

MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY VERSUS LUKE'S GENEALOGY

In the pursuit of verifying Jesus' ancestry for purposes of proving fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies relating to the Messiah, different explanations have been made to explain the difference between Luke's genealogy to that of the gospel of Matthew. It is claimed by those who believe in the virgin birth that both Luke's and Matthew's ancestral lineages are that of Joseph, the father of Jesus. Matthew's records give the descendants that includes King David, King Solomon and the rest of the royal lineage. Some say that Luke's genealogy is also that of Joseph but given through a different lineage, that is, through David's son, Nathan, who did not receive the crown and never sat on the throne as king. In this study, we will compare the genealogies between the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Looking first at Matthew's genealogy, the book starts by stating "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ" or in other words, the following is the genealogical table of Jesus, the Christ. This phrasing by Matthew was used in elsewhere in the Bible, for example: "***These are the generations of Noah.***" Genesis 6:9a; "***This is the book of the generations of Adam.***" Genesis 5:1a; "***Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah.***" Genesis 10:1a. The Jews, we read from the Old Testament scriptures kept genealogical tables of their families ancestry just as many people of today still do, although, Jews were often very meticulous about family lineages.

Most Jews waited for their Messiah and according to the Old Testament prophets, the Christ would come from the family of David. It was promised to King David that from "his bowels" would come the Messiah that would hail in the everlasting kingdom. "***And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.***" I Chronicles 17:11, 12; "***And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.***" II Samuel 7:12, 13.

God had set his promised Anointed One apart from all others who had been anointed. This consecrated One of God would be King, High Priest and Prophet to God's people. Anointing was believed by the Jews to be an emblematic influence of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist bore witness of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus, God's chosen: "***And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ... And John bare record, saying, I say the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.***" John 1:14, 32; "***For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.***" John 3:34.

Matthew knew his fellow countrymen well and if he was to show that Jesus of Nazareth was that long-awaited Messiah, he knew he would have to prove to them that Jesus was descended from the royal lineage of King David. It should be pointed out that in Matthew's genealogy, there were names missing from the royal line; these personages were considered "less important" and this practice of leaving some descendants out of the ancestral record was common. Note that these missing names take nothing away from the credibility of the genealogy. Another thing to point out about Matthew's genealogy is the appearance of the names of four women, that is, Tamar, Rachab, Ruth, and the wife of Urias, Bathsheba. "***And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife...***" II Samuel 12:24a. The mentioning of these four women in the genealogical record has nothing to do with them being of the royal line of David; the husbands of these four women are included in the ancestral record as being descendants of King David. So why were the women mentioned? All four of these women were famous Bible characters associated with important historical events recorded in the Old Testament and it is interesting to note that the women were Gentiles. But again, the husbands of these four women were all descended from the tribe of Judah. It was prophesied that the royal line would come

from the tribe of Judah. ***"Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."*** Genesis 49:9, 10.

Matthew's genealogy appears to be a more accurate account than that given in Luke since the names in Matthew's version are accountable in the Old Testament whereas many names in Luke's genealogy cannot be traced to historical sources in the Old Testament. Matthew's account is abridged by the omission of some names for the purpose of making three groups of fourteen generations each, for a total of forty-two generations. Again, the omission of certain names does not invalidate the line of descent; the omission of names was also sometimes used for making it easier to recount family lineages – don't forget that record-keeping was not widely available in those days. The first group of fourteen generations covered an era of 1,000 years from Abraham to King David; the second group of fourteen generations covered about 400 years from King David to Jechonias; the third and final group of fourteen generations covered about 600 years from Jechonias to Jesus.

Those that believe in Jesus coming from a virgin birth will try and say that the third group of generations is actually only thirteen, given that they don't include Jesus, believing he is God. But we must not let our ideological beliefs get in the way of the truth and distort what the Bible states. The first verse of Matthew 1 states ***"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ"***. This statement means that the account Matthew was presenting was the ancestral record of Jesus. Remember, Matthew was aware of his Jewish brethren who would not be persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah unless it could be demonstrated that Jesus was from the royal lineage of King David. Verse 17 of Matthew 1 also confirms that Jesus is included in the third group of generations: ***"And from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations."*** Matthew clearly wants us to see Jesus as being part of this genealogical record.

Another important point that should be made in respect of Matthew's genealogy is the statement in verse 1 of ***"Jesus Christ, the son of David."*** In Jewish genealogies, the word "son" had a wide variety of meanings, that is, it could refer to a literal son, or in a broader context, a grandson, an adopted son, son-in-law, a descendant, a disciple, or even one who is the object of tender affection. In the case of Matthew 1:1, it is no doubt being used in the context of a descendant since the bulk of the chapter is dedicated to making the reader aware of who Jesus' descendants were. In verse 20 of Matthew 1, the father of Jesus is addressed as ***"Joseph, thou son of David"***. Jesus is the descendant of David by having been born to his father Joseph who was of the stock of David.

Let us now turn our attention to Luke's genealogy where we find differences in the genealogical tables. The first major difference are the names listed from King David to Heli (or Eli). Many of the names contained in this portion of Luke's tables cannot be found in the Old Testament, therefore, we cannot be sure of their pureness of the continuance of one single line. The important part of proving Jesus is the Messiah is to show that he comes from King David; Matthew does this well as he mentions King Solomon, King Roboam, King Abia, King Asa, King Josaphat and so on. But when we look at Luke's genealogical record, he goes in a different direction with respect to lineage, that is, after King David, he mentions David's son, Nathan who was never king of Israel but is believed to have gone into the priesthood, and then mentions the descendants of Nathan, whose lives are somewhat obscured in respect to Biblical accounts of that lineage. In contrast, the kings mentioned in Matthew's genealogy is well established in Biblical records.

The lack of historical support for many of the characters names in the lineage is of concern. It is not known whether a certain personage died with no male heir and was replaced by the nearest available male kin or a non-kin. We can see from Luke's record that it crosses the royal lineage, but it only crosses it, this at Salathiel and Zorababel. It is because of the lack of biblical proof of

background of who and whom, and how many times family lines had been crossed, leaves much to be desired of Luke's genealogy. As for demonstrating Jesus' descension from King David, it does not show a continuous descent through the kingship line, thus, could not be used to prove that Jesus had the right pedigree to be the Messiah.

Luke's account basically shows Mary's lineage. In the book of Luke, Mary is the main object of certain events; for example, in Matthew, the angel visits Joseph while in Luke, the angel visits Mary. Similarly, the angel tells Joseph what the child will be named in the gospel of Matthew, while in Luke, the angel tells Mary the child's name. With respect to genealogy, the same thing occurs: Matthew gives the lineage of Joseph while Luke gives the lineage of Mary. Notice that Mary's lineage ends with Joseph being the son of Heli (or son-in-law of Heli), in other words, Heli was the father of Mary. Despite the emphasis on Mary in certain parts of the gospel of Luke, Luke does not dispute Joseph being the father of Jesus. ***"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)"*** Luke 2:4; ***"And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."*** Luke 2:48.

With respect to Mary's ancestry, she must have been affiliated with the priesthood through her mother or both parents because it is stated that Elizabeth was her cousin, and Elizabeth was descended from Aaron which is why she could be married to a priest of the temple, that is, Zacharias. ***"... and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth ... And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth ..."*** Luke 1:5b, 36a. To maintain the purity of the priesthood, priests preferred marrying women who were of the Aaronic lineage. While Elizabeth was definitely of the priestly lineage, one can only assume Mary had priestly blood as well.

To be more specific in our suggestion that there are concerns with respect to the lineage as presented in Luke, we are going to put forward some concrete examples. To begin, very little is known about Nathan other than what we are told in II Samuel 5:14; I Chronicles 3:5; 14:4. The first three descendants from Nathan were Mattatha, Menan and Melea (see Luke 3:31) according to Luke's ancestral record, however, this cannot be confirmed elsewhere in the Bible. Luke also mentions Eliakim (Luke 3:30b) who was son of Melea, however, despite there being four different Eliakims mentioned elsewhere, none of them appear to coincide with the Eliakim of Luke's genealogy. More issues with Luke's account arise when we consider the first five ancestors prior to Joseph, son-in-law of Heli (or Eli). The names from most recent to oldest relation are Heli, Matthat, Levi, Melchi and Janna (Jannai) – see Luke 3:23b, 24. Heli (or Eli) and Levi were commonly used priest names. Melchi (short for Melchisedec) was also common as a name for priests. Some assume "Matthat" relates to the "Matthan" of Matthew's genealogy but there is concrete evidence for that assumption. The purpose of pointing these names out is that it is obvious that Luke was tracing a lineage through a priestly line, not a kingship line. And just to emphasize again, the majority of the lineage between Nathan and Joseph are largely unsubstantiated elsewhere with the exception where the line crosses with the kingship line at Salathiel and Zorobabel (Luke 3:27b).

It is interesting to note that there were no great concerns in the early church about the discrepancies between the two genealogical records presented by Matthew and Luke. It was accepted that Matthew was giving the ancestry of Joseph while Luke was recounting Mary's lineage through her male descendants. However, as belief in the virgin birth grew, new difficulties arose as well. For example, the involvement of the Holy Spirit in conception, the brothers and sisters of Jesus (ie. Were they only half-kin?), Joseph being the father of Jesus despite being a direct descendant of Davidic lineage, and other concerns. Belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary created difficulties in interpreting scriptures to support such a belief, for example, redefining the relationship between Joseph and Mary from simply being husband and wife and the parents of Jesus to Joseph being unwilling to take Mary for

his wife because she was pregnant before he consummated with her. Mary came to be portrayed as the mother of God, who, in time had also advanced to be known by the Catholic Church as a perpetual virgin. Due to these new doctrines, Luke's genealogy had to now become the genealogy of Joseph, but to contrive the genealogy as coming through another line of descent. In face of the virgin Mary doctrine, Matthew's genealogy constituted a threat by Joseph's direct lineage of descent.

A proponent of the virgin birth idea in the early church was a man named Julius Sextus Africanus (circa 160 A.D. To 240 A.D.), who was thought to have been born in Libya but some have argued that he was born at Jerusalem. Africanus was among the first writers to suggest that Joseph was not the biological son of Jacob in a letter he wrote to Aristides. This caused many followers to believe that Joseph (Jesus' father) did not come from the regal line through Jacob (Jesus' grandfather). This was meant to imply that Jacob was the brother of Heli. The short-coming of this already Biblically-unsupported idea is that it did not eliminate the fact that Joseph was still Jesus' biological father. For the first 70 years or so of the early church, believers did not question the legitimacy of Joseph and Mary being the parents of Jesus by natural birth, but this changed around the first part of the second century when many non-Jewish people entered the church with their pagan traditions of virgins being impregnated by the gods. By the time that Julius Africanus appeared on the scene, the doctrine of the perpetual virgin was a common belief within the church. Julius Africanus came up with the ancient Jewish levirate law in the attempt to justify the misguided interpretation of Joseph being son to both Jacob and Heli. The "Levirate" law is described in Deuteronomy 25:5: ***"If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her."*** Essentially, this law states that if a man die without having had a child, his brother was expected to marry the widow in order to keep the family line going. Due to the lack of historical records to support the various names appearing in Luke's genealogy, it was easy for Africanus to fabricate a levirate hypothesis about a man with an unknown historical background dying and his wife leaving him no offspring to carry on his line with Jacob being the supposed kin brother taking Heli's wife in accordance with levirate law. This hypothesis utilizing levirate law to Heli and Jacob is not supported anywhere and completely imagined. It supposes that Jacob took Heli's wife upon Heli's death and raised seed unto Heli by Jacob having Joseph, which also made Joseph legal heir and son to the dead Heli, but this still did not eliminate Joseph as being the natural biological son of Jacob. So why did Africanus put this notion forward? This was because believers of the virgin birth were unable to understand the verse wherein it stated that Joseph was the "son of Heli". Joseph was the son of Heli but only due to his marriage to Mary; more correctly, he was the son-in-law of Heli. We need to remember that there is not any evidence that a levirate relationship every took place in respect of Heli and Jacob. This levirate explanation was only dreamed up by Julius Africanus simply as a way to explain away how Joseph could be son to both Joseph and Heli, not realizing that in Jewish thinking, "son" can mean many things, that is, a literal son, an adopted son, a son-in-law, a person who is loved by another, a descendant, and so on.

One other piece of evidence that shows Luke's genealogy was that of Mary is David's son Nathan holding an office in the priesthood. Read II Samuel 8:18b: ***"... And David's sons were chief rulers."*** If you check *Strong's Concordance* under the name "rulers" for this verse, you will find no number, but an asterisk, which under the "Directions and Explanations" page of the concordance, you will read: *"An asterisk * calls attention to the fact that in the text quoted the leading word is changed for some other in the Revised Version."* So turning to the Comparative Concordance to find the correct word that had been used prior to "rulers" we find it should have been "priests" for purposes of II Samuel 8:18. In other words, the verse states that "David's sons were chief priests." Thus, Luke's lineage from David follows through his son Nathan, who was made a chief priest, whereas in Matthew's genealogy it follows David's son, Solomon, who sat on the throne. Luke's ancestral account was that of Mary, her being connected with the priesthood.

In summary, let's be careful not to hold as fact those unsupported assumptions that have not been proven by scripture nor other historical sources. Based on what has been provided in this booklet, we can be confident that the genealogy of Luke was that of Mary's male descendants while Matthew's related to that of Joseph's ancestral line. Mary's connection with the priesthood was substantiated by Luke's acknowledgment that she was cousin to Elizabeth who came from Aaron's lineage.