
Analysis of the Divergent Genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke

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ABSTRACT

The genealogy accounts of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-37 present two separate lineages for Jesus Christ. These genealogies have provoked intellectual discourse, theological disputes, and intrigue among Christians and skeptics. This article reviews the discipline of source criticism and analyzes the origins, objectives, divergences, and parallels among various genealogies. It also analyzes theological and source explanations for the discrepancies, offering a thorough comprehension of this notable feature of the gospels.

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Introduction

Recent researchers have discovered substantial variations in Jesus' genealogy as recounted in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Modern scholars conclude that one of the gospel authors have relied on an untrustworthy or reputable source, resulting in differences in the records and names of genealogy. Interestingly, Matthew begins genealogical record with Abraham, whereas Luke starts from Adam. This disparity creates a significant gap between the two versions, instilling distrust in the modern world and provoking countless inquiries, conflicts, and theological discussions.

Ancient Historical Comprehension of Genealogy



The interest in family history is a longstanding preoccupation. Since the inception of civilization in the Fertile Crescent, delineated by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the Near East, humanity has been profoundly engaged in tracing the origins of their families and deities. Family genealogies were frequently transmitted orally by a family or tribal member, who relayed these narratives across generations. Robert R. Wilson asserts that Ancient Near Eastern literature (ANE) genealogies were devised to preserve significant historical documents pertaining to lineage and custom.¹

The term “genealogy” originates from two Greek words: *genos* (γένος), signifying “race” or “family,” and *logos* (λόγος), denoting “discourse” or “an organized mode of communication.” Genealogy denotes the examination of familial origins, ancestry, and the interconnections among family members across generations. It involves monitoring and documenting an individual’s or family’s ancestry to understand their biological and historical connections.²

The Importance of Genealogy for Israel

The initial substantial compilation of genealogical information is found in the Book of Genesis within the Hebrew Bible, which presents a patriarchal lineage. These genealogies delineate the ancestry of prominent individuals and factions linked to the patriarchs,³ beginning with the line from Adam to Noah. In Genesis chapters 10 and 11, the lineage progresses from Noah's sons to Abraham. The initial nine chapters of the Book of Chronicles contain a genealogical record comprising more than 1,000 names,⁴ highlighting the importance of familial heritage and historical continuity within biblical tradition. The genealogical record in the Old Testament seems to have been assembled between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C.E., subsequent to the Hebrew captivity in Egypt and coinciding with the Persian invasion of Israel. Following the demolition of the Temple in 587 B.C.E., the priestly class, having lost their physical center of devotion, intensified their focus on the purity of their genealogical lineage to preserve their social status. In the Second Temple period, circa 510 B.C.E., the purity of lineage became paramount for the priests, since it was essential for maintaining religious identity and perpetuating the history of Israel.⁵ Here are some key reasons why Israel placed great importance on preserving genealogical roots:

1. **Purity of Blood:** A significant element in political strategy and the reinforcement of royal dynasties' status was the preservation of genealogical purity. Proof of lineage was also essential for religious and economic obligations. It was crucial for understanding the national history of Israel, its people, customs, heroes, and ancient narratives.



2. **Family Pride:** Genealogies were employed to highlight familial pride. The comprehensive genealogical records in the Old Testament, particularly in Genesis 36 and 1 Chronicles 1 and 2, as well as in the New Testament in Luke 3, illustrate the Hebrew emphasis on maintaining the prominence of significant figures. The more extensive a family's genealogical lineage, the higher its status and power.

3. **Heirship and Privilege:** In Judaism, the term “son of” possessed considerable importance. For example, “son of David” indicated a legitimate heir to the throne and a descendant of David, while “son of Abraham” denoted “heir of Abraham,” referring to an individual who was his biological descendant. These titles functioned as emblems of privilege, denoting an individual's connection to prominent historical figures and embodying hopes for oneself, one's progeny, and future generations.⁶

During the time of Jesus, certain families of Hebrew⁷ nobility were granted special privileges, such as the honor of carrying wood to the Temple on designated days. This indicated their social and religious status within the community. Furthermore, an Israelite woman desiring to marry into a priestly household was obligated to furnish evidence of her lineage for a minimum of five generations.⁸ This guaranteed the integrity of lineage, which was esteemed, especially for preserving the sanctity of the priesthood and the holy heritage of Israel.

Identification of Dual Lineage in Hebrew Scriptures

The Life of Jair

In First Chronicles chapter 2, Jair is recognized as a member of the tribe of Judah. Jair's father, Segub, was the progeny of Hezron, so reinforcing his affiliation with Judah. In several texts, Moses identifies Jair as the son of Manasseh (Numbers 32:41; Deuteronomy 3:14-15). Furthermore, First Chronicles 2 indicates that Jair owned several small villages in Gilead, referred to as the towns of Jair.

This is a conspicuous example of a dual lineage. Jair is recognized as descending from his actual paternal ancestor, Judah, and, on the other side, from the tribe of Manasseh. He was likely tied to Manasseh through either marriage or inheritance, as he obtained a substantial tract of property in Gilead, a region associated with the Manasseh tribe. This dual identity exemplifies the ambiguity of genealogy claims in the Bible, often influenced by tribal or territorial affiliations.⁹

The Life of Caleb



Caleb, identified as the son of Jephunneh, is also recognized as the son of Kenaz, his grandfather and the founder of his lineage. Conversely, Caleb is identified as the son of Hur in 1 Chronicles 2, who was a descendant of Pharez, the son of Judah. This presents a complex depiction of genealogy.

Caleb is thought to have not been an Israelite by birth, as indicated in Joshua 15:13, but rather adopted into the tribe of Judah and granted an inheritance therein. Consequently, he was genealogically classified as a member of Judah. This indicates that Caleb has a dual lineage, one stemming from Jephunneh and Kenaz, and the other from Hur, Hezron, and Judah. This dual lineage origin illustrates how Caleb, despite not being of Israelite descent initially, was assimilated into the tribe of Judah and acknowledged as part of its legacy. Instances of dual genealogy underscore the mobility and importance of lineage and inheritance in biblical eras.¹⁰ The allocation of property and inheritance is profoundly affected by dual genealogy, which also defines an individual's lineage and tribal affiliation. It allows individuals to claim rights and allocate resources based on their tribal or ancestral records.

This intergenerational method has facilitated the recognition and integration of individuals into diverse familial or tribal structures with adaptability. Facilitating the allocation of inheritances and resources in a manner that respected both practical necessities and ancestral rights, it simplified property transfers and maintenance. According to ancient civilizations, this dual genealogy system served both social and genealogical functions.

Efforts to Reconcile Matthew and Luke

Theory of Levirate¹¹ Marriage: Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.7 references Julius Africanus¹² A letter to Aristides that offers an alternative narrative of the genealogies documented by Matthew and Luke. Africanus thinks that these genealogies were essentially symbolic enumerations intended to indicate, through the amalgamation of royal and priestly names, that Christ embodied both Priest and King. He employs the notion of Levirate marriage as delineated in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 to elucidate this, illustrating the fraternal relationship between Jacob and Heli, and the connection between Matthan and Melchi, who, despite originating from distinct families, were both grandfathers of Joseph.

Matthan and Melchi are presumed to be brothers, as they both espoused the same lady and fathered sons with her, rendering these offspring uterine siblings. Matthan, a descendant of Solomon, married and fathered Jacob. Subsequent to Matthan's demise, Melchi, a member of Nathan's lineage, wed her and fathered a son named Heli. Moreover, Jacob and Heli, albeit originating from distinct families, were half-brothers via their same mother, Estha. Moreover, Heli passed away childless; Jacob wed the widow in a Levirate marriage and had Joseph. Consequently, Matthew delineates the biological



lineage of Joseph, whereas Luke presents the legal lineage.¹³ Christian authors from both the East and West have acknowledged and reiterated Julius Africanus's interpretation of Joseph's lineage, encompassing his account of Levirate marriage and his differentiation between natural and legal paternity.¹⁴

Marshall D. Johnson references K. Bornhauser's perspective that Matthew delineates the legal lineage of royal succession, specifically establishing a clandestine royal line from Zerubbabel to Joseph. Matthew's genealogy may signify 'adopted' instead of 'begat.' However, Luke establishes the lineage, for which the term *egennēsen* is employed.¹⁵ For instance, Jeconiah, who was sentenced to childlessness in Jeremiah 22:24-30, adopted Shealtiel, the biological son of Neri, a descendant of David. Matthew traces the lineage via Zerubbabel, maintaining the clandestine royal line until it culminated in Jacob, who had no heir. Jeconiah designated Joseph, son of Heli from an alternate lineage of Zerubbabel, as his successor. This maintained the tradition of the clandestine royal lineage from which the Messiah would emerge.

The Desposynoi¹⁶ Tradition

Africanus instituted the Desposynoi tradition to substantiate the levirate resolution he proposed, now referred to as "Africanus' solution." Nevertheless, numerous contemporary commentators indicated that it was not precisely Africanus' original response; rather, it was one he had encountered through tradition.¹⁷ Africanus fails to disclose the origin of the tradition he alludes to and stands in stark contrast to the emphasis he subsequently places on the testimony of the Desposynoi, which he cites to substantiate the authority of the levirate narrative. He asserts with confidence that he will reveal the "true account of the events that transpired." (*τὴν ἀληθῆ τῶν γεγονότων ἱστορίαν*). Nonetheless, his conclusion exhibits significantly diminished confidence, complicating the comprehension of the assumption that the levirate narrative originates from the Desposynoi.

If both stories originate from the family of Jesus, how could Africanus assert that the Desposynoi are wholly reliable in detailing their family genealogy preservation, while also acknowledging that the authority of the levirate narrative is not indisputable? Africanus references the evidence of the Desposynoi solely to substantiate his resolution of the inconsistency between Jesus' genealogies, rather than during the presentation of the answer itself. Moreover, the notion that Jesus' relatives elucidated (*ἐξηγησάμενοι*) his lineage captivated Africanus, since he interpreted this term to tackle the inconsistency between Matthew and Luke.¹⁸



Although Africanus could not formally substantiate the levirate narrative, he rendered it plausible and failed to present concrete evidence. He was compelled to concede that his solution was ἀμάρτυρος (lacking testimony or evidence) and ultimately resorted to authority, asserting, “In any case, the Gospel speaks the truth.”¹⁹

Contemporary scholars criticize the reasoning of Africanus’ argument, which has not been adequately examined, and the Desposynoi tradition has not been sufficiently valued by the majority of researchers. This is because they perceived it only as an attempt to reconcile the levirate tradition. Modern academics assert that the two narratives initially pertained to distinct individuals born to parents sharing the same name, elucidating the discrepancies in their genealogy and the birth accounts presented by Matthew and Luke.²⁰

The Source Narrative

The initial two chapters of Matthew are narrated from Joseph's viewpoint, while the first two chapters of Luke are conveyed from Mary’s perspective. In Matthew, the announcement is conveyed to Joseph through a dream, instructing him not to dread taking Mary as his wife, revealing the name of the Son she would bear, and advising him to flee to Egypt with the child and his mother. Following the incident, Joseph is instructed to return, and his apprehension prompts the family to reside in Galilee instead of Judaea. In contrast, Luke prominently features two relatives, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary. Mary gets the announcement directly, and although it probably did not become well recognized until it was incorporated into Luke’s Gospel, it was already a crucial element of Luke’s narrative.²¹

Theory of Adoption

The genealogies of Jesus presented in Matthew 1:17 and Luke 3:23 demonstrate differing perspectives. The adoption theory asserts that biological lineage might differ from legal descent, allowing for the simultaneous existence of two equally valid genealogies. One genealogy may relate to Joseph, the putative father of Jesus, while the other may pertain to Mary, as revealed in Luke and supported by the Talmud, which states that Mary was the daughter of Heli.²² Matthew’s genealogical list may not accurately reflect Joseph’s direct forebears but might be viewed as a presumed lineage, accepted as valid unless refuted or renounced.²³

Matthew’s Objective in the Genealogy



The Gospel of Matthew was authored by Matthew, a disciple of Jesus and a tax collector. It was initially published in Hebrew for Jewish adherents.²⁴ The Jews placed special value on recording genealogies²⁵ of kings and priests (Ezra 2:62; Neh 7:5; 1 Chron 1) to ensure that future generations would know and observe the true bloodline of Israel.

Matthew Employed an OT Genealogical Interpretation

Matthew commences his Gospel with the title (1:1), “the birth of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.” This title evokes analogous formulations present in Genesis 2:4 and 5:1. The nearest equivalent to Matthew 1:1 is Genesis 5:1, which gives the genealogy of Adam. Like how Genesis presents the narrative of Noah, Matthew employs his formula to introduce the account of Jesus, signifying that history has culminated in Jesus. In Matthew’s view, the genealogy, tracing Jesus’²⁶ lineage back to David and Abraham, demonstrates God’s planning rather than merely recording human biological productivity.²⁷ Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish nation, represents the inception of Israel. In first-century Israel, Jews believed they participated in the merits of Abraham, which was meant to render their prayers acceptable, assist in warfare, atone for transgressions, placate God’s wrath, and secure a position in his eternal reign.²⁸

Matthew 1:1 emphasizes “Jesus Christ,” “son of David,” and “son of Abraham,” underscoring the fundamental themes of the infancy tale. The designation “Messiah” attributed to Jesus Christ establishes the foundation for the genealogy and narrative, underscoring that Jesus realizes Jewish messianic aspirations. This emphasis equips the reader to comprehend that Jesus represents the fulfilment of the prophesied Messiah in Jewish tradition.²⁹ Abraham is the inaugural patriarch of Israel, and Jews consider themselves the descendants of Abraham, signifying their authentic Semitic identity. Gentile Christians also consider Abraham the progenitor of all the faithful, both Jews and Gentiles.³⁰

Sources for Matthew’s Composition

Matthew provides a public account based on widely known information or genealogy³¹ during Jesus’ life and after his death. Popular belief often transforms and adapts such facts for moral purposes. In contrast, Luke presents a more private account, derived from knowledge within Jesus’ family, and primarily from Mary alone.³² Raymond Brown claimed that the evangelist either devised the genealogy independently or transcribed it from a predecessor, or that Matthew either uncovered or intentionally fabricated the 3x14 structure referenced in verse 17 through selective omissions. Brown posits that Matthew utilized two pre-existing genealogy lists located in the Greek Septuagint (LXX). One of these



lists, pertaining to the pre-monarchical era, resembles those found in Ruth 4:1-22 and 1 Chronicles 2:5, albeit with certain alterations introduced by Matthew. Matthew included the names of women to emphasize God's plan, spanning from Abraham to David, culminating in fourteen names and consequently fourteen generations.

The alternative list encompassed the monarchical and early post-monarchical eras, functioning as a prominent genealogy of the Davidic royal lineage, featuring kings from Judah to Zerubbabel. Matthew saw that this royal lineage comprised fourteen generations, and by including Joseph and Jesus, he discerned a pattern of 3x14. This numerical pattern, along with Matthew's affinity for numerical frameworks, convinced him that he had discovered a key to God's plan of salvation.³³ The concurrence of numerical patterns in the genealogies indicates that Matthew was cognizant of and maybe integrated his own modifications. Matthew may have utilized an existing genealogy of Jesus or constructed one independently, with the conclusion (1:1-17) showcasing a unique Matthean theological and structural focus.

Matthew's Inclusion of Sinners and Women

The lineage of Jesus is adorned with saints, sinners, and outsiders. Matthew incorporates four women in his genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba (the spouse of Uriah). They are commemorated as the forebears of Jesus.³⁴ Jerome posited that the incorporation of these Old Testament women, perceived as sinners, prefigured Jesus' function as the Redeemer of sinful humanity. Martin Luther posited that the inclusion of women, as foreigners, demonstrated that Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, had ancestral ties to the Gentiles.³⁵

The subsequent supplemental suggestion posits that these ladies exemplify how God employs the unforeseen to surmount human impediments and intervenes on favor of His designated Messiah. The amalgamation of scandalous or irregular partnerships with supernatural involvement via these women elucidates Matthe's selection in the genealogy.³⁶ The inclusion of these women may have aimed to address Jewish critiques of Jesus' birth or, more favorably, to illustrate God's infinite grace and his ability to transform human existence.³⁷

Consequently, Matthew's reference to these four women is to exalt the messianic bloodline. Matthew addressed Jewish Christians familiar with the discussions surrounding the Messiah's lineage, illustrating that the Pharisaic anticipations were realized in Jesus of Nazareth, who descended from these four women. Craig Keener believes that Matthew's citation of these women reflects the biblical



acceptance of David's mixed heritage, implying that Gentiles were part of God's plan³⁸ from the beginning. R. T. France notes that God fulfilled his plan even from an obscure background.³⁹

Fourteen: The Mysterious Digit

The ancient Mediterranean civilizations employed letters to denote numbers instead than Arabic numerals. The letters in the name "David" possess a cumulative numerical value of fourteen in Hebrew. The Jewish audience for whom Matthew primarily composed did not possess numerals as we have now. They ascribed numerical values to specific letters of the Hebrew alphabet: Dalet (4), Vav (6), and Dalet (4), resulting in a total of fourteen.⁴⁰ Thus, the number fourteen was linked to King David, signifying devotion and adoration.

It is possible that Matthew structured his genealogy of Jesus with a pattern of fourteen generations⁴¹ to symbolically emphasize the connection between David and Jesus. Nonetheless, there is no precise tally of fourteen generations in each of Matthew's classifications. There are fourteen generations from Abraham to David. There are fourteen generations from Solomon to Jeconiah, yet only thirteen generations from Shealtiel to Jesus. To form three groups of fourteen, it would be necessary to count an individual twice.

The significance of seven in Jewish philosophy originates from the seven days of creation (Gen. 41.2-7, 26-30). Similarly, the six periods of 'days' precede the Sabbath of permanent rest, the messianic age, and three times fourteen equates to the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24-27.⁴² The number fourteen, rooted in tradition from Abraham to David, is documented in 1Chronicles 1-2. Matthew associated this tradition with three, a number frequently referenced throughout the Gospel, culminating in the structure of three times fourteen.

D. A. Carson posits that this pattern aligns with the context, observing that the numerical value of "David" in Hebrew is fourteen. Through this symbolism, Matthew signifies that the prophesied "son of David" (1:1), the Messiah, has come. The deficiency in the third set of fourteen may imply to certain readers that, akin to God's reduction of the period of tribulation for his chosen, he likewise compassionately abbreviated the interval from the Exile to the advent of Jesus the Messiah.⁴³

Brown contends that Matthew's emphasis on the 3x14 pattern in the genealogy (1:17) is "artificial" rather than absolutely "historical" in its composition. He posits that it is improbable that God orchestrated events with such precision that precisely fourteen biological generations delineated pivotal points in salvation history, including the call of Abraham, the accession of David, the Babylonian Exile, and the advent of the Messiah. This suggests that the evangelist may not have recognized, or did not



personally execute, the omissions in his list. It would be uncommon for Matthew to intentionally exclude generations to establish the pattern and subsequently emphasize it as extraordinary and divinely orchestrated. Thus, it appears that Matthew, through combining sources and creative work, “discovered” a 3x14 pattern in God’s messianic plan.⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas asserts that the number fourteen represents the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

Antiquated Tradition of Generational Leaping

Matthew’s audience, acquainted with the genealogical records of the Hebrew Scriptures, would have comprehended his employment of “jumping generations” in Matthew 1:1 and 1:8. Matthew deliberately excludes certain names to establish his pattern, as evidenced in verse 1 of his Gospel: “this is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” He used the “jumping generation” technique to underscore that Jesus is a descendant of David.⁴⁶

Carson observes that Matthew excludes rulers such as Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah from the lineage between Joram and Uzziah due to their legendary wickedness and their association with Ahab and Jezebel. “Two of the three were infamously malevolent; all three met violent ends.”⁴⁷ Luke presents a continuous lineage from Nathan to Joseph, indicating that Matthew’s enumeration corroborates this assertion. In Matthew 3:15, the third generation preceding Joseph is identified as Matthan, who is likely the equivalent of Luke’s Matthat. This relationship signifies that Matthew’s genealogy is associated with Nathan instead of Solomon.⁴⁸

Jesus’ Genealogy in Luke

The importance of the genealogy in Luke presumably resides in its focus on Jesus as part of humanity, tracing his ancestry back to Adam. This lineage highlights Jesus as the true Son of God by juxtaposing him with the defiant first Adam and the compliant second Adam.⁴⁹

Luke’s Aim in Genealogical Documentation

Luke’s objective in composing his Gospel can be succinctly articulated as follows:⁵⁰

i. Preservation and Documentation: Luke sought to construct a cohesive narrative derived from firsthand testimonies and oral traditions on Jesus’ life, ministry, trial, death, and resurrection.⁵¹ His objective was to safeguard these narratives for posterity and to furnish a credible document for both prospective converts to Christianity and prominent individuals inside the Roman Empire during the late first century CE.



ii. Legitimacy and Continuity: Luke aimed to establish that the nascent church, arising from the teachings of Jesus, had supplanted the synagogue as the authentic Israel. By establishing that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah in Judaism, Luke contended that the church deserved the same protections and privileges under Roman law that had been accorded to Judaism.

iii. Universal Message: Luke underscored that Christianity is a message for all individuals, above racial and national confines. This is exemplified in his genealogy of Jesus, which delineates his ancestry back to Adam, emphasizing Jesus' link to all of humanity.

iv. Biographical Focus: On the account of Jesus' birth, early years, and lineage. Luke discussed a shared interest in the lineage and familial heritage of prominent figures. The early church would have been eager to explore the Messiah's roots and personal history, enriching the narrative of Jesus' miraculous deeds and his influence on everyone he met.

From Jesus to David

Matthew's genealogy commences with Abraham and delineates Jesus' lineage in a descending sequence, highlighting his royal ancestry from David. Conversely, Luke's genealogy traces a lineage from Jesus to David, then to Abraham, ultimately reaching Adam and God, emphasizing the universal nature of Jesus' ministry.⁵² Luke's enumeration, consisting of seventy-seven names, exceeds Matthew's forty-one. Despite considerable overlap in the historical periods addressed, Luke's account is more comprehensive. Both genealogies concur on David; however, Luke incorporates twenty-one names, and Matthew contains only fifteen. Between the collapse of the monarchy and the Babylonian Exile, culminating in the birth of Jesus in 575 BCE, Luke enumerates twenty-two names, whereas Matthew documents thirteen.

Matthew and Luke focus on only a few names: Shealtiel and Zerubbabel at the outset, and Joseph and Jesus at the conclusion. Matthew's genealogy highlights Jesus' royal heritage, whereas Luke's genealogy accentuates Jesus as the Son of God and his global importance. The discrepancies between the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke might be ascribed to many factors. One theory is that Matthew replicated an existing account of David's genealogy, highlighting the significance of the House of David in post-Exile Jewish history. Contemporary academics argue that Matthew may have utilized the genealogical records of Joseph the Carpenter, which could explain the inconsistencies between the ancestral lists of Jesus to Zerubbabel in Matthew and Luke.⁵³ Consequently, Luke's genealogy diverges from the traditional father-to-son order found in Old Testament genealogies and in Matthew's account, as it advances from son to father, so further distinguishing it from Matthew's version.

From David to Noah

The royal lineage of Jesus is affirmed through his descent from David as documented in both Luke and Matthew. This agreement underscores the significance of Jesus' lineage in fulfilling Jewish messianic expectations. Noah, however, underscores a unique aspect of divine covenant and regeneration in the biblical narrative. Noah and the ark were divinely selected, symbolizing a new beginning for humanity. The ark, representing hope and conservation, was constructed to safeguard and preserve all creation throughout the deluge. Following the receding of the waters, God bestowed blessings upon Noah and his family, instructing them to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth,” thereby initiating a new epoch in human history and the perpetuation of creation.⁵⁴

Significance of the Names Enoch and Adam

In the Lukan genealogy, Enoch occupies the seventh position, representing the seventh generation from Adam, which denotes significant importance. This creates a connection in which Enoch, as the seventh generation, is significant, while Jesus, as the seventy-seventh generation, embodies the ultimate realization.⁵⁵

Adam is a crucial figure in the genealogy of Jesus, who is recognized as the New Adam. Adam, being the first human created by God, represents all of humanity, beyond racial and national differences. Created in the “image of God,” Adam was granted dominion over the Earth and commanded to reproduce. The Apostle Paul often contrasted Adam with Jesus in his teachings, highlighting that Adam was “a living being” and “a man of dust,” while Jesus is described as “a life-giving spirit” and “a man from heaven.”⁵⁶

The Role of Number Seven

The number seven possesses considerable significance in the Old Testament and in ancient Near Eastern culture. It plays a significant role in religious rituals, including the week-long celebrations of Passover and Tabernacles. The New Year, the Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles are celebrated in the seventh month, whilst the Feast of Weeks and the Jubilee are derived from the square of seven. The number seven pervades numerous elements of cultic practices: the ordination of priests and the consecration of altars need seven days; sacrificial victims and altars frequently number seven; sacrificial blood and anointing oil are utilized in proportions of seven. Moreover, temple furnishings and decorations often feature the number seven, with the seven-branched candelabra being a notably revered



artifact.⁵⁷ Moreover, the number seventy-seven appears in various Jewish genealogies, notably Matthew 1:1-17 and 1 Chronicles 6:1-15:2.

The eleven groups of seven generations in the Lukan genealogy may symbolize eschatological views that segment global history into twelve epochs, with Jesus concluding the eleventh and initiating the twelfth before to the end. The Old and New Testaments prominently feature multiples of seven, such as seven, fourteen, twenty-one, forty-two, seventy, and seventy-seven. Matthew enumerates forty-two individuals (seven times six) but documents just forty-one, whilst Luke lists seventy-seven names (seven times eleven) in the genealogy of Jesus. It is possible that Matthew misjudged or omitted a generation.

Another interpretation of Luke's genealogy reveals seven patriarchs from Adam to Enoch, followed by seventy names from Enoch to Jesus.⁵⁸ The number seven is prevalent in the New Testament, exemplified by the seven parables and seven woes in the Gospel of Matthew, the seven utterances of Christ on the Cross, and Christ's post-resurrection manifestation to seven disciples. The number seven, representing wholeness and perfection, holds significance in both the Old and New Testaments.

Concluding Remarks

Upon examining the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, I determined that they do not detract from, but instead bolster, the Christian faith. Both genealogies affirm Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the redeemer of all humanity, tracing back to Adam. Matthew's genealogy is tailored for a Jewish audience, highlighting Jesus' lineage from the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, in addition to Abraham. It offers a concise summary of Israel's history, illustrating Matthew's intention to link Jesus to Jewish heritage and royal lineage.

Conversely, Luke's genealogy connects Jesus' lineage to Noah, Adam, and ultimately God, highlighting Jesus' relationship with all humanity and portraying Him as the Son of God, even though Luke was composed for a primarily Gentile audience. Luke's methodology aligns with Old Testament prophecy and underscores the wide scope of Jesus' mission. The variances in the genealogies illustrate the distinct objectives of each Gospel's author. No definitive explanation exists for the discrepancies with absolute confidence regarding all uncertainties; yet, as asserted, the gospel conveys the truth.

References:

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- ² Joseph F Kelly, *The Birth of Jesus According to the Gospels* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008), 28.
- ³ Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 137.
- ⁴ Kelly, *The Birth of Jesus According to the Gospels*, 29.
- ⁵ James B. Bell, *The Roots of Jesus: A Genealogical Investigation* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1983), 1-5
- ⁶ Bell, *The Roots of Jesus*, 12-13.
- ⁷ This shows that some of the Jews were well preserved their genealogical records/traditions whether in Israel or even if they were living in a foreign country.
- ⁸ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 276.
- ⁹ Arthur Hervey, *The Genealogies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1853), 27-28.
- ¹⁰ Hervey, *The Genealogies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 31.
- ¹¹ The objective of Levirate Marriage was to ensure the birth of a child to the deceased father. Consequently, it would be peculiar for Joseph, if he were the offspring of a levirate marriage, to possess a genealogy record that follows his lineage through his biological father. The levirate marriage hypothesis may account for only the inconsistencies at the conclusion of the genealogies, providing minimal assistance about the remaining divergences between the lists. If one accepts the levirate hypothesis, which posits that both genealogies of Jesus are familial records derived from Joseph's biological and legal fathers, how does it account for the discrepancies between the earlier lists of Matthew and Luke, which trace lineage through Zerubbabel's son Abiud and Rhesa, respectively? Matthew delineates lineage through Solomon, the son of David, whereas Luke delineates it through Nathan, another son of David. The concept of levirate marriage addresses few issues and presents numerous challenges, warranting its dismissal as a resolution to the discrepancies in the two genealogies, and even in the narrower context of Jesus' excessive grandfathers.
- ¹² A Christian Traveller and Historian of the late 2nd and early 3rd century CE.

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- ¹³ Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 139-41.
- ¹⁴ Yifat Monnickendam, “Biblical Law in Greco-Roman Attire: The Case of Levirate Marriage in Late Antique Christian Legal Traditions,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 34/ 2 (2019): 146.
- ¹⁵ Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, 142.
- ¹⁶ Desposyni refers to individuals affiliated with the Master or Lord Jesus Christ; a term specifically designated for members of Jesus' blood family in the early centuries of the Common Era. The Theologoumenon concept posits that the early church was acquainted with Jesus' relatives. Had the family not been of Davidic lineage, would they have adhered to the theological presumption of Davidic ancestry? No one may assert ownership. James, identified as the “brother of the Lord” and the leader of the Jerusalem community until the 60s, would not have encountered the assertion that his close cousin was of Davidic descent. Particularly regarding the Pharisees who repudiated Jesus’ Davidic lineage as fraudulent, and also in the 80s or 90s, the grandsons of Jude, another “brother” of Jesus, were prosecuted before Emperor Domitian on the basis of their descent from David, rendering them politically perilous.
- ¹⁷ Christophe Guignard, “Jesus’ Family and their Genealogy according to the Testimony of Julius Africanus,” 2011, https://www.academia.edu/5362559/Jesus_Family_and_their_Genealogy_according_to_the_Testimony_of_Julius_Africanus (accessed on 20/09/2024).
- ¹⁸ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 361.
- ¹⁹ Christophe Guignard, “Jesus’ Family and their Genealogy according to the Testimony of Julius Africanus,” 2011, https://www.academia.edu/5362559/Jesus_Family_and_their_Genealogy_according_to_the_Testimony_of_Julius_Africanus (accessed on 20/08/2024).
- ²⁰ Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, 141-144.
- ²¹ Willian Sanday, *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 195-196.
- ²² Sanday, *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, 200.
- ²³ Hervey, *The Genealogies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 14.

- ²⁴ H.U. Weitbrecht Stanton, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919), 34.
- ²⁵ There is a foreshadowing of the unusual birth of Jesus by the emphasis of Joseph as the husband of Mary and use of the passive (ἦς ἐγέννηθη) rather than the active verb (ἐγέννησεν) which is repeated throughout the genealogy. It appears that Matthew has a theological purpose for the genealogy.
- ²⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday and Company, INC., 1977), 66.
- ²⁷ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 68.
- ²⁸ Louis Matthews Sweet, “The son of Abraham,” Matthew 1 Commentary, 02/09/2024, <https://www.pceptaustin.org/matthew-1-commentary> (accessed on 19/09/2024).
- ²⁹ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 67.
- ³⁰ Zhodi Angami, *Tribals, Empire and God: A Tribal Reading of the Birth of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 95.
- ³¹ Africanus conveyed to Aristides that Hebrew genealogy was preserved in public records until the coronation of Herod as king of Judea. Herod obliterated the genealogy record, cognizant that the Israelites were unrelated to him, which he found insulting. As the ancestry of the Hebrews remains indeterminate, he is consequently exonerated. However, several individuals maintained the confidentiality of their records, including Jesus' family from Nazareth and Cochaba, as well as those from Judean villages and other areas of the nation. The origin of these lineages was referred to as “the Book of Days.”
- ³² William Mitchell Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? A Study on the Credibility of St. Luke* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1939), 78.
- ³³ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 69.
- ³⁴ Bell, *The Roots of Jesus*, 38.
- ³⁵ Raymond E. Brown, eds., et al., *Mary in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 82.
- ³⁶ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 71.
- ³⁷ Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, 176.
- ³⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 80.



- ³⁹ R.T. France, Matthew, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 79.
- ⁴⁰ Kelly, *The Birth of Jesus According to the Gospel*, 38.
- ⁴¹ M. D. Goulder, in his book *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, asserts that Matthew emulates the model established in 1 Chronicles 1–3 and seemingly concludes the third section of the Chronicler by presenting three sets of fourteen generations. Contemporary academics assert that Matthew has constructed an artificial framework for the genealogical lists to conform to his 3 x 14 pattern, having omitted specific names and counted others redundantly. Furthermore, he must possess an external source beyond 1 Chronicles for the third segment of the genealogy. Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel S. Matthew* critiques that the author of the Gospel acquired the names in vv. 13–16 from an unidentified source, maybe Christ's family.
- ⁴² Angami, *Tribals, Empire and God*, 136.
- ⁴³ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, edited by F. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 69.
- ⁴⁴ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 82.
- ⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected Out of the Works of the Fathers I, St. Matthew*, edited and translated by John Henry Newman (Southampton: Saint Austin, 1997), 38–39.
- ⁴⁶ R. Herbert, “Understanding Matthew’s Genealogy of Jesus,” *Living with Faith*, 2016, [http:// www.livingwithfaith.org/blog/understanding-matthews-genealogy-of-jesus](http://www.livingwithfaith.org/blog/understanding-matthews-genealogy-of-jesus) (accessed on 24/08/2024).
- ⁴⁷ Carson, “Matthew,” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 67.
- ⁴⁸ Hervey, *The Genealogies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 29-30.
- ⁴⁹ Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositors Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 861.
- ⁵⁰ Bell, *The Roots of Jesus*, 44.
- ⁵¹ From New Revised Standard Version.
- ⁵² Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, 234.
- ⁵³ Bell, *The Roots of Jesus*, 48-58.
- ⁵⁴ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 296.
- ⁵⁵ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 297.



⁵⁶ Bell, *The Roots of Jesus*, 53.

⁵⁷ Bell, *The Roots of Jesus*, 54.

⁵⁸ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 296.