

Genealogies of Jesus

Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38

The two genealogies of Christ found in the books of Matthew and Luke both prove Jesus' right to the throne of David. But a careful examination gives so much more to the wonders of the Messiah.

Genealogies were very important to the Jews. Through them came the establishment of a legitimate claim to inheritance or position. (Ezra 2:59, 62) Not all the names found in Matthew or Luke are found in the Old Testament. It is believed by theologians that both men would have not only interviewed to collect this information but would have gone to the open Temple registry to find the names of Jesus' descendants. Unfortunately, one of the greatest losses to the Jewish nation in the destruction of the temple in 70 AD was the loss of all the centuries of Jewish genealogies!

I. Genealogy of Matthew J Vernon McGee said of Matthew's genealogy, "The genealogy which opens the Gospel of Matthew is in many aspects the most important document in Scriptures." p. 7 This genealogy is the first of many proofs Matthew records to show that Jesus is the true Messiah.

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Matthew 1:1

A. Introduction – The first verse of the New Testament is an introduction. Some scholars feel it introduces the genealogy. Others believe it introduces the first 2 chapters of Matthew, being the birth account. And lastly some think it is an introduction to the entire book of Matthew. In reality, it begins all three!

- "book of the generation of Jesus Christ" – This is a Hebrew expression. It is only found here and Genesis 5:1. The word "book" means account/record. **This is the record of Jesus' legal ancestry by the line of Joseph, his legal father.**
- "son of David" – Here, at the beginning of Matthew's narrative, before any facts, he establishes to his Jewish readers Jesus' royal claim as son of David. David is mentioned first over Abraham because the line of David holds the key to Messiah! David's throne had been vacant for almost 600 years. No one would be seriously considered the Messiah unless he could prove his royal descent. Matthew will use this title 10 times in his Gospel. (Mark only 2 times, Luke 3 times)
- "son of Abraham." – Christ's Hebrew origin is established by Matthew as he starts the genealogy with Abraham proving Jesus' claim to "Messiah."

In Matthew's genealogy, he will highlight the three major periods in Israel's national history – Theocracy, Monarchy, and Hierarchy. This is absolutely in accord with the Jewish custom of teaching their history. Matthew will mention over 40 generations and span about 2000 years! He explains this pattern in the verse 17 in his conclusion of the genealogy.

"²Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren; ³And Judah begat Pharez and Zarah of Tamar; and Pharez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram; ⁴And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon; ⁵And Salmon begat Boaz of

Rahab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; ⁶And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah;” Matthew 1:1-6

B. Abraham to David – Theocracy Both Abraham and David received the promise of the Messiah.

- “Abraham” – Matthew starts his genealogy with Abraham the father of the race to whom he was writing and the first to receive the covenant promise! (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4) This is made perfectly clear in Gal. 3:16.
- 4 women mentioned – One of the outstanding facts to Matthew’s genealogy is the four women he mentions. This was totally out of the norm for Jewish genealogies. But realize this is really still done today. Ancestry lines follow the males with women being mentioned.

Tamar – (v. 3) Gen. 38 – Tamar was the Canaanite daughter-in-law of Judah, Jacob’s son. After the death of her husband, Judah did not make sure that she was respected as a wife by her other sons. He seemed to disrespect her position and needs. Tamar, disappointed and faithless, acted on her own and tricked Judah into fathering a child, or actually twins. No one in this Bible event was without sin and blame. But it is interesting to note that Judah took responsibility for not keeping his word to Tamar. (Gen. 38:26) Wonderfully, Tamar is in the line of Jesus your Savior!

Rahab – (v. 5) Joshua 6 – Rahab was a Canaanite harlot that hid the two spies sent into Jericho. She had taken a great risk with the rulers of her city, if she had been found hiding the two men, it would have been certain death. What drove her to defy her people and protect these men? It was her faith! (Jos. 2:11; Heb 11:31; James 2:25) She proved her faith by saving the spies. Rahab went on and became wife of a Hebrew and was four generations from David the king! Did you see, Rahab, within Scripture, never lost the word “harlot” from being tagged to her name? But that was her old life, that was before she new about the God of “heaven above, and in earth beneath!” We might be tagged with our pass but that does not have to define us, remember Rahab is in the line of Jesus your Savior!

Ruth – (v. 5) Ruth 4 – Ruth was a Moabite woman that returned to Bethlehem from Moab with her mother-in-law. Outside of the book of Ruth, her name is only found here in the Scripture. Her foreign birth did not keep her from being part of the lineage of Christ. But what got her in that list? Her faith! Listen to Ruth’s own words to Naomi her mother-in-law, “thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:” Ruth 1:16; Boaz said this of Ruth, “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” Ruth 2:12 God certainly did bless this faithful young woman with love, family, a people, and remember, Ruth is in the line of Jesus your Savior!

Bathsheba (“wife of Uriah”) – (v. 6) 2 Sam. 11-12 – Please realize Bathsheba’s name is not mentioned in the genealogy of Christ, instead she is only known as “her that had been the wife of Uriah.” Bathsheba is being identified with the lowest, ugliest time of her life. She had been young, foolish, and swayed away from the covenant of marriage into adultery by the lure of the great king of Israel. The consequences rushed in like waters through a broken dam. Bathsheba was left shamed, her first love murdered by her new lover, she had to leave her home for life in a harem, and the first child of that union died at birth. But Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, rose above the shame and guilt. For you see, Bathsheba seemed to have both the ear and heart of David the king, for it was her son who was chosen to later sit on the throne. She was sought out by the prophet to help move David into action to crown Solomon near the end of his life. Bathsheba was the one that also bore Nathan, from whom came Mary the mother of Jesus. Understand this, Bathsheba, the wife of

Uriah, lines of descendants are found in both Matthew's and Luke's genealogies of Jesus. Two of her sons are in these two separate lineages of Christ. In Matthew's genealogy Solomon, Bathsheba's son, was in the line of Joseph, but in Luke's genealogy Nathan, Bathsheba's son, was in the line of Mary. So anyway you calculate it, Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, is in the line of Jesus your Savior - twice!

Found in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus are four women, at least two were Gentiles, and three involved in immorality. Most good, pious people would think that each one would have been very unlikely to be found in the line of a king. But Jesus, the King of Kings, not only have them in His ancestry, God the Father makes sure it is recorded for all to see.

- "David the king" – All though there are many kings found in the line of Christ, only David is named as a king. In verse 6, he is named a king twice! David is a very important focal point of this genealogy for it is on his throne that Jesus will sit someday soon!

⁷And Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa; ⁸And Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Johoram; and Johoram begat Uzziah; ⁹And Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah; ¹⁰And Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah; ¹¹And Josiah began Jechoniah and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:" Matthew 1:7-11

C. Solomon to Babylonian Captivity – Monarchy Here we find those that have sat on the throne of David in the past. In reality, it is not a very great list. Too many of David's descendants did not share his love and devotion to God.

- Missing Kings – When going to the Old Testament and comparing the genealogies with Matthew's, it doesn't take long to realize four descendants of David are missing in Matthew's listing. I am not going to go into the details of who and where these men would have fallen but here are several reasons and Jewish allowances in justifying this.
 1. Leaving out secondary individuals or those not as well-known descendants was often done. An accurate view of the ancestry is still given, without drawing out the details.
 2. Matthew had sought to highlight the organizational tool of 14 generations per historical division. The three categories of Israel's past were a tool used in the Jewish classrooms for ease of teaching/learning.
 3. The word "begat" does not necessarily mean "fathered" but a direct descendant.
- Jechoniah's Curse – Jeremiah 22:24-30 Jechoniah was a very wicked king and in control of Judah when Nebuchadrezzar took them into captivity. God removed him and his family from the throne. Consequently, the lineage to the throne of David ended with Jechoniah. None of his descendants would be allowed to rule.

What does this mean for Jesus' right to the throne? Remember, **this is the record of Jesus' legal ancestry by the line of Joseph, his legal father.** This is not Christ's blood line, that would be through His mother. Mary's genealogy found in Luke, holds no curse and from Mary's line, Jesus has the right to the throne of David! In the John MacArthur study Bible, the note on this passage states that because Jesus was not in the true blood line of Joseph but an adopted son with rights as a son, he felt that the throne could even go to Jesus through Joseph's line. Remember, it doesn't seem it was an issue at the time of Christ. No one openly rejected the legitimacy of Christ's right to be called the Son of David!

“¹²And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechoniah begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zerubbabel (Zerubbabel is the last of this genealogy found in the Scripture – Ezra 2:2); ¹³And Zerubbabel begat (The rest of these men’s names would have been easily found in the Temple registries) Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; ¹⁴And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; ¹⁵And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; ¹⁶And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.” Matthew 1:12-16

The last division is those born during the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity and return to the land. But the throne is gone, the list ends with a lowly carpenter in Nazareth.

D. Babylonian Captivity to Joseph – Hierarchy – a system of government using ranking levels of importance.

- “Joseph the husband of Mary” – Notice the break in pattern here. We have read “someone begat someone” repeatedly. But that pattern is stopped! There is no “Joseph begat Jesus” because he did not. The wording carefully avoids giving the impression that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus. Instead, the virgin birth is reenforced! Matthew will continue to strengthen the fact of Jesus’ incarnation as he begins the narrative of Joseph’s involvement with Mary and the birth of Christ in verse 18.
- “of whom was born Jesus” – “whom” – Gk – “by whom gave birth” singular feminine pronoun; this word is referring to Mary! A causal reading might cause one to think it is suggesting Joseph, but it is not.

“¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.” Matthew 1:17

E. Conclusion Here we find Matthew’s explanation of the divisions. Why these divisions? 1) Very Jewish way of teaching the history of the nation 2) Matthew, the tax collector, put much attention to numbers. 3) Ease of memory. But truth is, to our calculations, there are problems with the numbers. $3 \times 14 = 42$ and only 41 names appear. Many solve this issue with counting David twice or counting the Babylonian captivity. This was not a problem to Jewish readers as it must have been a normal, acceptable pattern in genealogies.

II. Genealogy of Luke After Luke completes his birth narrative and before he begins the record of Christ’s ministry, he includes the genealogy. Luke will connect Jesus to the entire human race by taking Jesus’ line back to Adam, about 4000-6000 years of generations!

“²³And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) (Here we have again the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ being emphasized!) the son of Joseph, (At this point the names mentioned until verse 28 are found nowhere in Scripture. They would have been found only in the Temple registries.) which was the son of Heli, ²⁴ Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, ²⁵ Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Nahum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Naggai, ²⁶ Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah, ²⁷ Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zerubbabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, ²⁸ Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, ²⁹ Which was the son of Jose, which was the son

of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, ³⁰ Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Judah, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, ³¹ Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, ³² Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Nahshon, ³³ Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Ram, which was the son of Hezron, which was the son of Pharez, which was the son of Judah, ³⁴ Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Terah, which was the son of Nahor, ³⁵ Which was the son of Serug, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Peleg, which was the son of Eber, which was the son of Salah, ³⁶ Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Shem, which was the son of Noah, which was the son of Lamech, ³⁷ Which was the son of Methuselah, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Mahaleel, which was the son of Cainan, ³⁸ Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.” Luke 3:23-38

A. The Actual Line of Mary – Though most scholars believe this is Mary’s descendants, the blood line of Jesus, she is not mentioned. The name “Heli” is given as “Joseph’s father”. But in Matthew his name is given as Jacob. Also, Matthew’s line from David is Solomon but in Luke it is Nathan. These are major discrepancies and are clues to theologians that we really have the line of Mary in the book of Luke. It is not unusual for a son-in-law to be named as a son in descendant listings, especially when it comes to subject of inheritance. Through marriage Joseph became Heli’s son. Please note in our Bibles the words, “the son” was supplied by translators, this gives leeway to relationship such as Joseph and Heli.

B. Theme of “Son of Man” – Jesus called Himself the “Son of Man” more than He did the Son of God. One of the Messianic names of Christ is “Son of Man,” this list of ancestors prove it! (“Son of Man” = Matt. 22 times; Mark 10 times; Luke 21 times; John 12 times) Jesus is the Savior and Ruler of the whole world not just the people of Israel. God loves mankind and put His Son down amid our poor, fallen, sinful race. He made Himself truly the “Son of Man.” Heb. 4:15; 7:26-28

III. Similarities of the Matthew and Luke Genealogy There are many similarities, and they share many of the same names. Here are two highlights found in both genealogies.

1. **Both** set Joseph as **not** the father of Jesus. Special care is taken when handling Joseph the husband of Mary.
2. **Both** set Jesus as the Messiah, the son of David. Matthew deals with the line of Joseph – the legal line of Christ. Luke deals with the line of Mary – the blood line of Christ. J Dwight Pentecost said in his book The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, “The fact that Jesus had throne rights through both His paternal and maternal lines would make His claim to be the Messiah very strong.” p. 28

IV. Contrasting Facts of the Matthew and Luke Genealogy

1. Though Luke records more woman in his Gospel than any other writer, he has no woman in his genealogy. But, an all-male genealogy was the normal, Matthew’s is unusual.
2. Matthew goes from Abraham to Christ while Luke deals with Adam to Christ!
3. Matthew has 41 names. Luke has 74 names. That leaves 19 names mentioned before Matthew’s generations even begins!
4. About 19 names are in common.

5. The two genealogies move in opposite directions. Matthew – Abraham to Jesus; Luke – Jesus to Adam
6. Matthew highlights the two covenant heads – Abraham and David. Luke emphasizes the head of the human race – Adam.

Both Matthew and Luke carefully establishes the proof of Jesus' line and claim as Messiah. Early in Jesus' ministry it is very plausible the Religious Leaders would have checked the Temple records for this very information. What they would have found is very close to what we read today in the books of Matthew and Luke. Realize, they never accused or doubted Christ acceptance of the title "son of David" for He was---the records showed it! Many called Jesus by the name, "Son of David", and never once was that title discounted. After the 70 AD destruction of all those Temple registries and because these Biblical records stand for eternity, Jesus is the only Jew alive that can claim His right to the throne of David!

Believer's Application:

Within the lineage of Jesus is found shady, evil, corrupt, immoral, idolaters, murders, and all sorts of gross sinners. Yet He was without sin. What might be some reasons God included these notorious men and women in the line of Jesus? How should this encourage you and me! The genealogy of Jesus spans thousands of years and a vast diversity of personality, spirituality, and experience. So why did God put unbelieving, even God-defying people in the ancestry of Christ?

1. To remind us that those are the type of people Jesus came to save! Matthew 1:21; 9:13; I Tim. 1:12-17
2. To remind us that Jesus came to save all people – Jews and Gentiles! John 1:29; 3:16; 12:47; I John 2:2
3. To remind us that God's work is accomplished and not limited by human sin! God's power and grace rules and overrules to bring about His will! Job. 42:2; John 16:33; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 8:28; Acts 2:22-24; 4:27-28