

St. Matthew

Chapter 1

The Genealogy of Jesus 1:1-17

Matthew begins his Gospel with the Genealogy of Jesus. He organizes it in three groups of fourteen ancestors. Matthew is intent on getting the fourteen, and shortens the second and third group to get at this number. This accounts for the omissions in the genealogy.

The Nuts and Bolts

The first list of fourteen is a list of the fathers, the patriarchs, from Abraham to David. The lives of Abraham to Judah can be read in Genesis. The genealogy from Perez to David is traced in Ruth 4:18-22.

The second list of fourteen is a list of kings. The list can be found in 1 Chronicles 3:10-16. Matthew excludes three kings, Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah between Joram and Uzziah. There is nothing that these kings have in common (length of reign, good or bad, etc.) to indicate why they are left out, and it appears that Matthew did this to make the lists equal in length.

The third list from the deportation into Babylon to Jesus is not drawn from the Scriptures, but apparently from the priestly records that were kept in Jerusalem.

Comparing the genealogy in Matthew with the one in Luke [3:23-38], we make the following observations:

1. Matthew is presenting us the Jesus' legal genealogy, through His step-father Joseph. Luke is presenting us with Mary's genealogy.
2. The two genealogies are in reverse order, Matthew beginning with Abraham and ending with Jesus, Luke beginning with Jesus and ending with Adam and God.
3. The genealogies are the same from Abraham to David. They then diverge, Matthew following Solomon and Luke following Nathan.
4. Interestingly, the lines converge 16 (or so) generations later (by marriage) for two generations (Shealtiel and son Zerubbabel) before diverging again toward Joseph and Mary.



The Promise of the Gospel, Abraham and David

The chief characters of the genealogy are Abraham and David. Concerning this, Luther says, “For this reason he [Matthew] refers only to those two fathers, Abraham and David, because he has a definite intention with regard to this nation, in order that he might influence them, as heirs of the promise, in a charming manner, to accept the Christ prophesied to them and to believe that this man was Jesus whom they had crucified.”

The promise that the Messiah would come through the line of Abraham can be found in Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18. The promise that He would come through the line of David can be found in 2 Samuel 7:1-17; 12:13; Psalm 89:3,4; 132:11; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5.

The genealogy puts Jesus before us as the Son of David, exactly as the Scriptures promised. [See

How to Read the Genealogies of the Scriptures

Bible students often come to the long genealogies of the Scriptures and get tired or bored or skip them all together, but the genealogies in Matthew and Luke teach us how to read the genealogies of the Scriptures.

These are the last genealogies in the Scriptures. This teaches us the purpose of all the genealogies: to get to Jesus. So too all the genealogies in the Old Testament: they are all pushing toward the birth of the divine Messiah who would save His people from their sins.

It this way we can understand the genealogies as the history of the promise of the Gospel, that the Son of God would be born of a woman to destroy the devil by His death. [See Genesis 3:15]

The Women of the Genealogy

Matthew mentions four of the women in Jesus family tree: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and her of Uriah (Bathsheba). Why?

The Birth of Jesus 1:18-25

It is interesting to note that the main character in Matthew's account of our Lord's nativity (besides Jesus, of course) is St Joseph. Joseph is an often overlooked Biblical character. Because he is never mentioned after Jesus' boyhood, most believe that Joseph died before Jesus reached adulthood. For this reason Joseph is often pictured as an old man.



The emphasis on Joseph serves to show that Jesus is the “Son of David.”

Also, by showing Joseph's faithfulness, Matthew answers the critics that had already come in Jesus' lifetime who accuse Him of being of illegitimate birth [See St John 8:41].

Betrothal

In the Scriptures engagement is a legally binding state in which the bridegroom and bride are married before the actual ceremony. So Joseph and Mary, though their marriage had not been consummated, were legally husband and wife.

The Virgin Birth

Many doubters question the authenticity of the virgin birth. So did Joseph who, when Mary told him that she was pregnant, knew that she must have cheated on him, and prepared to “put her away.” His rash action is stemmed by the angelic messenger who, in a dream, verifies the truth that Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

The virgin birth is the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, especially Isaiah 7:14.

The Two Names

Jesus, in this passage, is given two names, Jesus and Immanuel. We are given the meaning of both names:

Jesus. “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” [St Matthew 1:21]
Jesus is the Greek derivative of the Hebrew “Joshua”, literally, “The Lord saves.”

Immanuel. “They shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.’” [St Matthew 1:23]
Matthew here gives us a literal translation of the Hebrew name.

Concerning these two names, Dr David Scaer writes, “Jesus means God saves and Emmanuel means God is with us, but the difference in meaning is only apparent as both names have significance. The God of the Old Testament is never just culticly present like the pagan gods. He is not confined to shrines. His presence cannot be mechanically brought about through incantations. Neither is the name Emmanuel, God is present, merely a belief in the omnipresence of God. When God is present, He is more than *just* there, but out of freedom He chooses to be where He wants *for* the salvation of man. In the Old Testament, God chose to be present in victory and defeat, grace and judgment. For the true God to be present with His people means that He is present for the express purpose of saving His people, even when He is subsequently rejected. The Lord of hosts is present with Ahaz and his people to give them victory over their political enemies and with Jesus and His people to give them victory over the internal enemies of sin and death. Emmanuel, “God is with us,” means Jesus, that is, God is saving now.” [*What Do You Think of Jesus?* David Scaer. p. 25]

