WEEK 2 - INTRO TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW (+GENEALOGY OF JESUS)
OVERVIEW

In this message we will explore the world behind the text of Matthew to understand what he was attempting to accomplish by writing his gospel in the way he did. We'll see that Matthew's original audience was facing many internal and external challenges as the Church shifted from a largely Jewish body of believers to congregations growing significantly in Gentile membership. Additionally, with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., many Jewish Christians were no longer welcome in their Synagogue communities and were facing social isolation as a result.

Thus, Matthew's gospel focuses a lot on the theme of fulfillment. The mission and message of Jesus was all about fulfilling the "law and the prophets" (a.k.a. the Hebrew Bible). We see this at the very outset, as Matthew writes the genealogy of Jesus, tying his birth into the entire story of the people of God. He also gives hints at how radical and "upside-down" the kingdom of God is by including in the genealogy four women from the Hebrew Bible whose stories demonstrate God's heart for the outcast and broken of our world.

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham.
Matthew 1:1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. On a scale from "skip it" to "fascinating", where would you rank genealogy - of Jesus and of your own family? Why?
2. Read Matthew 1:1-3 and 16-17, and at least look over verses 4-15.
   a. Why does Matthew include the genealogy of Jesus at the beginning of the book?
   b. What stands out to you?
   c. Why did Matthew start with Abraham? (see Genesis 12:2-3)
   d. Why are four women included?
   e. Why do you think Matthew mentions the sets of fourteen generations?
3. Why would Matthew include many links to the Old Testament?
4. How is the book of Matthew useful to us today?
5. Barry said that Matthew's main theme is *fulfillment*. What does he mean by that?
6. How does knowing our ancestors' stories help us understand our own?