

Matthew 1

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[0 : 0 0] I want us to come back to the second passage we read from, that is from Matthew chapter 2, Matthew chapter 1, and look particularly at verse 1, the record of the demorology of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Some of you may have been aware that this year Christian's truths have been called some controversy. This has been, that's particularly true, in North America, where there were controversies which received national attention in the United States, from the Seattle-Cacoma airport from the West Coast of the United States, decided to take down 13 Christmas trees, or whole of the trees, as they heard them, that they had erected from the airport.

Then a Jewish rabbi requested that alongside the trees they would curse a Jewish manila. They heard that the Pharisees said, one night, we would push the trees to hold the trees, and we counted any of the symbols here, and could be taken down.

But then, when the rabbi objected them, he said, he'd invent the trees to come down, just left them, and merely to be out beside them, the authorities relented, and the trees were replaced.

A somewhat similar situation was placed in Toronto last week, where a provincial judge, whose name is the judge that she is a Jew, Judge Cohen, argued, and the Church of the United States, and the Church of the United States, who was in the United States, and the Church of the United States, which was a Jewish manila, which had been installed in the level of the courthouse in Travis Street, in Toronto, should be removed to a corridor at the side, and taken away because this was, what she said, a Christian symbol.

[2 : 1 3] well if ever it is a Christian symbol of course is questionable the Christmas trees are relatively recent introduction to Christmas activities in this country trees of course are symbolically bad we know that from the first time which we sang two times ago that I don't know any place from the Bible where a tree symbolizes the incarnation but nevertheless there is in the Bible a Christmas tree and we read part of it tonight it's a family tree it's a genealogical tree and this is the only true Christmas tree the family tree of the Lord

Jesus Christ now some people wonder when they open in New Testament for the first time and they are filled with this list of names of one generation after another they wonder well what have you got to say to us today in fact there is a lot to say to us today we in our culture perhaps don't don't appreciate genealogies to the same extent that many other cultures do that there have been people who have come to Christ who are reading this genealogy and they know that all they knew about the gospel is at least one person in Korea who having read this genealogy could down on his knees and accept that the Lord Jesus Christ as a savior because he said this must be a great person this must be the son of God because he's got such a long genealogy he's got such a long history which he's been specially recorded for him many cultures have a much greater respect for family trees and genealogies than ours do

Alec Paley who wrote the novel *Goose* tells how in the section of his novel he returned to West Africa where his ancestors had been taken as slaves in 1752 and he knew the name of the ancestor who went to the United States and he discovered his family tree which was still preserved in the older tradition of the tribe from which his ancestor had been taken and he says that that was he describes it as a peak experience in his life a moment which emotionally can never again be equal it was a highlight for him simply to listen to a genealogy and to discover in it his identity genealogies at the time of Jesus were very carefully preserved the standard trees were very accurate they were passed on early and indeed also in writing to a festival from one generation to another this is particularly important for the priest to be a priest you have to demonstrate that you have to prove and take the descent from Aaron and relating to the very story of the word of God and Ezra and the

United which is in the United Testament some priests lost their efforts because they were not able to produce their family trees chasing them back to Aaron now here you have the family tree of Jesus here you have the genealogy of Jesus and it's got a message for us and it's important that although we may not make much of genealogies in our culture it's important that we have not to miss the message this is being put in the scriptures not simply for Koreans and Africans who are made interested in genealogies in here but also for us because there is a message here for us today this family tree illustrates the fact that the Lord

Jesus Christ pulled into the world to bring peace peace and good will towards men was the message from the angels and this family tree and the other family tree which we have of the gospel of Luke which is the same but different as we'll see in a moment underlines this message that Jesus comes to bring peace peace with God and peace with one another as I said there are two family trees of Jesus one at the beginning of Matthew's gospel other in the third chapter of Luke's gospel gospel in many ways they are similar they are both summaries they manifest that with a common practice of genealogies among the Jews and that is the telescopic generations and here they are saying that someone was the father of souls so it could mean the grandfather or it could mean the forefather of God it's interesting that both these genealogies emphasize just rather they are going to make fear that

[8 : 14] Joseph was not the genetic father of Jesus that's very interesting they want to make clear that the birth at least the conception of Jesus was unique it was miraculous it was it was it was the work of the Holy Spirit and not of any human being but there are differences between these two family trees Matthew works his tree forward from the beginning down to the time of Jesus Luke goes the other way about he works backwards he goes from the present into the past Matthew goes back to Abraham the early believer the prototype believer Luke goes back to Adam the first human being from Abraham to David both genealogies are literally the same but from David onward they differ so why do they differ they differ and especially because

Matthew follows the family line of Joseph and traces Jesus' legal descent while Luke follows the family line of Mary and traces Jesus' genetic descent and so these two family trees are distinct nevertheless they do complement one another and they underline the message that say Jesus has come to bring peace the Indians said to the shepherd if you remember glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom God's favor rests peace Jesus came to bring peace to bring peace with God to bring peace among people to bring peace within ourselves after we lived in a divided and alienated world a society which is divided by gender by race by rank and by power peace now

Jesus came to bring men and women who are separated from God to God he came to bring men and women who are separated from one another together and in these family trees you see traces of the way in which Jesus brings people who are often divided together and let me illustrate what I mean I think in the family tree we see Jesus bringing men and women together or male and female together look at the shogunism among the Jews in Jesus' day we're told from Jewish tradition that the male Jew and his men and fair thank God that God would not know him a Gentile a slave or a woman in Greek civilization women lived a life of utter seclusion with nothing to do apart from household tasks something which perhaps was reflected in the culture of

Islam to go at least in some parts and so women really had scarcely any power in society and look when we come to this genealogy we discover that Luke traces the history of Jesus through his mother it's a maternal genealogy that was very unusual Jesus I think Luke is making the point here that Jesus came to liberate women as well as men and in fact Matthew Matthew brings five women into the family tree it's not that the original they were but he's normally referring to men but in the case of five he brings in the mother as well as the father he brings in Tamar he brings in

Reher he brings in Ruth he brings in Bathsheba and of course he brings in Mary and so in a world which in many ways is still a chauvinistic world a world which the chauvinism has caused a violent reaction of extreme feminism you see Jesus bringing men and women together this is the message I think that both Matthew and Luke or one of the messages that they're seeking to communicate through the family tree of Jesus he breaks down the barriers he doesn't break down the differences between men and women that's important he breaks down the barriers and it's very easy for us to forget that in Christ there is neither male nor female and there is an invoked advantage to men in many sections of society and indeed in the church and we need to recognize that

[13 : 41] Jesus in Christ male and female are one he breaks down the barriers but Jesus brings together not only different genders but he brings together different races the Jews were very proud of the fact that they were Jews and they tended to despise the Gentiles the Gentiles were simply all those races like ours which went Jews they called the Jews the Gentiles rather they do call the Gentiles dogs and yet in the family tree of Jesus we discover Gentiles it's interesting that that that that that that Matthew brings in these women who are not simply not simply Gentiles but Gentiles with capital letters because they belong to peoples that the Jews have fought with and who were enemies have been enemies of

Comer and Reher for example were Canaanites Ruth was a Moabite test Moabites were forbidden to become part of the nation of Israel part of the congregation that's Sheba the mother of Solomon was married to a Hittite we're not told if she was gentle but certainly she was married to one and so we see in the genetic history of Jesus we find we don't find pure Jewish blood we find a mixture we find the testimony here is that Christ brings together different races different ethnic groups groups he brings together in himself people who traditionally are enemies and he is the one who brings peace he brings together those who are for simple reasons divided who breaks down the barriers between races not the differences he doesn't destroy the differences between cultures

God has created the human race in a multi faceted varied way that wherever our culture wherever our ethnicity interests we are brothers and sisters in him we are brought together in him having been put at peace with God we are at peace with one another after Jesus brings peace between male and female he brings peace between the black and white but he also brings together what we sometimes call the spirit and the special in the gospel there's a tension and a conflict between the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman operator between what we might call the politics of God's people and the politics of military and economic power another sense in which the family trees of

Jesus reflect both these power structures in the world Matthew faces the history of the ancestry of Jesus back to David the great Jewish king and Abraham the first who received the promise of the land the focus is on the leaders the focus is on the people of God the focus if you like is on the sacred but Luke has a much broader spectrum he brings he takes his family tree back to the first man he's got like a secular he's looking at the full human race he's not just looking at the people of God the focus here is the secular focus the focus on the world and today too often we allow the sacred and the secular to become enemies for one or the other now there is a distinction between the sacred and the secular that we need to unite them together and to recognize that they complement one another there's a lot of controversy in the

United States between people who call themselves theonomists who argue that democracy is wrong because democracy is the will of the people and really we should be seeking to establish a theocracy here on earth there are other Christians who believe that the basic values of democracy are taught in the New Testament and that therefore we should encourage and promote democracy there is a similar conflict in Muslim countries very often between the concept of an Islamic state on the one hand governed by Tahrir law and a secular state of what our time initially would call a modern state on the other and there is tension within Islam on that just as we found this in Europe but in the United States certainly among

[19 : 35] Christians one finds this division Christians now Jesus does not abolish the witnesses between church and states and I think it's important for us to recognize that he does seek to bring them together let himself in opposition he brings peace together and the state has got a God given duty to recognize God and to honor him and to place him there's no such thing in the Bible as an atheistic state seeful as the servant of God says Paul and so we see the gospel bringing together church and state and Christians will work together not coalescing the two but working together in a complementary way so Jesus says it's not a question of choosing between a secular and a secular and a religious a secular society and a religious state if not either or it's both and

Christ is the head of the church yesterday or to the Lord of the world and it's a danger that we sometimes separate these two things and we allow different standards to operate in different sections there's the well that used to be told in the islands about the island credences from a factor when the factor was sent by the landlord to clear the houses of the village and when he came to a certain house he ordered this lady to clear out and she said how can you do this factor she said you're an elder in the church how can you do this how can you put me out and nowhere to go how can you do it and he said to her that you don't understand I'm not doing this as the elder I'm doing it is the factor he tried to make a distinction between the values that he follows in his work and the values they live by in the church now we can't do that

Jesus said the values of the kingdom of God apply everywhere they apply in society as much as they do in the church and Jesus helps us to bring these together and to see to have a holistic view of the life that God has given us to live so Jesus has come into the world to bring together male and female black and white split and secular and finally what we might call national and global in the first century Palestine there was a strong nationalism we refer to where there's references made in the death foods to the zealots in fact when Jesus decided had been zealots and the zealots were a nationalistic movement that looked for independence from the

Roman Empire they believed that the Jews were the chosen people and that they had to come first in fact some had seen the Jews took the view that the Gentiles had been created by God simply to stop the fires of hell the only hope for the Gentiles was that they might become Jews in the religious sense to becoming God-fears and cross-alites but Luke's version of the family tree reminds us that God loves the world not simply the people of God not simply the Jews that loves the whole world and that his love is not a love that can be localized and privatized but it is a love which is universal a love for all different kinds of people that this tension continues to be between the universal and the universal between the national and the international that tension is there and we see it as a tension in denominations because many denominations are structured traditional denominations are structured according to the nation's state we've got national churches when the peace free church was founded in 1843 it was founded as an alternative national church and it's very easy for us to become for national churches to become victims of criticism in which the state as it were dictates to the church and it's very easy for us to become so wrapped up in our own national situation that we forget that God has a church elsewhere that God's church is international

God's church is ecumenical there's the denominational but there's also the ecumenical aspect and it's important in our thinking to think of the church not simply in terms of our church of our local church of our denomination but the faith of the church of God worldwide because Christ has brought us all together and his people are universal his people are found in right across the world and today we live in an age in which the gospel has reached more cultures than any other time in history and the church of Jesus Christ is more varied more multi ethnic more multicultural than at any other time in the history of the church and it's important for us to recognize that in Christ we are all united together and that we have brothers and sisters around the world especially as we think of a time when outwardly the churches seem to be declining rapidly in this country to recognize that elsewhere especially in the southern hemisphere in the eastern world in China especially in

[26 : 11] Korea churches are growing and multiplying and we have witnessed in these parts of the world the dramatic growth of the church in the last half century and it's easier for us to become so focused in our own as it were own little corner that we forget that God is at work elsewhere John once said that the world was his parish and the world is our parish today and it's so important for us to recognize that it's so important for us not to become wrapped up in our own local and national situation to such an extent that we ignore and become ignorant of what God is there elsewhere in the world what we're finding today is that Christians are coming from

Africa to Europe to re-evangelize our continent there are 600,000 African Christians in Europe today many of them have come for work but they've also come many of them as evangelists and it may be that the future of the church of God in this country may well lie in the hands of people who will come from the younger churches to help us and to help us to go forward into the future and so Jesus brings together what sin has separated he brings together men and women he brings together different races black and white brown and yellow he brings together the secular and the secular he brings together the national and the global I think this is a message that we need to recall at this time of year why did Jesus come he came to bring peace to all men and that peace of course is founded upon being put at peace with God we have peace with God says Paul there will be a faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ that is how we enter into peace with God but having received being given peace with God we also have to recognize that Jesus wants us to be at peace with one another he wants us to be reconciled there is a ministry of reconciliation that he has given to us so that these divisions which reveal the factors that sin has inflicted upon our human society can be healed we are called to be peacemakers not just peacetellers not simply peace proclaimers but peacemakers and so as we come to this another festive season and as we reflect upon the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ let us also reflect upon the purpose for which he came he came into the world to bring peace and he invites us to be his heralds of peace and his peacemakers in the world in which we live tonight may God grant that we might know what it is to be at peace with God there is someone here tonight who does not yet know what it means to be at peace with God then I urge you to trust in the

Lord Jesus Christ he will put you right with God he is the bridge he is the way he is the door into the presence of God he can put you right because he has borne our sins and his own body and the cross he can introduce us to God he can do that but he also wants to introduce us to one another and he also wants us to live in harmony and in peace he wants us to demonstrate especially in the church of God the shalom the peace he has come to give to the world and I look at an Old Testament scholar who lives in Dostal I think is Alec Beteer was recently writing in the scripture Union Notes and he spoke about the church as God's pilot project for the future and that very step struck with me so God has a plan for the future of the new heavens and a new earth a new universe and the church is this pilot project in which he demonstrates to the world what the new heavens and new earth will be like in part of it and so the church is meant to demonstrate a reconciled community and a reconciling community and in this way to be a token a tangible token of the kingdom of God may God grant that this congregation and all the congregations in the city and in this land and in our denomination and around the world they become such tokens of the kingdom of God let's pray