

The Genealogy of the Lord Jesus

Matthew 1:1-17

Matthew 1:1-17 - *"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:*

² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. ⁴ Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵ Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife^[a] of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. ⁸ Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon,^[c] and Amon begot Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. ¹² And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴ Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶ And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations."

Background Notes

The author of "The Gospel According to Matthew" was Matthew, the disciple of Jesus Christ. He is also called Levi in Mark 2:14. We read about Matthew's call to be a disciple in Matthew 9:9. *"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him."*

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector (a "publican"), before he became a follower of Jesus. Tax collectors, as you might suspect, were not well liked in Israel - not only because no one likes to pay taxes, but also because the Jewish tax collectors received taxes from their fellow citizens for the oppressive Roman government. The Roman Empire was in power at this time, so the Jewish people looked on tax collectors as traitors and thieves. In addition, tax collectors often lined their own pockets by cheating on the amounts they collected.

But even though Matthew was not a popular or well-liked figure, the Lord chose him to be a disciple - and not only to be a disciple, but also to write a Gospel! So here we have the gospel or good news of the Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew, one of His twelve disciples.

In reference to the genealogy of Christ in Matthew, let us consider two points:

1. This is a **genealogy**, and **not a chronology**. In a chronology, there are no gaps between generations, and the number of years is given. In a genealogy, each link does **not** have to be mentioned or named, and the ages and the total number of years do **not** have to be given. In a genealogy, for example, you can go from grandfather to grandson, simply with the word “begot.” If we compare the genealogy in Matthew 1 with the genealogies in the Old Testament, we find that Matthew has purposely left out a few names and structured this genealogy according to three specific time periods: 14 generations from Abraham to David; 14 generations from David to the Jewish captivity in Babylon; and 14 generations from the Jewish captivity to the birth of Jesus Christ.
2. When we compare this genealogy with the genealogy of our Lord in Luke 3, we find that it’s not the same. Why the difference? The genealogy in Luke 3 is most likely the lineage of our Lord tracing back through Mary, his mother, to King David and all the way back to Adam. Matthew’s genealogy is the Lord’s lineage through Joseph, his legal earthly father, back to King David and then on back to Abraham. It was through Joseph that our Lord had the legal right and claim to the throne of David, but the Lord, of course, was not the biological son of Joseph. Jesus Christ was the biological son of Mary, by virgin birth -- and Mary was also in the line of David.

The truth of the virgin birth is protected here in verse 16, but it is not obvious in the English language: “*And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*” The phrase “*of whom was born Jesus*” in the English language sounds like it could refer to both Mary and Joseph as parents. However, in the Greek language the “*by whom*” is **feminine singular**, leaving no doubt that the Bible teaches the virgin birth of Christ.

Another background note: In verse 12, the “*Jeconiah*” mentioned here is the same as King Jehoiakim who was deported to Babylon in 597BC. In Jeremiah 22 he was called “*Coniah*,” and a curse was pronounced upon this evil king. None of his descendants would ever occupy the throne of David. Jeremiah 22:28-30 - “*Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol— a vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, and cast into a land which they do not know? ²⁹ O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the LORD! ³⁰ Thus says the LORD: ‘ Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.’”*

The curse said that no physical descendant of King Jehoiakim will ever occupy the throne of David - and yet, this king, *Jeconiah or Jehoiakim*, is in the genealogy of Christ! However, the curse doesn’t affect our Lord because Jesus Christ was not a physical descendant of King Jehoiakim. He has a **legal** right to the throne of David through Jehoiakim, but he is a **physical** descendant of King David through Mary - through a different lineage.

Mary and Joseph were both in the line of David, and our Lord will occupy the throne of David when He returns to earth and sets up His millennial Kingdom.

Doctrinal Points

1. The genealogy of Christ proves that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Matthew's purpose in writing this Gospel was to **demonstrate conclusively that Jesus was the Messiah and King who was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures**. Matthew wrote primarily for a Jewish audience. He answered logical questions that would come up in the Jewish mind about Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to be the Jewish Messiah.

Messiah means "Anointed One." The promised Messiah was to be the Son of David and King. If Jesus was indeed the Messiah, were His claims backed up by His lineage? And if Jesus was really the rightful King, then why did He fail to set up His kingdom and ascend the throne of David at that time?

All these questions are answered in the Gospel of Matthew - this wonderful Gospel of the King! Here in the beginning of the Gospel, we see the Messianic line of Jesus. He indeed had a royal lineage. He was in the line of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, and He was in the line of David the King, through whom the promised Messiah and King would come. The genealogy of Christ proves that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

2. The genealogy of Christ proves that God is a gracious God.

Where do we see this Doctrinal Point taught in the genealogy of Christ? We see it in the four Old Testament women who are mentioned to in the genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. By Jewish standards, none of these women were "ideal" forebears of the Messiah -- but God chose to include them in Jesus' genealogy! Tamar was a Canaanite, not a Jew. She pretended to be a prostitute and committed adultery with her father-in-law, Judah (Genesis 38). Rahab was a Canaanite, and most likely a prostitute (Joshua 2). Tamar, Rahab and Ruth (a Moabite) were Gentiles - not of the Jewish race. And Bathsheba committed adultery (2 Samuel 11).

Women are rarely mentioned in Jewish genealogical tables, especially if they're Gentiles or "known sinners," but the grace of God is clearly seen in His sovereign choice to include these women in the genealogy of the coming Messiah!

When was it determined that these four women would be part of the lineage of Jesus Christ? It was pre-determined in the eternal counsels of God, before the world began! Certainly the inclusion of these four women in the genealogy of Christ is a strong indication that the coming of Christ would bring salvation to sinners, and that salvation would be available for anyone, of any race or every nationality. The genealogy of Christ proves that God is a gracious God!

Practical Application

Don't dismiss the "designs" in Scripture.

Because the Bible is the Word of God, it is infallible and inerrant; it does not and cannot contain error! Furthermore, because the Bible is the Word of God, it is perfectly arranged. The arrangement of Scripture includes literary designs and numerical designs. For example, it has been shown that there is a beautiful numerical design in the Greek text here in the first eleven verses of Matthew, based on the number seven. 49 Greek words are used - that's 7 X 7. 21 of the words (that's 3 X 7) begin with a Greek consonant. 28 of the words (that's 4 X 7) begin with a Greek vowel. 35 of the words (5 X 7) end with a consonant, and 14 of the words (2 X 7) end with a vowel. Of the 49 words, 42 of them (6 X 7) occur in only one form, and 35 of the words (5 X 7) appear more than once in the text. 42 of the words (6 X 7) are nouns. Of the 42 nouns, 35 of them (5 X 7) are proper names. Of the proper names, they appear a total of 63 times (9 X 7) in the Greek text. 28 of them (4 X 7) are male ancestors of Christ, and male names are mentioned 56 times in the Greek text here (8 X 7). And there are even more features based on the number seven in this passage.

Did I snow you with all those numbers?! Obviously the study of numerical designs can be carried way too far, and too much time and emphasis can be placed on searching for designs in Scripture. The primary purpose of Scripture is to lead us to saving faith in Jesus Christ, but people can get side-tracked by looking for designs and secret codes rather than seeking simple spiritual truth. However, I do believe there are literary and numerical designs in Scripture, and these designs are another stamp of the supernatural on the Word of God.

Matthew 1:1-17 is the genealogy of Christ, and it would have been pretty hard for Matthew to arrange these designs himself! So don't dismiss the designs in Scripture!