

The Genealogy of Christ Jesus

Matthew's gospel begins with a genealogy of Jesus -- a genealogy that differs from Luke's genealogy because it traces a different path through Jesus' lineage. One theme of Matthew's supported by the genealogy's structure is that of the importance of the inclusion of Gentiles in the Kingdom inaugurated by the Messiah's coming. The genealogy includes the names of several gentile women brought into the people of God -- Ruth, Tamar, Rachab, and Bathsheba (the wife of Urias). Matthew explicitly takes a path through Jesus' ancestry to connect him with Gentiles and Jews. He connects him ultimately with Father Abraham.

Genealogy. [Heb. generally *yachas* Ⲭ, as a noun, "genealogy," and as a verb, "to reckon genealogically"; Gr. *genealogia*, "genealogy."] An ancestral record giving one's line of descent. The "book of the generations" (Gen 5:1) and the "book of the generation" (Mt 1:1, KJV) were genealogical lists or family registers. The tribal organization of Hebrew society, with its strong emphasis on family relationships, demanded accurate genealogical lists (Num 1:2, 18). Status in the community and before the law depended on one's personal identity as belonging to a certain family and tribe. The Hebrew economy was essentially pastoral-agricultural, and each tribe and family had its own allotment of land (Jos 13 to 19). The legal right of inheritance was based on kinship, and land was not to pass from one tribe to another (Num 36:7, 9), nor, except in walled cities, was it to be permanently transferred from one family to another (Lev 25:23, 28–31; Num 27:8–11). Headship in the tribe, the tribal family, and the father's house, was likewise a matter of lineage. The high priesthood, the priesthood, the Levitical service, and the royal succession were all hereditary. At one time inability to prove Aaronic descent automatically excluded certain persons from the priesthood (Ezr 2:62; Neh 7:64).

The fact that Messiah was to be of the house of David (Is 9:6, 7; 11:1; cf. Rom 1:3) gave members of that family an additional incentive for preserving an accurate record of their family pedigree. A valid genealogy was thus essential to the stability of the throne, to the purity of the priesthood, and to family and tribal status, and for every Hebrew male there were compelling ethnic, social, economic, political, and religious reasons for the preservation of precise and accurate family records. Certain Jewish customs and modes of expression must be kept in mind in any study of the genealogical lists of the Bible.

For instance, the term "son" is also used to mean "grandson" or an even more remote descendant (1 Ki 19:16;. 2 Ki 9:2, 14, 20; Mt 1:1, 8; cf. 1 Chr 3:11, 12). Thus, there are skeleton genealogical lists in which only the more important ancestors are mentioned, with the gaps bridged by the word "son" as if each person in the list were the immediate descendant of the one previously named (see Ezr 7:1–5; 1 Chr 6:7–9; Mt 1:8, 11; cf. 1 Chr 3:10–12, 15, 16). Furthermore, by the levirate ("husband's brother") marriage law, the next of kin was required to marry the widow of a deceased person and provide him with a successor and heir (Deut 25:5–10; cf. Ruth 2:20; Ruth 4:5, 10, 13, 14; Mt 22:23–28). Thus, a person could be the actual son of one man and yet be referred to as the son of another.

Obviously, great care must be taken in the interpretation of the genealogical data of the Bible. For Christians, the most important genealogy of Scripture is that of Jesus Christ. The two versions of this genealogy given by Matthew (ch 1:1–16) and Luke (ch 3:23–38) differ in certain important respects, and each has problems of its own. Internal evidence leads to the conclusion that Matthew composed his account of the life of Jesus primarily for readers of Jewish birth. In his Gospel, Matthew stresses the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was, indeed, the One to whom Moses and the prophets bore witness, and begins his account in typical Jewish style by giving Jesus' family pedigree. Since Messiah was to be of the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18; Gal 3:16), the father of the Jewish nation, and of David, the founder of its royal line (Isa 9:6, 7; 11:1), Matthew presents evidence that proves Jesus to be the legal descendant of these two illustrious men. Lacking such proof, the Jews would declare His claim to Messiahship invalid and summarily dismiss other evidence without examination.

On the other hand, Luke, writing for Gentile readers, carries his ancestral list back to Adam, the progenitor of both Jews and Gentiles, in order to prove Christ to be the Saviour of both. Matthew gives the direct descent, from Abraham to Jesus, whereas Luke presents it in reverse order, from Jesus back to Adam. One noteworthy characteristic of Matthew's genealogy is the division of Christ's ancestors into 3 groups of 14 generations each—from Abraham to David, from David to the Captivity, and from the Captivity to Christ (Mt 1:17). His omission of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah in v 8 (cf. 1 Chr 3:11, 12) and Jehoiakim in v 11 (cf. 1 Chr 3:15, 16), marks his as an intentionally abbreviated list like that of Ezr 7:1–5; cf. 1 Chr 6:7–9, perhaps as an aid to memory. Furthermore, there are only 41 names in the 3 sections, instead of 42, which makes it necessary to count either David or Jechoniah twice—as the last member of one group of 14 and as the 1st member of the next group.

Chief points of difference between the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are:

1. Luke names 41 descendants of David as ancestors of Jesus, whereas Matthew gives only 26.
2. Except for Salathiel, Zerubbabel, and Joseph, the 2 lists are altogether different between David and Jesus.
3. The 2 genealogies converge briefly, with Salathiel and Zerubbabel, but Matthew identifies Salathiel as the son of Jeconiah (Mt 1:12) and Luke lists him as the son of Neri (Lk 3:27).
4. Matthew identifies Joseph as the son of Jacob (ch 1:16), and Luke, as the son of Heli (ch 3:23).

The complete absence of information on nearly all of the 64 persons between David and Jesus named in the 2 lists makes a positive reconciliation of the differences between the lists practically impossible. However, enough is known of ancient Jewish customs and modes of thought and expression to offer an entirely plausible explanation of the points of difference to justify both lists as inherently correct. These seeming discrepancies may be explained as follows.

1. Luke's 41 generations, spanning more than 900 years from David's death to the birth of Christ about 5 BC., average about 24 years each, as compared

with Matthew's 26 generations averaging 37 years each. The intentional omission of at least 4 names by Matthew suggests the possibility that he may have omitted still others in the relatively obscure period between the Testaments. An average span of 24 years between a man's own birth and that of his successor is far more probable than 37 years.

2. From David to the Captivity, Matthew traces Jesus' ancestry through the royal line, and doubtless does so with potential heirs to the throne following the Captivity, whereas Luke follows a non-ruling branch of the royal family back to Nathan, another son of David by Bathsheba (Lk 3:31; cf. 1 Chr 3:5). Intermarriage within the limits of the royal family could easily account for Christ's ancestry being traced back to David through 2 almost entirely distinct family lines.
3. Salathiel may have been both the literal son of Neri as Luke states (ch 3:27) and the adopted son of Jeconiah, or the legal successor to Jeconiah by the extinction of Jeconiah's family (Mt 1:12).
4. The absence of literal blood relationship between Joseph and Jesus, the fact that the Jews never introduce women as direct genealogical links, and the loose way in which Bible writers use the terms "son" and "father" are probably responsible for the seeming discrepancy by which Matthew lists Jacob as Joseph's father, and Luke gives Heli. Either Luke or, more probably Matthew, uses the expression "son of" (in Lk 3:23) or "begat" (in Mt1:16) in a strictly legal and genealogical sense rather than in a strictly literal sense, since Joseph, the husband of Mary, could not be the literal son of both Heli and Jacob. This seeming discrepancy has been explained on the basis that Luke presents Jesus as the actual blood descendant of David through Mary (cf. Rom1:3, 4), but without listing Mary as a link in the chain of progenitors, whereas Matthew gives the royal and legal line of descent through Joseph, who was Jesus' father by Jewish law. Joseph could have been the literal son of either Jacob or Heli and the adopted son of the other, perhaps through a levirate marriage by either. Horn, Siegfried H., Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, (Washington, D.C.:Review and Herald Publishing Association) 1979.

The name "Jesus" is from the Greek (and Latin) for the Hebrew "Jeshua" (Joshua), which means "the Lord is salvation." The title "Christ" is from the Greek for the Hebrew Meshiah (Messiah), meaning "anointed one." Son of David was a highly popular Messianic title of the times. The genealogy in Matthew is traced through Joseph, Jesus' legal (though not natural) father, and it establishes His claim and right to the throne of David(1:6). The genealogy in Luke 3:23-38 is evidently that of Mary, though some believe it is also Joseph's by assuming that Matthan (Matt. 1:15) and Matthat (Luke 3:24) were the same person and Jacob (Matt. 1:16) and Eli (Luke 3:23) were brothers (one being Joseph's father and the other his uncle).

Matthew, in giving Jesus pedigree, is attempting to show that Jesus is the One to whom Moses and the prophets bore witness. Inasmuch as Messiah was to be the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16), the father of the Jewish nation, and of David, founder of the royal line (Isa. 9:6,7;11:1; Acts 2:29,30). Matthew presents evidence that Jesus qualifies as a descendant of these two illustrious men. Without such evidence, His claim to Messiahship would be held invalid, and additional proofs could be dismissed without further examination of His claim (cf. Ezra

2:62;Neh. 7:64).

At the time Matthew wrote, it was probably possible to verify his genealogy of Jesus by comparing it with accessible public records. A large part of it (Mat.1:2-12) could be checked against Old Testament lists (1 Chron. 1:34; 2:1-15; 3:5, 10-19). The fact that, so far as we know, no contemporaries of Matthew, even the avowed enemies of the Christian faith, ever challenged the validity of this family pedigree is excellent testimony favoring the genuineness of the genealogical list.

In view of the fact that Matthew has clearly omitted at least four genealogical links where a comparison with Old Testament lists can be made, it is entirely possible that he may have omitted at least 11 from the more obscure period between the Testaments. It may be observed, also, that an average span of 24 years between a man's own birth and that of his successor is far more probable than 37 years. This observation tends to confirm the 37 generations of Luke and the probability that Matthew arrived at 24 by the intentional omission of about 15 names from his list.

Matthew, writing primarily an apologetic to Jews proving Jesus to be the Messiah, wanted to show Jesus' legal right to the throne of David. Therefore his genealogy begins with Abraham and goes through David and his son Solomon to Jesus' legal father, Joseph. On the other hand, Luke is writing primarily to Gentiles and the world and, therefore, wants to show Jesus' physical lineage as the perfect man. So he traces Mary's line back to Adam through Heli, Mary's father—the father-in-law of Joseph--and on through David's son Nathan. One important support for this is that, in the Greek, the name 'Joseph' has no article where all the other names do, putting Joseph's name in a different category. Luke 3:23 can be translated with Joseph's name in a parenthesis: "And when Jesus Himself began (His ministry) He was about 30 years old, being the son (it was supposed, of Joseph) of Heli, of Matthat, of Levi..." and so forth. 'Son' is not repeated every time, only the article 'tou', so Jesus is seen as the "son" of all these.

Both Matthew and Luke signify that Joseph was not Jesus' actual father but only his adoptive father, giving him legal right. Matthew departs from the style used throughout his genealogy when he comes to Jesus, saying: "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." (Mt 1:16). Notice that he does not say 'Joseph begat Jesus' but that he was "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born." Luke is even more pointed when, after showing earlier that Jesus was actually the Son of God by Mary (Luke 1:32-35), he says: "Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli" (Lu 3:23). Since Jesus was not the natural son of Joseph, but was the Son of God, Luke's genealogy of Jesus would prove that he was, by human birth, a son of David through his natural mother Mary....

We may conclude that the two lists of Matthew and Luke fuse together the two truths, namely, (1) that Jesus was actually the Son of God and the natural heir to the Kingdom by miraculous birth through the virgin girl Mary, of David's line, and (2) that Jesus was also the legal heir in the male line of descent from David and Solomon through his adoptive father Joseph (Lu 1:32, 35; Romans 1:1-4). If there was any accusation made by hostile Jews that Jesus' birth was illegitimate, the fact that Joseph, aware of the circumstances, married Mary and gave her the protection

of his good name and royal lineage refutes such slander.

Objections:

1. In 1Chron. 3:16-17, Jehoiakim had a son named Jeconiah who also had a son named Salathiel. Now, notice in Jer.22:24 that "Coniah" had a son named Salathiel and that Coniah's father was Jehoiakim. This means that Jeconiah and Coniah are one and the same person, just a different spelling. This corresponds to Matthew's Jechonias [Greek spelling] in Mat.1:11. So, Jechonias in Matthew 1:11 is the Coniah in Jer.22:24 and the Jeconiah of 1Chron. 3:16. Matthew 1:11 also says this was about the time they were carried away to Babylon. The Old Testament characters in Jeremiah took place just before the Babylonian captivity.

God cursed Coniah and Jehoiakim and said their descendants, of which Jesus is one, would never prosper on David's throne. (Jeremiah 22:30, 36:30-31). This alone disqualifies Jesus as sitting on David's throne.

Answer: Let's look at these verses to see if Jesus fits into them. Let's look at both Jeremiah 22:30 and Jeremiah 36:30-31:

Jeremiah 22:30, "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper IN HIS DAYS: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in JUDAH."

There are two points that need to be observed. 1) Notice this is a curse upon the man of Coniah's seed, and was to last only DURING HIS DAYS, while he was still living. The "man" referred to in "a MAN that shall not prosper in his days" refers to the "man of his seed." This verse says nothing about this curse being placed upon Coniah's descendants AFTER his days.

And 2) This curse prevented his seed from ruling JUDAH ONLY. In Luke 1:33, it says "Jesus shall reign over the house of Jacob," not Judah. Judah was destroyed in 70AD, and 70AD is when Jesus did fully reign. It wasn't until the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah in 70AD that Jesus put all enemies under his footstool. Judah has not existed since 70AD.

Based upon these two points, this verse could not refer to Jesus. Now for Jeremiah 36:30-31:

Jeremiah 36:30-31, "Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his SEED and his servants for THEIR INIQUITY."

The "none" in, "He shall have NONE to sit upon the throne" must be referring to "him and his seed and his servants" in verse 31. You are claiming that the

"seed" in verse 31 refers to Jesus, but verse 31 specifically tells us WHICH descendants (seeds) will be punished. Read carefully, God said he'd "punish his seed for THEIR (the seeds') iniquities," not HIS (king Jehoiakim's) iniquity. So, only the descendants that commit iniquity will be punished by not sitting upon the throne of David. Since Jesus never committed iniquity, this punishment of not sitting on the throne does not apply to him. Only those who commit iniquity are forbidden to sit on David's Throne. In Luke's account of our Lord's genealogy, (Lk 3:23-38), Jesus' human family line is traced through Nathan to David, which does not have the prohibition of rulership on it.

2. Genealogies in the Bible were never based on women, only the men's side.

Answer: Tracing the genealogy on the maternal side was unusual but, so was the virgin birth. Matthew traces the family line of Mary. Matthew 1:16 does mention Mary's name, so Mary is specifically mentioned in Jesus' genealogy. Numbers 27:1-11 and 36:1-12 give Scriptural precedent for the substitution of Joseph's name in Lk 3:23. At the same time it avoids the judgment spoken of in Jer 22:28-30. Man and wife are one flesh, and both are known by the same name. God called both Adam and Eve "Adam" (Gen.5:2). Joseph and Mary could have been known as "Joseph", just as Adam and Eve were known as "Adam".

Although Matthew's genealogy does mention women (Mary, Ruth, Tamar, Rachab, and Bathsheba - the wife of Urias), notice that the line of the genealogy is strictly through the male names. So our Lord's descendancy as traced through His human mother would first state that He is Son of Joseph since Joseph was Mary's husband - the male. Then the genealogy would properly move to Mary's side of the family and begin with the male of the next generation related to our Lord through Mary: Luke 3:23 ff "son of Heli" (on Mary's side who is) "the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of (another) Joseph...." (etc.).

3. Since Jesus was born of a virgin, this disqualify him as being Messiah (2 Samuel 7:12, Acts 2:30).

Answer: People who were adopted were considered "sons", and their "seed" throughout history. Even today, when people are adopted, they are considered part of the blood line in family trees, and take the family name, and inherit family fortunes as if they were the "seed".

Matthew 1:23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son," The writers of the New Testament understood that in order to be a "son", one need not be a physical descendant. This is proof.

4. The problem I have with Isaiah 7:14 is that you have to posit a double fulfillment in order to maintain that this was meant for Jesus, as well as someone who was born back then in the time of Ahaz. How can this passage, which has reference to Assyria, in the time of Ahaz, also have reference to someone, Jesus, 700 years later? Second, why can it only

apply to Jesus, when the context clearly states that it has reference to that time? One would think that if God said it was a sign for Ahaz, in his own time, then it couldn't apply to someone 700 years later.

Answer: Please read the previous verse in Isaiah 7:13, "And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David." Notice the Lord is not speaking to Ahaz directly, but to the house of David. It is a sign for the house of David, it is a future confirmation and does not have to be fulfilled right there and then in Ahaz's time.

OK, now notice verse 16 says, "before the child (Jesus) shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good..." Was Assyria forsaken by the Lord before Jesus knew about good and evil? Yes. Assyria was forsaken before Jesus was born in the flesh! Therefore, this prophesy is not contradictory, but in harmony. The Bible says Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:31 with the birth of Jesus.

Other reasons why I believe this "child" refers to Jesus is in Isaiah 8:14, "And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." This was fulfilled by Jesus in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:8. Isaiah 9:6-7 describes this "child" from Isaiah 7:14 in more detail. Only Jesus fits this description of this "child".

Paul tells us "But avoid... genealogies... for they are unprofitable and vain." (Titus 3:9) and "Neither give heed to...endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do." (1 Timothy 1:4).

5. If Jesus was not the literal son of Joseph, why is Joseph's genealogy given in the Bible? What would be the point?

Answer: First, let us be quite clear that Jesus was not the literal, biological son of Joseph. The Gospel of Matthew leaves us in no doubt that Jesus' conception was miraculous and that no human (or "divine") intercourse took place (Matt.1:1-25). Rather, what was conceived in Mary was "from the Ruach-Ha Kodesh (Holy Spirit)" (v.20, Jewish New Testament). Therefore the only genes that could have been present in Jesus were from Mary's genealogical line, and even then we do not know to what extent the Holy Spirit modified these. It may even be that the genes were completely made anew using Mary's physical matter (we do not know to what extent Jesus resembled His earthly mother).

So why is Joseph's genealogy traced? There are probably several reasons. Firstly, for legal reasons. Irrespective of whether Joseph was the biological father or not, he was at least the legal father. To all intents and purposes, Jesus was an adopted son.

Secondly, the father is the head of the household and the genealogy of children was always traced through the male line in Hebrew culture (the

opposite was true in Egypt which was a matrilineal society, genealogy being traced through the female line). As the adopted child of Joseph, Jesus nevertheless obtained the name of Joseph, and was called Jesus, son of Joseph.

Thirdly, the Gospel teaches plainly that we are all the adopted sons and daughters of Abraham by faith. Even though those who are Gentiles have no blood lineage back to Abraham, they are nevertheless his sons and daughters through faith in Christ. Likewise, we become the sons and daughters of Christ through adoption. The principle of adoption is important, and the origin of the one to whom we are adopted to is therefore important. And the origin of Christ is God.

The purpose of Joseph's genealogical tree in the Gospel of Matthew is to establish kingly descent. Joseph was a pure descendant of David and therefore entitled to sit on the throne of Israel in place of the upstart Herod.

But even if Jesus did not belong biologically to Joseph's Davidic line, He certainly did through His mother Mary. Mary was a descendant of Nathan, Solomon's brother and son of Bath-sheba, the wife of David. Joseph was a descendant of Solomon, Nathan's brother.

There are important spiritual principles hidden up in these two genealogies. They are, if studied with the eye of the Holy Spirit, a beautiful picture of the redeeming mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came as two parts of a unique whole -- He came as God and as man -- as pure spirit and as earthly flesh. To effect His redeeming work a Virgin Birth was absolutely essential. Jesus Christ had to have two genealogies, therefore -- a divine genealogy and an earthly one. Mary provided the earthly one and Joseph, by proxy, provided the "heavenly" one.

For the Hebrews, genealogy meant everything. It lay at the heart of the Mosaic dispensation. Jesus came to bring the Mosaic dispensation to its completion -- to fill it up spiritually, as it were, by elevating it to its true spiritual position, and not the lower, fleshy, school-master position which it occupied under the Old Covenant. He not only lived the outer covenant perfectly, without sin (the Mary dimension) but also lifted it into a new dimension (the Joseph principle). Though Mary had the biological line establishing Jesus as the legitimate King of Israel, Joseph, by proxy for our Heavenly Father, represented quite a different line -- a spiritual one. Though he himself had the biological line requirements too, it was not that which was of the utmost importance -- for Jesus came not as a political Messiah (on the first occasion) but as a spiritual one. The Kingdom He came to establish was "not of this world".

Matthew was a Hebrew and he alone of the four Gospel writers wrote in Hebrew. He was writing to a Hebrew audience, for whom genealogy was important. Luke, who wrote in Greek, was writing to a gentile audience. Mark and John, who wrote in Greek also, mention no genealogy at all. In a way, the latter three represent the "completion" or the "filling up" of the Law of Moses --

filling the outer, physical vessel (represented by the Gospel of Matthew) with the Spirit of God (represented by the other three Gospels).

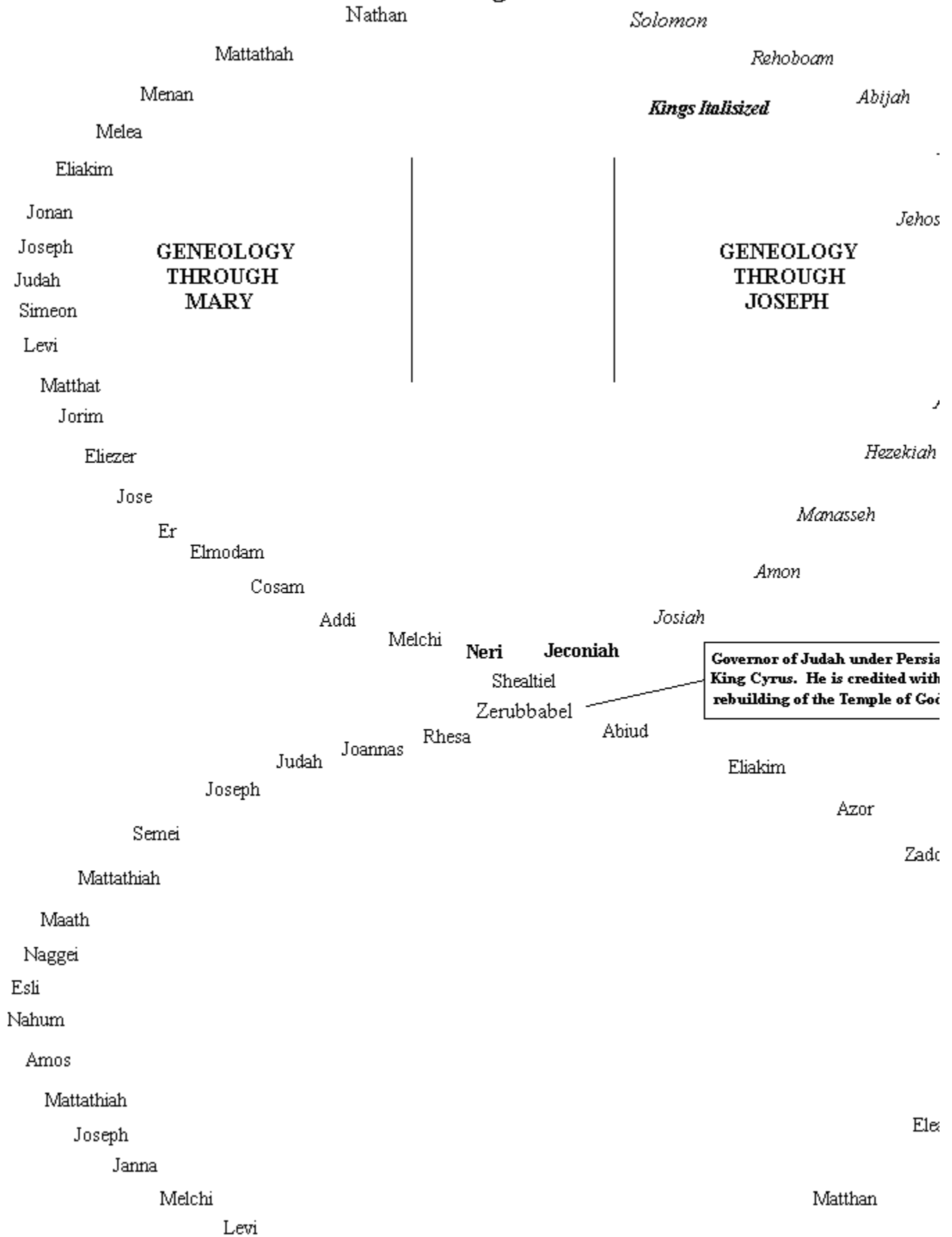
Throughout the Gospels, and particularly John's Gospel, we detect a force or movement, as it were, which is trying to elevate the human consciousness above the physical and into the spiritual. It cannot be any accident that Matthew's Gospel is the first chronologically in the New Testament, for it is the stepping stone from the old thinking and the first tentative steps into the new. Matthew, writing to the blood descendants of Israel, is preparing the stage for the Great Adoption by all those who believe into the same great family of God.

The fact that Matthew's Gospel contains accounts both of Joseph's genealogy and Jesus' miraculous conception can mean only one thing: that we are to understand that a marvelous work and a wonder is about to take place on all levels of Creation, from the physical (genealogical) to the spiritual. If Jesus had been naturally conceived and the writer had wished to stress this, then the story of the Virgin Birth would never have been included because it would have been a blatant contradiction. Indeed, it would have been so laughable that nobody would have believed the apostles' message.

But for we who have found the Christ, and have been reborn in His Spirit, the presence of Joseph's genealogical line is no mystery. For as Joseph adopted God-in-the-flesh on the earth, so God-in-the-flesh has adopted us in heaven. We, too, have received a "virgin birth" but on a different plane. Our rebirth on the spiritual plane is the fruits of that planting on the physical plane. We too have a biological line through our mothers and fathers and they are important to us so that we know to whom we belong on the earth. But as all Christians know, we also have another genealogical line through adoption, making us children of heaven and citizens of a better world. We have been adopted by one who was adopted Himself, the One we know who has experienced everything and knows us through and through. God, in His infinite wisdom, left nothing incomplete.

Diagram of the Genealogy of Jesus

King David





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