

Preparing For a New World Matthew 1:1-17

The Olympics have just finished. Katie loves the Olympics and she has really gotten me into the Olympics. One of the best part of the Olympics is the opening ceremonies. We get to see all the participating nations and all their athletes joining each other in the arena for friendly competition. No matter what is going on in the world the Olympics were designed to promote peace and unity amongst nations.

The modern Olympic Games were inspired by games played during the Roman Empire. In 1896 in Athens, Pierre de Coubertin (de Qbertun), taking inspiration from the Roman games, launched the Olympics again as a way to build bridges for peace amongst nations. We know from history that such a peace has never occurred. The games were cancelled in 1916 during WWI and again in 1942 and 1946 while the world was at war again. So much for peace. The Olympics are always played against a backdrop of uncertainty. Even the last Olympics brought memories of the only time that the USA has boycotted a game - during the Cold War as the Russian Federation was riddled with doping scandals.

There is a longing for peace, but no answer that can come from the scheming of man to bring about real and lasting peace. Our world needs saving and thankfully salvation has come! Let's begin our new series in Matthew today and begin right with the beginning.

READ TEXT

What may seem like an irrelevant and boring passage actually shows God's mission in Christ to save a world not only needing saving but truly longing for salvation. Look at the fanfare as history parades before us. Here we walk through the corridors of history to interpret things in light of God's activity in the world. We aren't just viewing meaningless history but we are being drawn down the path of sovereign providence as we see the LORD God preparing for a new world, a world ruled by a prince of peace.

So this is a parade of providence set before us and there are many characters worth noting in the procession but it is who comes last that receives all the fanfare. Remember the political world that Jesus is born into. This world is brutal (as chapter 2 will make abundantly clear). By listing these names there is a very political statement being made. Matthew is not simply recalling a list he is telling us that everything in history has been leading to this moment. Jesus is the goal of the list. Jesus is the King Israel has been anticipating for over 2,000 years. Jesus is the King the world has desperately needed since the beginning.

Which is our first point this morning:

1. God Has Been Preparing A New World

God is moving his world towards salvation and has been since the beginning. I want you to notice something from the first verse. See that word genealogy? The root word for genealogy is the same word for Genesis. Matthew could have said here is the lineage of Jesus, the family of

Jesus, but instead he tells us this the book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ. Why? He's making a point to tell us that Jesus' coming is a new beginning, a new creation, a new creation that is beginning right in the midst of the old one!

The most memorable words of Genesis are God created, when he saw what he had done he rested. But the rest of God was interrupted by his working, and what was his working? Putting the flesh of a sacrifice on the backs of his sinful creation. Here we see God continuing to work and what is his work? He has become flesh, he has taken our flesh upon himself so that he could give us salvation - to cover our unrighteousness with his own righteousness. He has assumed our humanity so that he could bring us healing.

All of history has been leading to the moment described in our text. This is why we are taken back to Genesis. When we turn back to Genesis we see God's promises being made throughout the Old Testament.

Abraham - Genesis 12:1-3 - Jesus is the way of blessing for the entire world

David - 2 Samuel 7:16 - Jesus is the one coming to eternally rule the world

This point is so simple but is the most overlooked. All of Scripture is to be read in light of Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture. You can't read the Old Testament or any passage simply in light of the characters themselves as if they were the fulfillment. You can't even read the Bible and think it merely about yourself - the whole Bible is about Jesus, and every story whispers his name.

But look further into this lists. There are some heavy hitters in this list of the lineage - Father Abraham, King David - but look who else is mentioned: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Every name mentioned in this passage in some way tells the story of the longing of the Savior. We see those least expected - women and Gentiles alike - all telling us the story of a world ready for a Savior.

2. This New World is Beginning in the Midst of the Old One

Let's go back and look at this list. There are a few names that are mentioned here that are telling the story of brokenness. Gentiles and Women are highlighted on purpose. A Jewish man thanked God each day that he had not been created a slave, a Gentile or a Woman. But Jesus has come to change everything. All of Scripture points to his coming. All these people are a part of God's grand design, but we couldn't see the beauty of his design until after the coming of Jesus. Now that he has come, we read each text in his shadow. This is why Peter, when he is called to preach salvation to Cornelius, says, *Truly I understand that God shows no partiality* (Acts 10:34). Now that Christ has come, we know salvation is for all who call upon the name of the Lord. As Scripture says, *In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28).

In Jesus we have a new beginning. Matthew doesn't say this as directly as Luke, but Jesus is now the Last Adam. The first Adam lived, the Last Adam has become a life giver. And how has he come to give life? Jesus has come into the midst of chaos to save the lost. It should not surprise us to see the depths of this deep depravity in the genealogy of the Messiah. We look at the family tree of Jesus and see many skeletons, much decay.

Tamar - adulteress who enticed her father-in-law into an incestuous relationship (Gn 38)
Rehab - Gentile Prostitute
Ruth - a Moabite whose descent could be traced back to incest

Bathsheba - Look at how she is cloaked. Matthew by not saying her name shines the light on the adultery and murder carried out by David.

What do all these women, some of them the rest of the world saw as dogs, have in common? 2 Things: 1) They needed saving, and 2) Grace came looking for them and saved them! Matthew is not simply telling us history, his point is more rich than that. His purpose is to show us how God takes our chaos and weaves a tapestry of grace. Even today he is doing this with lives all over the world as he takes men and women whom the world deems unfit and unworthy who then are saved and it is said of them the world is not worthy of them.

This lineage bears it all. The darkest moments of the chosen generation, the darkest moments of the great King of Israel all telling us that Jesus has stepped into chaos, did not allow chaos and sinfulness to keep him from seeking and saving. This is important for us to remember. Without ceasing to be what he was, he became what he was not; and what he became was sin so that we could become the righteousness of God. He was genuinely human, joining himself with us, becoming us, being numbered among the transgressors even though the transgression that he bore was not his own.

The genealogy points to his mission. It was depravity that he has come to undo. It was our sickness that he came to heal. When we were running away from him, this genealogy tells us, that he came running towards us. He has come down to our lowest to raise us to his highest. We were failing and falling, and he reached out his hand towards us, to pull us back to him. Christ descended from a degenerate race and truly has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4). Why? So that he could make us his very own!

You this morning are not hopeless. No matter who you are, where you are from, what you have done, there is a God in heaven who looks at you, sees the depths of your sin and declares, "that one is mine." His grace is greater than all our sin. He is more ready to save than you are to even think of him. From this passage we know that he will go to great lengths to save you because he has already gone to great lengths to save you. This God sees you at your worst and still chooses to save you. This God has known your days since before there was even one of them, knew how far you would go to mar yourself with sin, and still reaches out his hand to offer you salvation.

Can't you hear him this morning?

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling for you and for me; see, on the portals he's waiting and watching, watching for you and for me.

Come home, come home:
you who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!

O for the wonderful love he has promised, promised
for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon, pardon
for you and for me.

There is one final point this morning. And it's an important one, especially on the heels of what we have just heard.

He has been preparing this world, he is preparing it in the midst of the old world filled with chaos, finally this morning - It couldn't have come sooner.

3. His Timing is Perfect

How could you be hopeless this morning? This God who has been working salvation, who is working salvation, will bring about salvation. Look at verse 11 and 12, and then verse 17. See all those references to the Babylonian exile? Why are they there? To remind us that even when the whole world around us seems to be falling apart, our God of salvation is saving!

God is moving his world towards salvation and has been doing so since the beginning. Peter tells us (we who he says are in exile waiting for our King to come again to save us) *The Lord is not slow as some count slowness*. Instead the opposite is true as this passage stands here to remind us. *When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law so that we might received adoptions as sons* (Galatians 4:4). He, as Peter continues to tell us, *is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance* (2 Peter 3:9).

Listen, today if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart (Hebrews 3:7). Today could be the day that you life begins brand new, but you have to come. Come to him who has already come to you. Come meet your King! The King of Kings - Jesus!