

What's in a name? A look at genealogies...

1. Study Matthew 1:1-18 and Luke 3:23-38. What do you know about the authors?

Matthew was financially well off and had his own house. He was educated and knew how to read and write. As a Jewish publican, a tax collector, fellow Jews despised him. Luke was a physician and companion of Paul. As a Gentile, he recorded as a historian and did careful research.

2. Make a table of the names of each genealogy. What do you notice?

Matthew 1:1-18

Abraham-David		David-Exile		Exile-Jesus	
1. Abraham	8. Amminadab	15. David (Bathsheba)	22. Uzziah	29. Jeconiah	36. Achim
2. Isaac	9. Nahshon	16. Solomon	23. Jotham	30. Shealtiel	37. Eliud
3. Jacob	10. Salmon (Rahab)	17. Rehoboam	24. Ahaz	31. Zerubbabel	38. Eleazar
4. Judah (Tamar)	11. Boaz (Ruth)	18. Abijah	25. Hezekiah	32. Abihud	39. Matthan
5. Perez	12. Obed	19. Asa	26. Manasseh	33. Eliakim	40. Jacob
6. Hezron	13. Jesse	20. Jehoshaphat	27. Amon	34. Azor	41. Joseph (Mary)
7. Ram	14. David (Bathsheba)	21. Joram	28. Josiah	35. Zadok	42. Jesus

Observations of Matthew:

Matthew's accounting of Israel's kings was for the Jewish audience who were interested in Jesus' royal-legal lineage as decreed by the Davidic covenants (2 Sam 7:8-13). This is perhaps emphasized as Matthew lists in a descending order: "...father of..." with the range of genealogy: Abraham-Jesus. By beginning with Abraham, Matthew stresses Jesus' Jewish ancestry.

The genealogical list is short, because Matthew does not list a number of generations. The reasons are not clear; the Jews did not use the term "son" in a limited sense as in English. The term "son" may or may not be taken literally as a first generation son; it can be understood as a descendant whether as a grandson or a son of a distant generation.

In counting David twice (Matt 1:17), Matthew reveals a pattern in his list. The list is broken down into 3 time periods: a) Abraham and David, b) David and the Exile, and c) the Exile and Jesus. During each period, Matthew lists only 14 generations.

The numerical value of "David" in Hebrew is fourteen. In the ancient world letters serve not only as building blocks of words but also as symbols of numbers. The use of such symbolism is called "gematria." By this symbolism, Matthew points out that the promised "son of David", the Messiah, has come.

Five women are mentioned in the genealogy:

Tamar (Gen 38:6-29) and Rahab (Josh 2:1-21; 6:17-25) were prostitutes, Ruth (Ruth 1:4-16; 4:10-22) was a Moabitess, and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3-5, 14-24; 12:24) was an adulteress.

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Mary had the pattern break: "...the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus,...." The Greek term "by whom" here is a feminine relative pronoun which indicates that Jesus was the physical child of Mary and not of Joseph.

Jeconiah, the last Jewish king, is included in Matthew's genealogy. Jeremiah's prophecy, "Record this man as if childless" (Jer 22:30), is in reference to God's judgment to end the Jewish kingship at Jeconiah (whom Jeremiah calls Coniah) and deny the occupation of the throne by any descendant and thus deny future blessings (2 Chron 36:9-10 Jehoachin is equivalent to Jechoniah).

If Jesus was a physical descendant of Jeconiah, God's curse on Jeconiah would have prevented Him from sitting on David's throne.

Luke 3:23-38 (to compare with Matthew's list, this table reverses Luke's order of Jesus' ancestry)

1. God	14. Cainan	27. Hezron	40. Melea	53. Cosam	66. Naggai
2. Adam	15. Shelah	28. Ram	41. Eliakim	54. Addi	67. Hesli
3. Seth	16. Eber	29. Admin	42. Jonam	55. Melchi	68. Nahum
4. Enosh	17. Peleg	30. Amminadab	43. Joseph	56. Neri	69. Amos
5. Kenan	18. Reu	31. Nahshon	44. Judah	57. Shealtiel	70. Mattathias
6. Mahalalel	19. Serug	32. Salmon	45. Simeon	58. Zerubbabel	71. Joseph
7. Jared	20. Nahor	33. Boaz	46. Levi	59. Rhesa	72. Jannai
8. Enoch	21. Terah	34. Obed	47. Matthat	60. Joanan	73. Melchi
9. Methuselah	22. Abraham	35. Jesse	48. Jorim	61. Joda	74. Levi
10. Lamech	23. Isaac	36. David	49. Eliezer	62. Josech	75. Matthat
11. Noah	24. Jacob	37. Nathan	50. Joshua	63. Semein	76. Eli
12. Shem	25. Judah	38. Mattatha	51. Er	64. Mattathias	77. Joseph
13. Arphaxad	26. Perez	39. Menna	52. Elmadam	65. Maath	78. Jesus

Observations of Luke:

Luke lists Jesus' genealogy in ascending order: "...son of ..."

The range of genealogy: Jesus-God.

There is a pattern break with Joseph in the beginning, "..., being supposedly the son of Joseph,..."

In comparison to Matthew's list, Luke's genealogy is very different. The two apostles, Matthew and Luke, traced two different family genealogies. Matthew recorded the ancestors of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. Luke is believed to record the ancestors of Mary, the biological mother of Jesus.

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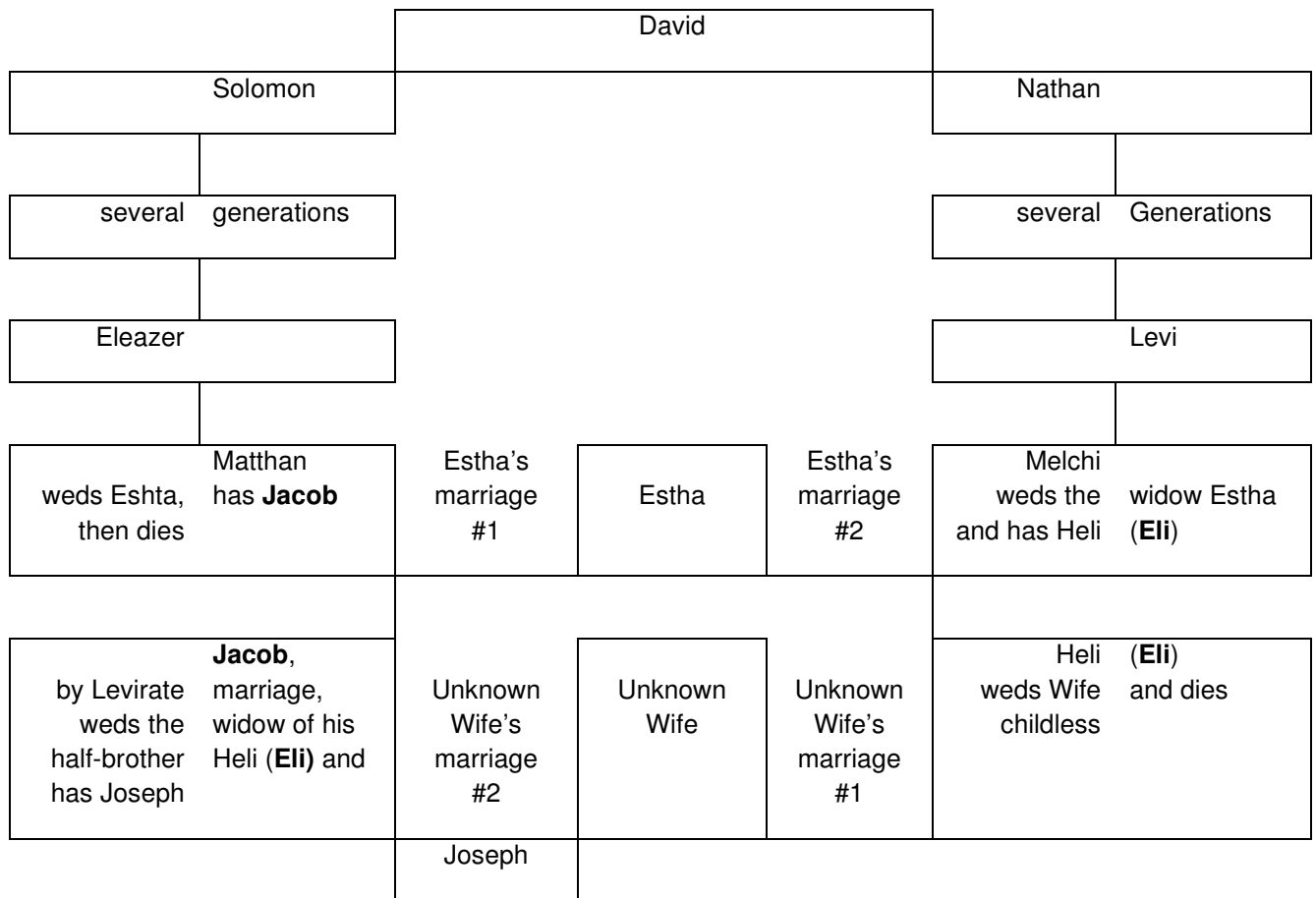
3. In Deuteronomy 21:16, Jewish birthrights are only passed through the father, and God promises David that His kingdom will be established forever with David's descendant on its throne (2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 132:11-12; Jer 33:17). With Jesus' virgin birth, is Jesus entitled to receive the kingly rights of the Davidic bloodline?

This issue has been contentious and the main reason why contemporary Jews deny Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

While both Matthew and Luke do not list Joseph as the biological father of Jesus, Joseph is recognized as Jesus' legal parent and father. There are two approaches to this problem.

#1: The birthright to the Davidic throne passes through Joseph. This argument takes the position that Matthew lists the legal genealogy for succession to the throne, and Luke lists Joseph's real genealogy.

Julius Africanus (160-240 A.D.), a Christian traveler and historian, using records of the Desposyni (alleged blood relatives of Jesus [i.e. Matt 13:55-56; Mark 6:3]) reconstructed the genealogy of Joseph. His writings influenced Eusebius who cited Africanus' genealogical work in 325 A.D (Eusebius Pamphilius: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine, Chapter VII).



Observe with Africanus' theory:

Jacob and Eli are half-brothers, with the same mother but fathers of different names. There is some question whether Levirate marriage was practiced in the case of half-brothers.

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Joseph is listed as the son of Jacob in Matthew but as the son of Eli in Luke. In a genealogy, the child could be listed under his legal or his natural father, which, in the case of Joseph, Eli is the legal father but Jacob is the natural father.

While Joseph would be a biological descendant of David and avoided God's curse on the house of Jeconiah (Jer 22:30), he still was not the biological father of Jesus who was born to a virgin. This violates the promise God made with David (2 Sam 7:12-16).

#2: The birthright to the Davidic throne passes through Mary. This argument takes the position that Matthew lists the legal genealogy for succession to the throne, and Luke lists Mary's biological genealogy.

Romans 1:3 supports the notion that Jesus was of the seed of David through his mother Mary ("... born of a descendant of David according to the flesh").

There are a couple possibilities of how the birthright was passed to Jesus:

A) The Jerusalem Talmud indicated that Mary was the daughter of Eli (Heli) (Haggigah, Book 77, 4). Through Mary, Jesus was a biological descendant of Nathan son of David. Through Joseph, Jesus was the legal heir of the kingly birthright from the line of Solomon son of David. However, Jesus was not affected by the curse on Jeconiah (Jer 22:30) because of His virgin birth!

B) In Numbers 26 and 27, there is a story of Zelophehad who had only daughters. Moses prayed to God, and the Lord told Moses that the inheritance can flow to the female only if a) there were no male offspring (Num 27:8), **and** b) if there is marriage, the daughter must marry within their own tribe (Num 36:6). Mary had no brothers and married within her own tribe to Joseph.

While this possibility provides the biological seed from David, it does not account for the legal inheritance of the kingly birthright.

Matthew's genealogy establishes the royal lineage of Jesus and as legal heir to the kingly birthright through Joseph. Luke's genealogy establishes Jesus as the biological descendant of David through Mary. The virgin birth establishes the deity of Jesus Christ and avoids the curse on the house of Jeconiah. These two genealogies testify to the promise that God made with David, that his seed would reign forever in the kingdom of God.

References:

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