



The Genealogy of Jesus Christ: From Abraham to David to the Messiah

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Genealogies in the Bible are often skimmed over, considered boring and difficult to read and are therefore completely ignored by many.

It's true that the genealogy of Jesus or any genealogy for that matter is not the most entertaining part of scripture, however, as we look at the genealogies of Christ closer, we will see its theological significance, and its place within God's plan for Israel and humanity.

Most of our focus in this study will be on Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the son of David and the son of Abraham, the 14-14-14 structure of the genealogy, and the inclusion of unexpected figures within the lineage.

We will also briefly discuss a comparison with Luke's account and why some differences appear in the two genealogies.

By focusing on these elements, the genealogy will no longer be seen as just a boring record of names, but as a structured and purposeful account that highlights

the unfolding of God's plan leading to the coming of Israel's Messiah and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A New Beginning

Matthew's opening line intentionally mirrors the style of Genesis to show that all of Israel's history has been moving toward this point.

- "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created." - Genesis 2:4
- "This is the book of the generations of Adam." - Genesis 5:1
- "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." - Matthew 1:1

Jesus is the promised Son of David, the heir of Abraham's blessing, and the one through whom God will bring salvation to His people.

For Israel, this is the turning point: the long-awaited Messiah is coming, and a new era in God's plan is about to begin.

Covenant & Promise

Paul writes to the Romans:

"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:" - Romans 15:8 KJV

How did the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew reveal this?

Matthew establishes two covenant lines:

David

"And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." - 2 Samuel 7:16 KJV

While the throne was initially given to Solomon, the covenant extends beyond him to an eternal King.

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Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne. He is risen and exalted at the right hand of the Father, and will sit upon the throne of David when He returns to establish His kingdom.

For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” - Acts 2:34-36 KJV

Abraham

“and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” - Genesis 22:18 KJV

Given as a promise after Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac in Genesis 22, an excellent foreshadowing of God giving his only son, Jesus Christ, Abraham’s offspring would be the means through which blessing comes to all nations.

The genealogy again shows that Jesus is that promised seed through whom blessing will come.

The 14/14/14 Structure

Matthew’s structure is divided into three distinct periods of Israel’s history.

“So 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 KJV

- **Abraham to David:** Marks the establishment of God’s promise to Abraham and the rise of the nation of Israel.
- **David to Babylon:** The kingdom period, with certain kings omitted to maintain the pattern of 14 generations, highlighting Jesus’ Davidic lineage and, through Joseph, His legal right to the throne as eternal King.
- **Babylon to Christ:** The exile and post-exilic period, ending in the arrival of the promised Messiah. In this period, prophets are raised up whose prophecies point forward to Christ.

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Matthew intentionally omits certain kings to maintain the structured pattern. Comparing with 1 Chronicles 3:11–12 shows that Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are not listed between Joram and Uzziah.

One theory is that Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are omitted from Matthew's genealogy because of their unfaithfulness and idolatry.

Another theory is that in Hebrew, the letters of David's name (Dalet 4, Vav 6, Dalet 4) sum to fourteen, which is understood as an intentional symbol, reinforcing the Messiah's royal lineage.

Two Genealogies, One Messiah

Up until now, we've mostly focused on Jesus' genealogy from Matthew 1:1–17. Luke 3:23–38 also presents a genealogy, but with differences that reflect each writer's purpose.

- **Matthew** traces the line forward from Abraham to Jesus through David and the royal line, establishing His legal right to the throne through Joseph. He traces the line through Solomon, emphasizing the royal succession, and identifies Joseph's father as Jacob (Matthew 1:16).
- **Luke** traces the line backward from Jesus to Adam, placing Him within a broader human context. He follows another son of David, Nathan, and identifies Joseph's father as Heli (Luke 3:23), reflecting a distinct lineage from Matthew, commonly understood as either Mary's line or a legal lineage through Heli."

Ancient Jewish genealogical practice allowed flexibility, where a son could be named after a legal father or relative, not only a biological father. Levirate marriage or other legal arrangements could result in a child being counted in one line while biologically descended from another. This explains how Joseph could be called the son of Jacob in Matthew and the son of Heli in Luke without contradiction.

Matthew structures his genealogy into three groups of fourteen generations (Matthew 1:17), omitting some names to maintain the pattern and emphasize order. Luke includes a longer list without this structure. Matthew opens his Gospel with the genealogy, presenting Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, while Luke places it after Jesus' baptism, following the declaration that He is the Son of

God, showing His connection to all humanity.

These differences do not contradict but demonstrate each writer's intent: Matthew emphasizes Jesus as the Messiah and rightful King for Israel, while Luke shows His human descent, connecting Him to all mankind.

The Unlikely Women & Gentile Inclusion

Finally, as we wrap up this study on the genealogy of Jesus Christ, we turn our attention to the unlikely women that feature in Matthew's genealogy.

Matthew's genealogy includes Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah, whose presence is unusual in genealogical records. While women do appear in earlier genealogies, those typically include respected matriarchs such as Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. The women Matthew includes, however, fall outside that pattern and are associated with unexpected and often complicated circumstances.

- **Tamar (Genesis 38):** Judah's daughter-in-law. After the deaths of her husband Er and his brother Onan, she was not given in marriage to Judah's youngest son, Shelah, as was expected. She disguised herself as a prostitute and tricked Judah into sleeping with her, bearing twins. Through her son Perez, the line leading to David is preserved.
- **Rahab (Joshua 2):** A Canaanite prostitute in Jericho who hid Israelite spies and acknowledged the power of their God. She and her family were spared when Jericho fell. She later married Salmon, and through their son Boaz, she became part of the line that leads to David and ultimately to Jesus.
- **Ruth (Ruth 1-4):** A Moabite widow of Naomi's son. She chose to leave her own people and homeland to follow Naomi to Bethlehem, declaring, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." She married Boaz, and their son Obed became the grandfather of David, placing her firmly within the line that leads to Christ.
- **Bathsheba, wife of Uriah (2 Samuel 11):** David sinned when he took Bathsheba and arranged the death of her husband Uriah. After mourning, she bore Solomon, through whom the royal line continues, ultimately leading to Jesus.

Conclusion

In each of these accounts, God's covenant promises advance through unexpected and even difficult circumstances. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba show that God's plan cannot be thwarted by human failure or unconventional situations.

Their inclusion shows that God's plan has always accounted for Gentiles, even within Israel's history, pointing forward to the wider blessing that would come through Christ.

As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:13: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ," showing that through Jesus, Gentiles are included in the promises of God alongside Israel.