

CREDENTIALS CONFIRMED!

Matthew 1:1-17

It is a very critical matter to have the right credentials when it comes to important people, places, and positions. For instance, you could never walk up to the front gate of the White House and expect to get in unless you could prove your identity and that you had an appointment. If you are young man in Great Britain, unless your name happens to be Prince William or Prince Harry your chances of becoming the King of England are zero. But there are times when you can get around the credentials barrier if you are conniving enough to do it. We were all amused two years ago when a Washington D.C. couple crashed a White House state dinner, actually shook hands with the President, and left the Secret Service with a lot of egg on its face. A number of years ago I heard of a man who somehow acquired a Los Angeles Laker's basketball uniform, put it on and snuck in the back of the line as the team was leaving the dressing room before a game, and actually participated in warm-ups for a very brief time before he was discovered and probably tarred and feathered.

But friends, I can tell you one place in the universe where security will never be breached. And that is in the throne room of God! There will never be anyone sitting on the throne but God Himself and no one at His right hand but Jesus. And when God sent His Son into the world 2000 years ago, He wanted the whole world to know that His Son had the right credentials to rule, that He was no imposter, but that He was the real deal. And today we are going to see how God proved it. We are going to see that there is absolutely no doubt that Jesus had a right to call Himself the Son of God, because His credentials were perfect! And we are also going to see some other very precious truths hidden inside of all things, a genealogy!

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 1. Matthew is a book written by a Jew to the Jews. By all means its gospel message was for Jew and Gentile alike, as the Great Commission at the end of the book demonstrates. "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. 28:19). But a major purpose of Matthew is to convince the Jews that Jesus was indeed the Messiah of God, Whom the prophets foretold would come hundreds of years before.

There are a number of facts that bear this out. No less than 11 times in Matthew when something happened Matthew commented, "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet", and he is the only gospel writer to use such a phrase. But each time it occurred Matthew was pointing out an event in Jesus' life that one of the OT prophets had already prophesied concerning a coming Messiah. Ten times Matthew uses the title "Son of David" referring to Jesus, which was paramount to the Jews as we shall see in a moment. But Mark and Luke use the title "Son of David" only six times combined, and John doesn't use it at all. And it was

Matthew who quoted Jesus when He said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). And that quote would have warmed the heart of any good Jew.

So Matthew gives all of these reasons for the Jews to accept Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. But none of these things would matter unless Matthew could prove to them something else first. He had to show them that Jesus was from the seed of Abraham, the Father of the Jews. If Jesus was not in the lineage of Abraham He was Xed off the potential Messiah list immediately. For God had made the promise to Abraham, “In you shall all of the families of the earth be blessed”. Or more specifically, “In your offspring the whole world will be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3). But that’s not all. The Messiah also had to be of the lineage of David. For God had expressed just as clearly that Messiah would be of David’s seed. God told Israel through Isaiah, “For unto us a child is born.....Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom...” (Is. 9:6-7).

So in his book Matthew tackles the issue of Jesus’ lineage right out of the starting block, by listing Jesus’ ancestors from Abraham all the way up to Joseph. And may I interject here that this is the legal lineage of Jesus that gave Him the right to David’s throne, and not His biological lineage. For Joseph was certainly not Jesus’ biological father; He was born of a virgin. And the Holy Spirit was careful to make this clear. Look at v. 15-16. The Holy Spirit said to Matthew, “Don’t you dare write that Joseph begot Jesus”. So Matthew takes pains to break with the terminology he’s used for fifteen verses and says only that Joseph was the husband of Mary. But when any Jew read Jesus’ genealogy there was no question in his mind. He could truthfully say, “Jesus was certainly one of us and legally qualified to be our Messiah”.

But today I want us to see three additional truths from Jesus’ genealogy that God showed His people, three truths that would strengthen them amidst any and every trial that they would ever encounter. And God would have you and I draw strength from these precious truths today, too. And the first truth that we see is that **God’s Word is sure**. When God said to Abraham that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed, it came to pass just exactly like God said that it would when Jesus was born. And likewise when God said that this promised one, this Messiah, would also be of David’s seed, it came to pass when Jesus was born. And for first century Judaism the fulfillment of these promises was a magnificent thing.

You see, for the last several hundred years no nation had suffered more than the Jews. They had returned from captivity around 538 BC, but they were still subjects of the nation of Persia. The practice of their faith had deterrated to dead formalism and God had shut up the heavens for 400 years. There had been not one prophetic word from God. Can you imagine what it would be like if not one single man in America had preached the true word of God since 1611?

But in addition to the spiritual bareness, the Jews had been brutally overrun by the Syrian governor Antiochus Epiphanes, when in 165 BC he slaughtered 50,000 of them and sent 40,000 more back into slavery. And he topped off this holocaust and pillage by sacrificing a pig on the altar in the temple, the most abhorrent thing to a Jew that was imaginable. And the few Jews who had remained faithful to Jehovah were crying, "How long, O Lord? How long will it be before you make good on your promise to send us a Redeemer?" (Luke 1:68-75).

So you see, friends, when Jesus was born, and fulfilled the requirement of being the descendent of both Abraham and David, and then began to demonstrate that He was indeed the Messiah by His words and His works, every Jew who was still faithful to Jehovah was singing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow! He has kept His precious promises made to our fathers hundreds and hundreds of years ago".

Friends, when you look around you and look around the globe, you see a lot of similarities between the first and twenty-first centuries. We are living in a world that desperately needs an anchor, a solid rock on which to stand. Some of you read this week in the Tuscaloosa News that almost one half of all Americans are either living on poverty level or are scrapping by on low income status. But friends, most of these people still live like kings and queens compared to other parts of the world. Statistics tell us that almost one half of the world's population lives on \$2.50 or less a day. One fourth of the world's population does not have electricity, and the number classified as going hungry is almost 1 billion. Almost one out of seven people in the world don't have enough to eat. Persecution of Christians is rampant world-wide, and we even feel it in a nation whose Pledge of Allegiance says, "One nation, under God" and on whose currency we read, "In God we trust". And the distressing thing about this is that things are not getting better, their getting worse. So where is our hope?

Well, let me tell you that if you don't know God you don't have any hope. If your hope is in the solutions that men can come up with, just look around and see where those solutions have gotten us so far. But if you do know God, the old hymn writer Isaac Watts stated the basis of our hope just about as best as possible when he wrote, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word. What more can He say than to you He has said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?" Isaac Watts exclaims, "Child of God, you have a foundation that is unshakable! It will bear up under pressure that seems to be unbearable. It is God's Holy Word, and it will never fail!"

But Mr. Watts was simply echoing what the psalmist had declared thousands of years before. Listen to His promises from Psalm 119:

81: My soul faints for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word.

114: You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.

147: I rise before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; I hope in Your word.

And in v. 50 the psalmist tells us just why he hopes in God's Word: "...Your word has given me life". It is God's Word that gives us life...eternal life and abundant, victorious life day by day".

But I pose the question to you – why? Why does what you read in this book have such life giving power? I'll tell you. Every promise that you read in the Word of God is guaranteed by the character of God. Tell me, what reflects a man's character more than anything about him? You got it – his word. If a man always does what he says he will do when he says he will do it, that man stands out head and shoulders above the crowd, because he is a man of his word. Now, beloved, the Bible says in Titus 1:2 that God cannot lie. And when He makes a promise, His very character is at stake. If He fails to make good on His promise, He is a liar, He is untrustworthy, He is no longer holy and righteous and worthy of our praise.

You may be here this morning, and you brought a burden in with you that is just about to break you. It is with you night and day and it saps out of you all of your joy and all of your strength. And God would have you to see His promise to send a Messiah that He first gave to Abraham around 2000 years before Bethlehem, and see how He kept His Word to Abraham and then to David, and He would have you to know and believe that **God's Word is sure**. And He would have you to find one of His promises in His Word and claim it as your own, and know and rejoice that as surely as God is real that God will keep His Word to you. Listen to the testimony of Joshua concerning Israel entering the Promised Land: "So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass" (Joshua 21:43, 45).

But there is another truth from the genealogy of Jesus I want us to see, and that is **God's ways are sovereign**. Look with me again at verses 2 and 3. God tells us that Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. And by the way, the word "begot" simply means that Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers. Verse 11 says that Josiah begot Jeconiah and His brothers. So Jacob begot Judah and his brothers, Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers, and Judah begot Perez and Zerah. But I find it interesting that Matthew mentions Judah's and Jeconiah's brothers and also Zerah in his genealogy. He mentions no one else's brothers, and surely most if not all of those men had brothers. And Judah's brothers and Zerah have no part whatsoever in the matter being addressed – the lineage of Jesus. So why do their names appear at all? Well, beloved, I really do not fully understand why. But I do know that by being there we can see a marvelous truth about God, and that is, **God's ways are sovereign**. Why did God choose Judah over the rest of Jacob's twelve sons to be an ancestor of Jesus? Why did God choose Perez over his brother Zerah? And for that matter, why

did God choose Jacob over Esau? No one knows but God, and no one has to know but God. As Psalm 115:3 says, “....our God is in Heaven. He does whatever He pleases”.

Beloved, just as it is a comfort to know that **God’s Word is sure**, it is equally comforting to know that **God’s ways are sovereign**. God’s has a purpose for all things, and God has a plan, a perfect plan. And even when life is crazy and life is hard and we don’t understand, we can rest in the knowledge if we belong to Him, God has a perfect, sovereign plan. You may be one of the ones I mentioned awhile ago who is struggling just to pay the bills. I want you to know that God has a plan in your situation, and He wants you to stand still and see the glory of God as He works His plan. Some of you may be in an awful job situation, some of you may be in an awful home situation. Beloved, God has a plan!! God sent Joseph to Egypt as a slave and then sent him to prison, but God had a plan. Joseph became a mighty ruler and saved many lives. The apostle Paul knew the rats in the prisons of every town in Asia on a first name basis, but God had a plan. Paul had more influence for Christ than any man who has ever lived. And whatever your trial today, know that God has a wonderful, glorious plan. He wants to use you for His glory in your trial, and He wants to grow you into the likeness of His Son, and bless you in the process, just as He did Joseph and Paul. So don’t kick and scream because of what’s going on in your life. Trust God to do something great. His ways are sovereign. He has a plan.

But I may not have described your situation at all. Things may be going great for you. God may have blessed you with a loving family, plenty of money, good health, a good job, and great favor with all the VIPs in your life. I want you to know, it is all by God’s sovereign plan. You had nothing to do with it. God called you to salvation and saved you by His grace. God gave you the intelligence to get that job, He gave you the initiative to work hard and achieve the successes you’ve achieved. You may be thinking, “I don’t buy that preacher. God certainly blessed me, but I did my part, too.” Well, the Bible does exhort, “Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men” (Col. 3:23). But concerning all of the great achievements of the apostle Paul, here’s what He had to say, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, **but the grace of God which was with me**”. Paul said whatever I’ve done, it has not been the result of my intelligence or my diligence, it has been by the grace of God.

Even if you are not a football fan, you must be fascinated by what’s going on with Tim Tebow right now. In all of my half century of following college and professional athletics, I have never seen an athlete who has attempted to glorify God receive so much media attention. All of the sports talk shows are talking about Tim Tebow and his faith, but so are the network morning shows, and even one major network nightly news program. But why Tim? Why not someone else? Surely there

have been athletes in generations past who've loved the Lord as much as Tim Tebow. Bobby Richardson of the old NY Yankees did. Reggie White of the Green Bay Packers did. Even now, Colt McCoy of the Cleveland Browns does. But no one has been spotlighted like Tebow. Why? The sovereign ways of God. And every believer in Jesus in America who knows who Tebow is should pray that God will protect him from the fiery darts of hell and that he will continue to bring great glory to God.

So what am I saying? I am saying to you who have been so abundantly blessed with every need met and many of your wants, you have been blessed only because God has chosen to sovereignly bless you so. And with your blessings comes great responsibility!! Every day you should humbly thank Him for choosing to bless you. And every day you should realize that He has blessed you for a purpose, that of bringing glory to His matchless name.

There is one more truth that God would have us to know from our text. We've seen that **God's Word is sure**, that **God's ways are sovereign**, but now notice that **God's work is salvation**. There is something else that is very interesting about Jesus' genealogy I want you to see. And that is the names of five women. This is something that rarely happened. So what was God's purpose for including them here? Well, God was trying to show the Jews, and us, that the Messiah had come not just for them, but for all. Think about the first four women that Matthew lists. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Tamar birthed Perez and Zerah because she posed as a prostitute and seduced Judah. Rahab was so promiscuous that she was known as Rahab the harlot. Ruth was a Moabite, a foreigner. And Bathsheba committed adultery to conceive Solomon. Everyone of these women would be considered as undesirables and unfit to be mentioned in the blood line of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But there they are. And by their presence God is saying that all barriers are broken down between Himself and sinners, barriers of gender, barriers of race, and barriers of sin. God is saying, "Male or female, black or white, sinner to the highest degree, my Son has come for you. So come now unto Him!"