

CHAPTER ONE

Section 1

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

TEXT: 1:1-17

1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
2. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren;
3. and Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar; and Perez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram,
4. and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon;
5. and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;
6. and Jesse begat David the king. And David begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Uriah;
7. and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa;
8. and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Uzziah;
9. and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah;
10. and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah;
11. and Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away to Babylon.
12. And after the carrying away to Babylon, Jechoniah begat Shealtiel; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel;
13. and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor,
14. and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;
15. and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;
16. and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.
17. So all the generations from Abraham unto David are fourteen generations; and from David unto the carrying away to Babylon

fourteen generations; and from the carrying away to Babylon unto the Christ fourteen generations.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why do you suppose Matthew would begin his Gospel with the lineage of Jesus? Would it have not been much simpler to omit those difficult names and get on with the story? Why do you think so?
- b. Why would Matthew call these first 17 verses "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ" when they are not a "book" and these words do not constitute an adequate title for the entire Gospel?
- c. Do you think Matthew intended to give an exhaustive list of Jesus' ancestors? If so, why does he omit at least three names?
- d. Why does Matthew say there are fourteen generations in the three major sections of the list when there were obviously more ancestors?

PARAPHRASE

This is the record of the ancestry of Jesus Christ, a descendent of both David and Abraham:

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

Judah and his brothers

Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar

Hezron

Ram

Amminadab

Nahshon

Salmon

Boaz whose mother was Rahab

Obed whose mother was Ruth

Jesse

David the king

Solomon whose mother was Uriah's wife (Bathsheba)

Rehoboam

Abijah

Asa

Jehoshaphat

Joram

Ahaz
 Hezekiah
 Manasseh
 Amos
 Josiah
 Jechoniah and his "brothers" at the time of the deportation to
 Babylon
 Shealtiel
 Zerubbabel
 Abiud
 Eliakim
 Azor
 Zadok
 Achim
 Eliud
 Eleazar
 Matthan
 Jacob
 Joseph, the husband of Mary, who was the mother of Jesus, who
 is called "Christ."

So the whole number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen; from David to the Exile to Babylon fourteen; and from the Exile to Babylon to the Christ Himself fourteen.

NOTES

The genealogies of Jesus recorded in Matthew and Luke are apparently so bare of practical use and so full of difficulties for the modern Bible student that many usually skip them and go on with the "more important lessons which encourage faith and godliness." But the value of these records and the significance both to the modern unbeliever and Christian alike so greatly outweighs their seeming dry, forbidding content that Bible students cannot but be blessed by their study.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

A. THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR THE GENEALOGICAL CERTIFICATION.

To the western mind these first 17 verses of Matthew's Gospel seem to be a useless procedure in presenting Jesus' pedigree through which one must wade to get at the real beginning of His history. However, to the Jewish mind this is most natural, interesting and

essential. Matthew's opening words indicate that Jesus is both "son of David and son of Abraham" in an important, unique sense. God had promised the patriarchs and prophets that the Messiah would trace His lineage from these worthies. As apologetic evidence, therefore, it is imperative that Matthew indicate Jesus' lineage. (Cf. II Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:15-18.) These prophecies, which admittedly come from God, place Matthew under obligation to show that this Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the prophecies in this primary respect, before he could proceed further. Throughout Matthew's record (12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:41-46) as well as the apostolic preaching and the writing of others (cf. Ac. 2:25-36; Ro. 1:3; II Tim. 2:8) this ancestral relation of Jesus is emphasized. Neither Matthew and his age nor we and ours should spend further useless study and futile trusting in Jesus of Nazareth if he be not "the son of David, the son of Abraham."

B. THE GENEALOGIES EMPHASIZE THE HUMANITY OF JESUS.

Jesus is truly human. The Word who was with God in the beginning became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw not only His glory, which befits that of the Father's Only Son, but we saw His gracious self-abnegation. He was not ashamed to call us brethren: He had fellowship with us sinners, although he was sinless. (II Co. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:5-18; 4:14-16; 5:7-10)

C. THE GENEALOGIES PROCLAIM THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

God always keeps His word. The Jews were always a waiting people, never forgetting they were a chosen people. Often they forgot the moral responsibilities to God that that election required of them, but regardless of the long history of idolatry, decline and subjection, they never forgot their destiny rooted in the promises of God. Though man often forgets, God is faithful to His promises. What He promised to Abraham and David came to pass. (Ro. 15:8)

D. THE GENEALOGIES HINT AT THE SINFULNESS OF MEN.

As we notice the text, we shall be struck by the sinful character of important names in the list. What we see of Jesus, who was not stained with any sin, will force us to conclude that grace and goodness do not necessarily run in families, and that heritage alone could not account for the purity of Jesus. **JESUS WAS NOT PRODUCED BY THE LINE OF DAVID:** He was given to it. Certainly, it was not Matthew's purpose to clothe Jesus "with the diminishing glories of the first families of Israel," for he brings up, even if in a suggestive, veiled form, their embarrassing sins as well.

E. THE GENEALOGIES SHOW GOD'S PURPOSES IN HIS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL.

In this rapid stroke of the pen, Matthew summarizes the history of Israel and shows that, in God's providential dealings with the Jews, there was purpose and design. God was intending and willing that certain things happen. The many unanswered questions, which were left puzzling the ancient Hebrews, are drawn together and tied to God's supreme solution: Jesus His Son. Because of these genealogies, we must view Jewish history as proceeding toward the goal of accomplishing God's predetermined plan. (Cf. Ac. 2:23; 3:17-26; Eph. 1-3)

F. THE GENEALOGIES DECLARE THAT JESUS IS NO MERE "CREATURE OF HIS ENVIRONMENT."

Some might emphasize unduly the messianic expectation of the Jews to suggest that Jesus is to be accounted for by His fulfillment of the then-current Jewish expectations; that is, being quite as human as any other man, Jesus swept into the religious vacuum created by sterile Pharisaism and by Sadducean philosophy, filling the crying need of the common people by His careful exploitation of His own extraordinary grasp of the times. These genealogies, on the other hand, clearly teach that the coming of Jesus was clearly planned and carefully prepared for; hence, He was a Child, not of the moment, but of the ages. (Study I Pet. 1:20, 21; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7; Rev. 22:16.)

G. THE GENEALOGIES SUPPORT AND COMPLIMENT THE VIRGIN BIRTH NARRATIVES.

Luke records the annunciation to Mary (1:32-35) where her baby is called both "Son of the Most High," "Son of God," and "Son of David." Whatever Mary's lineage might be, though she would be the actual human parent of Jesus, yet Joseph was the head of the family, and the davidic connection of Jesus could only be established by acknowledging Jesus as legal heir of Joseph to David's throne. Thus, the two genealogies are required to show that Jesus is both the lineal Son of David by Mary, and that He is the legal heir to David by Joseph. Jesus is not the blood son of His legal father: He is the blood-line heir of the davidic throne being the grandson of David through Mary.

THE PECULIARITIES OF MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY

Attacks have been launched which question the accuracy of Matthew's record. Most fall short of their mark when Matthew's purpose for introducing the genealogy is seen.

A. THE ARTIFICIAL DIVISION OF THREE GROUPS OF FOURTEEN GENERATIONS.

The partitioning of Matthew is called "artificial" because of the omission of three generations in verse 8, where we would expect to find the additional names: Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah. Also, in verse 11, Jehoiakim is omitted. The omissions were not accidental since the OT genealogical tables were a matter of public record (See I Chron. 1-3; Neh. 7:5, 61-65; II Chron. 12:15; 31:16-19) and intense private interest, both religious and legal (See Lk. 1:5; Ac. 4:36, 37; Phil. 3:5). For this same reason, it may also be seen that Matthew makes these omissions not for advantage in argument, in which case ready refutation could be adduced from public annuals and OT chronicles. Rather, this "artificial" grouping of these well-known names furnishes three groups of fourteen names easily memorized. The early Christians, in argument with Jews, could more easily use the long, difficult list, having committed it to memory. Observe, it is Matthew who calls attention to the fact that he has so arranged the list. Matthew's purpose at this point is not primarily historical in the sense that he merely gives a precise list, but is logical in the sense that he reasons to a conclusion: "Jesus Christ (is) the son of David, the son of Abraham." Should he be charged with a deceptive motive for omitting the names, none could prove this supposed motivation, for Matthew never bases any argument upon the series of three groupings into fourteen generations each. It seems both fitting and proper to say that Matthew's "artificial" catalogue of the number of the generations was meant to apply only to this list as given, and not to the number that had actually existed.

B. THE INSERTION OF NAMES OF BROTHERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE HISTORICAL LISTS.

If he intended to give a simple, objective list, then why include the brothers of the lineal descendent? Is it because the OT so continually associates the sons of Jacob together? But, why mention the brethren of Jehoiakim in v. 11? It is difficult to see just why these extra names were introduced unless they offer another device for facilitating the memorization of the list.

C. THE INSERTION OF THE NAMES OF WOMEN INTO THE GENEALOGY.

The insertion of the names of women into the genealogy of so notable a person as the Messiah is a practice not only foreign but abhorrent to the ordinary practice. The singularity of these notices is

most clearly observed by their contrast to Jewish national self-righteousness:

1. The incestuous Tamar (Gen. 38)
2. The prostitute Rahab (if she is the same one who was contemporary with Salmon son of Nahshon, a chief of the tribe of Judah just prior to the Israelite conquest of the Promised Land (cf. Num. 1:7 and Mt. 1:5 with Josh. 2:1-21; 6:1-25))
3. The virtuous but gentile Ruth (Ru. 1:4) who belonged to the alien, hated Moabite race (cf. Dt. 23:3-6)
4. Bathsheba, the seduced but guilty wife of Uriah (II Sam. 11, 12)

The suggestion has been made as to why Matthew should have included these names: that he was answering the Jewish attacks and slanders upon the virgin birth and upon Mary's character. Accordingly, then, Matthew would be answering these slanderers of Mary by reminding them of real blemishes in the Messiah's unassailable bloodline. They should busy themselves with these real blemishes, well attested in the Jewish history, rather than slander the pure maiden Mary. However, it is difficult to admit that Matthew would, even for the sake of argument, compare the mother of Jesus with women in whose lives shame could be found. Perhaps Matthew's insertion of these names is not for comparison and analogy but rather for contrast: if even such shameful blemishes in the messianic lineage could be used by God to carry out His purposes, how much more the creative action of the Holy Spirit in the chaste virgin! However, it must again be admitted that Matthew draws no conclusions upon the basis of these inserted names.

How the Jewish ears must have stung as these women are mentioned! What could be Matthew's purpose? Could it be that:

1. The barrier between Jew and Gentile be down? Here is Ruth the virtuous Moabite and Rahab the believing Canaanite of Jericho (?) who find their places in Jesus' pedigree. It should be clear to the Jewish mind that the Messiah cannot be of unmixed blood!
2. The barriers between male and female are falling? The ordinary genealogy would have contained no names of women because they would have had no legal rights. Being regarded as a thing not a person, the mere possession of her father or husband, to be disposed of as he might choose, yet she finds her place in God's scheme of things.

3. The barriers between saint and sinner are changing? To the orthodox Pharisee, this must have been a blow, since his orthodox answer to the query "The Messiah: whose son is he?" must necessarily include those who have sinned greatly. So God is able to use for His purposes and fit into His scheme not only "the righteous," but also sinners. Observe that these women are not the only notable sinners of the list, for one need only read the record of the lives of the kings themselves to see how truly God used those unworthy instruments to accomplish His will.

HOW MATTHEW USES "SON" AND "BEGAT"

Unless we observe the usual manner of constructing ancient genealogies, we must pronounce Matthew's statement of the genealogy of Jesus as incorrect. The language of any nation or period must be understood in the light of its own peculiar usage. Genealogical terms were used in a much wider sense by the Hebrews than by ourselves. Matthew follows common usage among the Jews, when he describes, in v. 8, Joram as "begetting" Uzziah, when in reality Joram was grandfather of Uzziah at least three generations removed. (Compare the Hebrew usage in thus abbreviating genealogies: Ezra 7:1-3 contains 15 names of Ezra's ancestry whereas the same genealogy, I Chron. 6:3-14, contains 22 names.) Hence, "son of," "father of," and "begat" have broader technical meanings, which indicate adoption or some official connection or "descent" other than actual blood descent or other nearer or more remote connections. The sequences of generations often has to do with families rather than with individuals, and may represent the succession to the inheritance or headship, rather than the actual relationship of father to son. To summarize, then, we see that a man could be the "son" of another in one of the following modes:

1. Natural son. This descent and connection by birth constitutes the main line and, in any given case, has the presumption in its favor, unless clear facts to the contrary exist.
2. Grandson, or more generally, descendent (Cf. Gen. 46:26, 27)
3. Adopted son (Cf. Gen. 48:5-16; Ex. 2:10; Heb. 11:24) or "legal son."
4. Son-in-law, by marriage one becomes the "son" of his father-in-law.

5. Levirate son (Study Dt. 25:5-10 for the law and Ru. 4:1-22 for a case in point.)

So, if Matthew seems to be inaccurate due to skipping names or adding some names which are not bloodline sons directly connected with their fathers, then we will not be surprised, for he is following current usage of his time.

WHOSE GENEALOGY IS THIS?

Does this pedigree belong to Joseph? to Mary? To examine the text is but to find the obvious answer which, in turn, raises problems. "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." (1:16) If this be the pedigree of Joseph, then, why include such a list, if we are searching for a lineal descendent of David? The clearest truth taught by the narratives is that Jesus is NOT the lineal descendent of Joseph, the primary reason for which being Jesus' reported birth of the virgin. Luke, on the other hand, reports Jesus as "being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli." We will deal with the problem of Joseph's father in v. 16. But, suffice it to say now, that the best solution to the problem whose genealogy this would be, is that Matthew provides us with Joseph's genealogy which indicates Jesus to be of legal kinship to David and legal heir to David's throne through His legal father, Joseph. Matthew shows that Jesus possessed the right characteristic to be the promised Messiah. He is not attempting to prove that Jesus possessed David's blood, since David's blood did not pass from Joseph to Jesus. Rather, Matthew shows that Jesus is of the right lineage *legally* to be the Messiah. This certifies one of the facts necessary to prove Jesus to be the Messiah. Luke, accordingly, provides the blood-line descent of Jesus through His mother directly from David, not, however, through the line of kings as regards the inheritance of David's throne. We may rejoice that God in His providence has so clearly brought forth the Messiah from two lines: one line from which Jesus would inherit the throne of David, but from which He could not receive the blood of David (according to Matthew's genealogy); the other line from which Jesus received the blood of David but would not inherit the throne (Luke's record).

NOTES

1:1 **The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.** This inscription at the beginning of the larger narrative of Matthew's picture of Jesus might be confused for a title of the entire record. However, in

view of the immediate context, it is better to take these words as supplying a title to the genealogical list alone. (Cf. Gen. 5:1ff) The name "Jesus" is the Savior's personal name, a name then in common use (See Lk. 3:29; Ac. 13:6; Col. 4:11). It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua" (*yehôshua'*) which means "Jehovah is salvation," and is the term used for the OT Joshua in the Greek translation of the OT and in Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8. In Mt. 1:21 Mary is commanded by the angel to give this name to her yet unborn Son, "for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Thus, we recognize "savior" as the usual meaning. What was to this Son of Mary a common name, was given by God to provide the title which would declare His unique position to all the world. It is the personal name of the Lord in the Gospels and the Acts, but passes into a title also, as used in the Epistles where generally it appears in combination with "Christ" or some other title. (Cf. Ro. 3:26; 1:1; I Co. 12:3; Heb. 12:8; I Pe. 1:1).

"Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Messiah" (*Mâshîach*) as in Jn. 1:41; 4:25. This term is more a title than a proper name, the title signifying "the one anointed", an idea derived from the God-appointed practice among the Jews of anointing their prophets, priests and kings. (For examples and information on this practice, see Judg. 9:8-15; I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 12:3-5; 26:11; Is. 61:1; Ex. 29:1-9; Lev. 8:12; Ex. 40:13-16; I Kg. 19:16). The title easily passes into a personal name by use in passages where "Christ" does not mean the Messiah in general, but a very definite Messiah, Jesus, who is called "Christ", not so much a title as a proper name. (See Ac. 2:38; 3:6; 4:10; 9:34; Ro. 1:4; 5:6; I Pe. 1:1-3, 7.)

the son of David, the son of Abraham. In these four key words, Matthew summarizes the genealogy to follow, at once drawing attention to his object: that is, showing that Jesus of Nazareth is legitimate heir of both David and Abraham, and, as such, possesses the necessary credentials for claiming the Messiahship. Because the Jews believed the prophecies that the Christ would be of the seed of David and of Abraham, the first step in convincing them that Jesus was the Christ was to demonstrate that He was a direct descendent of them.

1:2 The sources of information for the names of the first division of fourteen generations might be found in Gen. 21:1-3; 25:21-26; 29:35; 38:29; Ru. 4:18-22; I Chron. 1:34—2:15. For ease of remembering, these names contained in this section may be regarded

as "patriarchs" (Cf. Ac. 2:29). The line of descent is traced in the Hebrew manner, naming the father who begot the son.

Observe that, in the case of both Isaac and his son Jacob, neither of their brothers, Ishmael and Esau, respectively, are involved in the promises of God's Messiah, while in the case of Judah, both he and his brothers together produced the chosen nation whence sprang the Messiah. Although Judah alone represents the actual line of Jesus' descent, yet all twelve patriarchs were the direct heirs of the Messianic promise. Thus, it would seem that Matthew begins to use the names not merely or only for the list's sake, but also to epitomize the history of God's promise. We will see this again in the inclusion of the names of the women.

1:3 **Tamar.** See above on *Peculiarities, C*, in the *Preliminary Considerations*.

1:4-6 From Perez to David, the descent is traced according to Ruth 4:18-22. A problem exists at this point regarding the time element. David is described as only fourth in descent from Salmon in a period of at least 450 years (Ac. 13:18-20) from the entrance of Israel into Canaan until the beginning of the reign of Saul. Saul's reign began prior to David's birth by ten years (Cf. Ac. 13:21 with II Sa. 5:4). Thus, there are only four generations which must cover 460 years. The most likely explanation might be one of two possibilities:

1. If Matthew is copying from Ru. 4:18-22, it may be that the author of that passage omitted unimportant links in the Davidic line, while retaining only the more noted ones.
2. Or, if Matthew is copying public records, perhaps he is omitting the unimportant links in an undisputed chain.

Regarding such omissions in Matthew's list, see *A, Peculiarities* in the *Preliminary Considerations*. For a clear example of compressed genealogy: Ex. 6:16-20; I Chron. 23:12-15.

The ancestral line has now reached royalty, but it has also seen grave, public sin. See how Matthew introduces David's sin: "her that had been the wife of Uriah" and in this phrase reminds of adultery, murder, and death of the first child. Though Bathsheba was David's queen, she belonged to Uriah.

1:6-11 These men are all kings whose names are found in the list of I Chron. 3:10-19, or of course in the histories of these kings

in the two books of Kings and Chronicles. No comment is needed on the names in the list except where some special problem requires it.

1:8 Here Matthew omits three names: Ahaziah (II Kg. 8:26), Joash (II Kg. 12:2), and Amaziah (II Kg. 14:2). Neither the length of their reign nor their outstanding wickedness can be assigned as Matthew's reason for omitting them, for there is no particularly obvious significance about the length of their reign or about their sins, any more than that of the other wicked men which are included. These men certainly deserve to be left out of the pedigree of the Messiah, but no more than some retained in the list. It becomes obvious that Matthew purposely drops these three kings to form three groups of ancestors comprised of the same number of names. It is not likely that Matthew made an unintentional error by omitting these names, for both friend and foe would have detected the error, and have demanded a correction in line with the OT chronicles.

1:11 **Josiah begat Jechoniah.** Here again Matthew omits another name: "Josiah begat Jehoiakim; Jehoiakim begat Jechoniah" we would have expected him to say. Here are the problems:

1. Jechoniah is not the immediate son of Josiah (I Chron. 3:10-17).
2. Jechoniah apparently had no such "brethren" as mentioned here.
3. Jechoniah would, apparently, have then to be counted twice in order for Matthew's scheme of fourteen names to stand good in the third group; that is, Jechoniah would then be number 14 in the second group and number one in the third.

Several solutions are possible to harmonize the known facts:

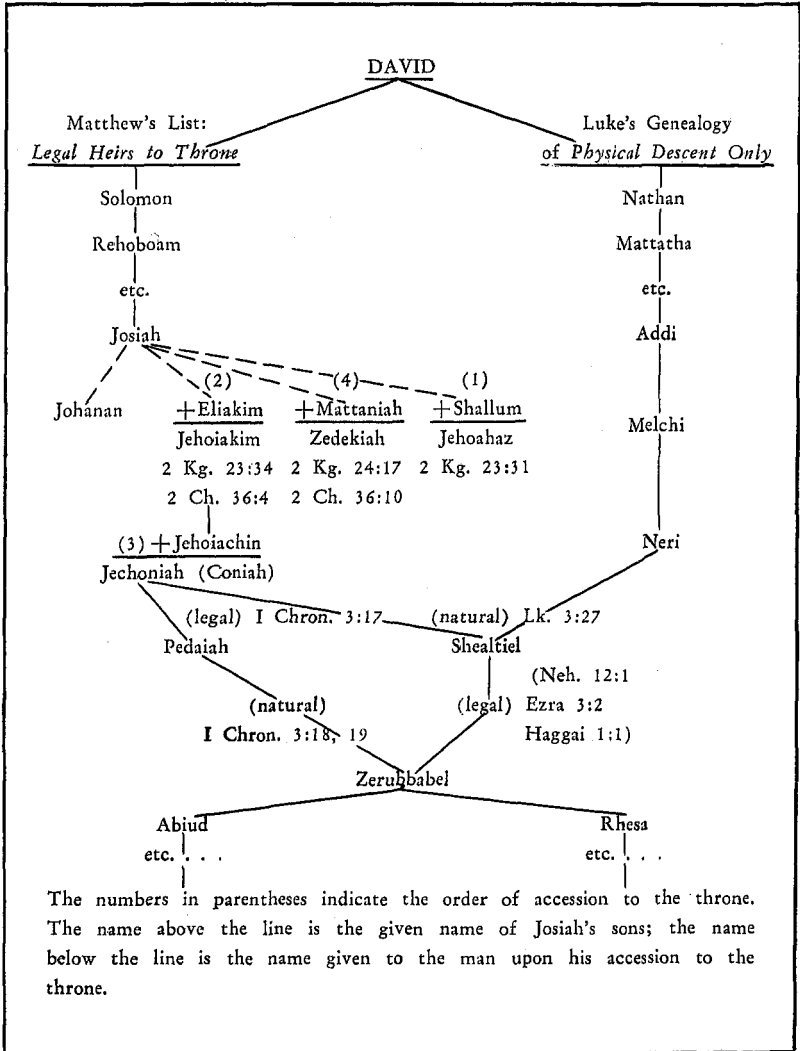
1. Jechoniah is the "son" of Josiah in the broad sense of the word, peculiar to Hebrew usage.
2. The term "brethren" could also be taken in the broader sense of "relatives" or royal kindred, an interpretation which fits quite significantly into Jechoniah's history. (See chart below.)
3. Because the list is apparently simplified "for memorization," it would be possible to count Jechoniah twice, although some have suggested the more likely solution that David, rather than Jechoniah, is to be counted twice. See comment on verse 17.

4. The suggestion by some, that a scribal error has occurred in the copying of this text, raises more problems than it solves. The suggested "original text" is supposed to have read: "Josiah begat Jehoiakim and his brethren, and Jehoiakim begat Jechoniah," but, when copied, "Jehoiakim" and "Jechoniah" were confused and the resulting text reads as we have it in the American Standard Version. This solution raises the following problems which are not answered by the solution:
 - a. There is scant textual evidence for such a supposed miscopy. The bulk of the evidence for including the name of Jehoiakim (i.e. MSS M, Theta, Lambda and 33) is from the ninth century, while the sole witness of Irenaeus in the Latin translation of his work suggests in the late second century that Jehoiakim's name appeared in the text.
 - b. The actual reading of the above-mentioned texts does not mention the brothers with Jehoiakim, as supposed by those who suggest a scribal error. There is thus another textual problem to explain. Jehoiakim had the brothers, not Jechoniah; so why are they mentioned with Jechoniah, even in the above-cited manuscripts?
 - c. The mere substitution of the name of Jehoiakim in the best Greek text as it now stands would not solve the problem, for there would be a logical break of connection between verses 11 and 12. The word "begat" would be omitted between the substituted "Jehoiakim" (v. 11) and his son Jechoniah (v. 12). Such a substitution would read: "Josiah begat Jehoiakim and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon. Then after the Babylonian deportation Jechoniah begat Salathiel . . ." Note that the phrase important to this solution is missing: "Jehoiakim begat Jechoniah."

Therefore, it would seem that there has been no evidence of scribal error. Harmonization is possible on simpler grounds.

At the deportation to Babylon. With this phrase Matthew indicates that he is not transcribing a mere list of names, rather, he is summing up Israel's history. The Jewish readers would recognize the tangled, tragic history and would interpret the phrase "Jechoniah and his brethren" as referring to the general period between Josiah and Jechoniah. Two of Josiah's sons reigned before Jechoniah (Jehoahaz

and Jehoiakim, Jechoniah's uncle and father, respectively) and one reigned after him (Zedekiah, Jechoniah's uncle). The following chart will help clarify the history involved and provide a solution to a problem in verse 12:



1:12 **Jechoniah begat Shealtiel.** Here Shealtiel appears as the son of Jechoniah, while in Luke 3:27 as the son of Neri. Elsewhere he is described as the son of Jechoniah (I Chron. 3:17). Because the name, Neri, is peculiar to Luke, not being found in the OT, we are unable to relate the name to known persons in the history without guessing. The appearance of Shealtiel in the two lists with two different fathers mentioned is not surprising in view of the many ways one man may be the "son" of another: adopted, son-in-law, levirate son, legal heir, grandson. Jechoniah, Jehoiachin, Coniah are but names for the same person (Jer. 2:24; 52:31; II Chron. 36:8, 9; I Chron. 3:17).

It is at this point, however, that a supposed contradiction appears between the prophecies of Jeremiah and the genealogical lists of both Matthew and the OT genealogists. Jeremiah writes: "Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out . . ." (36:30) Again, "Thus saith Jehovah, Write this man (Jechoniah) childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah." (22:30) Therefore, concerning both the father and the son, God promises that neither shall have an heir on the throne, yet it is obvious that Jechoniah, a son of Jehoiakim did sit on the throne of David, and that Jechoniah actually fathered seven sons (I Chron. 3:17, 18; II Chron. 36:9, 10). Regarding these two seeming problems, the solution may be:

1. Concerning the prophecy about Jehoiakim, it may be said that his being without heir to the throne of David was fulfilled by his lack of a grandson who would be rightful heir. In other words, his dynasty would be broken by lack of a grandson. However, the ascension of Jehoiachin (Jechoniah, Coniah) to the throne could hardly be called a "reign," or a "sitting on the throne," inasmuch as he was immediately besieged in Jerusalem, compelled to surrender after three months, then go into exile to Babylon.
2. The deportation to Babylon was tragic history of weighty significance: the throne of the house of David is lost! Though Jechoniah sired seven sons, none of them sat on David's throne, reigning in Judah. Jeremiah's prophecy would then mean simply "legal proscription" and not actual childlessness.

keep a lively interest in the public records of the davidic line. It is therefore an empty objection to suggest that Matthew could not have obtained the full genealogy, especially the latter portions, from authentic sources. There was also the mosaic legislation regarding inheritance (Lev. 25:13-34; 27:14-25) which restored lands which had been sold, at the end of every fifty years, to the heirs of the original owners. This, in turn, would require a registry of genealogy to be kept in every town for the accurate completion of just such a restoration of property. There is certainly nothing regarding Matthew's use of authentic sources that would justify even one doubt concerning the reliability of his list. Then, the collapse of the Jewish nation and the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A.D., and the final and irreparable demolishing of the temple—all these collaborated to eliminate the further necessity of keeping genealogical records: the priesthood is thereby forever prohibited from serving at a now non-existent altar and all hopes for a Son of David who would "restore the kingdom to Israel" are forever crushed.

1:16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. With this verse the sonorous rhythm of the preceding generations comes to a halt. We are awakened to the change as Matthew does not say "Joseph begat Jesus." Rather Joseph, legal heir of David's throne, was the husband of the mother of the Messiah, Jesus. Granted, the English translation might allow doubt as to the true, grammatical antecedent of the expression "of whom", that is, as to whether Joseph or Mary is intended. However, the best attested Greek texts of this phrase all unite in using a feminine pronoun. Therefore, on the basis of the fleshly relationship alone, Jesus is the Son of Mary, not Joseph: Jesus and Joseph are totally unrelated by blood. Not only the feminine pronoun but also the following context pronounce this fact.

The record of Matthew has been questioned by appeal to a late Syriac translation from the Greek text, which reads: "and Joseph, unto whom was betrothed a virgin Mary, begat Jesus, the one called Christ." This late reading, no earlier than 400 A.D., is seized upon by those who would reject the idea of a virgin birth. Thus, Matthew is made to say that Joseph begat Jesus. However, Matthew did not in fact say so, because:

1. This reading, found only in the Siniatic Syriac translation is too late. All other Greek texts and versions support the

common rendering and antedate the Syriac by at least 100 years.

2. The Siniatic Syriac is only a translation, not a Greek copy of Matthew's original.
 - a. The translator might have erred in translation from his Greek copy into Syriac.
 - b. It is difficult to recreate the original Greek manuscript reading with complete certainty, which the translator used.
 - c. But supposing no error in translation and supposing a faithful translation into Syriac of the Greek text, we cannot yet be sure that the Greek text before the translator was a faithful copy of the original document written by Matthew.

However, even with undeniable evidence against such a reading as "Joseph begat Jesus," yet such a reading could stand as if stated by Matthew without damage to the fact of the virgin birth. Why?

1. Because the one ancient text which contains the reading, also calls Mary a "virgin," a fact which would prove to be a glaring contradiction unless "begat" be understood in some sense other than physical generation.
2. The word "begat" as used in the genealogy of Matthew is clearly not to be taken solely in the physical sense. As shown above, the word "begat" means simply "had as a legal heir." If Matthew had written "Joseph begat Jesus," then he certainly would have intended it with that meaning, for certainly the context (1:18-25) excludes the possibility of attributing paternity to Joseph.

Yet, as a matter of fact, Matthew did not say "Joseph begat Jesus." Two principle items should be abundantly clear: namely, that the question of the historicity of the virgin birth of Jesus does not rest upon the peculiar reading of an ancient but late manuscript, nor does it rest upon a wooden interpretation of "begat." Rather, it rests squarely upon the entire narrative in Matthew, as well as that of Luke, as recorded with the abundant documentary attestation of the very best manuscripts.

1:17 Fourteen generations. We have seen that Matthew himself makes the generations come out with exactly fourteen names, while the actual history involved would require more names, both in the

second and third sections of his list. Obviously, his list is no mere copy from the public annals, but is an adaptation intelligently and purposefully designed. But to what end? These purposes have been suggested:

1. By securing equal numbers of ancestors in each of the three groups of patriarchs, kings and common people, perhaps Matthew wished the reader to understand that all three groups were of equal importance regarding the relation to the Messiah.
2. Perhaps by his arrangement and additions Matthew intended to epitomize the history of Israel, relating the coming Christ to the context of Israel's history and God's covenantal promises.
3. Perhaps Matthew arranged the list for easy memorization, so that Christians could present the important evidence to the Jewish mind, which would prove that Jesus belonged to the house of David and thus was a proper person of whom to expect other messianic credentials. If Jesus be not the Son of David with the necessary legal certification, then a great cloud of doubt and uncertainty must ever attend our trust in Him. But because of Matthew's ingenious arrangement, we are able to have at our fingertips the very material which will strengthen our faith in Jesus as the true Son of David, the Christ, and which will strengthen our confidence in God as a promise-keeping God. We have the evidence which helps us to appreciate the condescension of Jesus to dwell among us, and prepares us for the virgin birth narratives.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. List the various problems connected with the genealogies in Matthew and Luke.
2. What is the purpose or significance of the genealogies of Jesus?
3. What are the extra names or persons mentioned in Matthew's list? Why are they there?
4. How do the two genealogies work together to fulfill the prophecies of Jeremiah and Psalms which had seemed to contradict each other?
5. In what different ways could one man be a "son of" another?
6. What is the meaning of the word "Jesus"? "Christ"?
7. What of the title in verse one: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, etc."? Does "the book" refer to the entire gospel of

Matthew or only to the genealogy? Why is it called "the book of the generation"?

8. Into what basic divisions did Matthew divide the names?
9. Where could Matthew find the names in his lists to verify the accuracy of his writing?
10. What names does Matthew omit? Was this omission accidental; or, what good purpose could be served by such omissions?
11. Do omissions from Matthew's list frustrate the purpose of the list?
12. Why were the Hebrews so meticulous about keeping genealogies?
13. Is it possible for modern Jews to prove descent from David for any modern claimant of the Messiahship? Why?
14. Why is finding a practical solution to these problems important to the Bible student and important to Christian faith?

Section 2

THE ANNUNCIATION TO JOSEPH

TEXT: 1:18-25

18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.
19. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.
20. But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.
21. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.
22. Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,
23. Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us.
24. And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife;
25. and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JESUS.