local church, the idea of family is transformed not to just mean those who are related to you by blood, but by those who share the same heavenly Father, the same Lord, the same Spirit. And this family is not supposed to make sense—it's a supernatural reality, created by God.

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Friends, have you considered the local church? She is like another Garden of Eden whilst we wait for the final restoration. We have the unique job and responsibility of representing God on earth—his rule—but we have the Spirit, which enables us to do just that. The last Adam is serious about the last Eve, the church. And so should you, if you claim to follow him. We have the promise that he will be with us till the end of the age. This is how Matthew closes his Gospel: Jesus is the beginning and the end. What an encouragement!

Conclusion

So, what is the significance of Jesus? It is this: God through Christ has once again dwelt among his people, ushering in a new age, a new creation, a new cosmos, in which Christ is King, and the blessing of Abraham extends to all the nations—to all those who respond to the King in faith and repentance of their sins.

The final act has begun, and now we wait, by faith, for the final consummation and restoration of all things.

AMEN