



CHRISTOLOGY:

THE PERSON & WORK
OF JESUS CHRIST

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1. What is the Incarnation?

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- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

2. The Incarnation Foretold

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3. The “Virgin Birth”

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*** Book of the Week...**

A Harmony of the Gospels

Robert L. Thomas
and
Stanley N. Gundry

© Moody Press, 1978

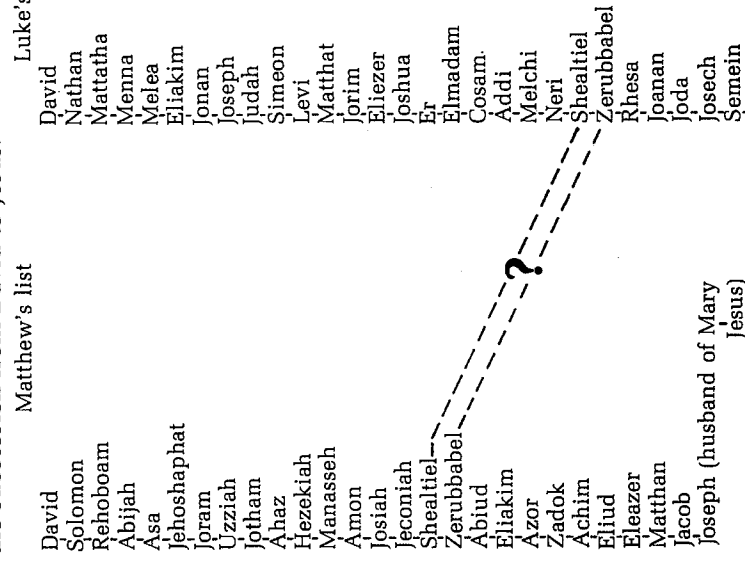
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The Genealogies in Matthew and Luke

(Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23b-38)

Both Matthew and Luke give a genealogical list for the descent of Jesus. When these are compared, differences and difficulties appear immediately. The most obvious difference is that Matthew's list begins with Abraham and descends to Jesus, whereas Luke's list begins with Jesus and ascends to Adam, the son of God. This in itself presents no difficulty; but when one of the lists is put in inverse order for convenience in comparing, it is quite another matter. Of course only Luke gives the generations from Adam to Abraham, and the lists of progenitors between Abraham and David as given by Matthew and Luke are nearly identical. No real problem comes until we compare the two versions of the succession from David to Jesus:



Mattathias
Maath
Naggai
Hesli
Nahum
Amos
Mattathias
Joseph
Jannai
Melchi
Levi
Matthat
Eli
Joseph
Jesus (supposedly)

For students of a harmony of the gospels the above comparison presents two problems: the difference in the number of generations and the dissimilarity of names. How can the two genealogies be harmonized without sacrificing the historical integrity of either?

Recent critical studies have generally regarded past attempts at harmonization as just so much frustrated effort and dissipated energy. Both H. C. Waetjen and M. D. Johnson summarily dismiss past efforts to preserve full historical authenticity as unconvincing, strained, and beside the point. In any event, it is said historicity will not affect significantly the reader's existential response or understanding of New Testament theology. Instead, each genealogy must be understood individually and theologically in relation to the gospel in which it appears and the thought of the evangelist that it is intended to express. The content and structure of each supposedly is arbitrary to suit the evangelist's purpose. What those specific purposes were need not occupy our attention here, for the analyses of scholars such as Johnson and Waetjen follow the assumptions and methodology of much recent New Testament critical scholarship. Their analyses will be no better than their assumptions and methodology. And the fundamental question of the historical reliability of the genealogies cannot be bypassed in so cavalier a fashion. Consequently, we turn our attention to the problems of harmonizing the two lists of Jesus' ancestral descent.

The first problem, the difference in the number of generations, is the easier to resolve. While it is true that Matthew lists twenty-six progenitors between David and Jesus, compared to Luke's forty, two factors must be kept in mind. First, it is not uncommon for the generations in one line of descent to increase much more rapidly than in another. Second, and more important, in Jewish thinking "son" might mean "grandson," or even more generally "descendant" (as "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," Matt. 1:1). Similarly, "begat" ("to 'X' was born," NASB) does not necessarily mean "was the actual father of" but

instead simply may indicate real descent. Just the fact that Matthew casts his list in the form of three groups of fourteen generations suggests this was a convenient though arbitrary arrangement from which some generations may have been omitted. In fact, it can be shown that Matthew's list has omissions (cf. 2 Kings 8:24; 1 Chron. 3:11; 2 Chron. 22:1, 11; 24:27; 2 Kings 23:34; 24:6). Omission of generations in biblical genealogies is not unique to this case, and Jews are known to have done this freely. The purpose of a genealogy was not to account for every generation but to establish the fact of an undoubted succession, including especially the more important ancestors.

The second problem is much more difficult to resolve. In the two lists of succession between David and Joseph all the names are different except Shealtiel and Zerubbabel (connected above by dotted lines). How is this to be accounted for? Some exegetes unnecessarily despair of finding an adequate solution or even suggest the lists are in error. But four other proposals deserve consideration.

1. Julius Africanus (d. A.D. 240) suggested that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph through his actual father, Jacob, while Luke gives Joseph's genealogy through his legal father, Eli. In this view, Eli died childless. His half brother Jacob, who had the same mother but a different father, married Eli's widow and by her had Joseph. Known as levirate marriage, this action meant that *physically* Joseph was the son of Jacob and *legally* the son of Eli. Jacob was the descendant of David through David's son Solomon, and Eli was the descendant of David through David's son Nathan. Thus, by both legal and physical lineage Joseph had a rightful claim to the Davidic throne, and so would his legal (but not physical) son Jesus. Matthew gives Joseph's physical lineage, Luke his legal lineage.

2. In his classic work *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, J. Gresham Machen argued for the view that Matthew gives the legal descent of Joseph whereas for the most part (he does allow for levirate marriage and/or transfer of lineage to a collateral line in Joseph's physical line) Luke gives the physical descent. Although the physical and legal lines are reversed, the purpose is still to establish Joseph's rightful claim to the Davidic throne. This view holds that Solomon's line failed in Jeconiah (Jer. 22:30). But when the kingly line through Solomon became extinct, the living member of the collateral line (Shealtiel, Matt. 1:12, cf. Luke 3:27) of Nathan inherited the title to the throne. Thus, Machen asserts, Matthew is tracing the legal heirship to the throne from David, through Solomon, through Jeconiah, with transfer to a collateral line at that point. Luke traces the physical descent (with a possibility of jumps to a collateral line or levirate marriages) to David through Nathan. Matthew starts with

the question, "Who is the heir to David's throne?" Luke starts with the question, "Who is Joseph's father?"

A large number of scholars have preferred some form of this view, including A. Hervey, Theodor Zahn, Vincent Taylor, and Brooke F. Westcott.

3. A third view suggests that the apparent conflict between the two genealogies of Joseph results from *mistakenly* assuming Luke is intending to give Joseph's genealogy. Instead, it should be understood as Mary's genealogy. Joseph's name stands in for Mary's by virtue of the fact that he had become son or heir of Eli (Mary's father) by his marriage to her. This view holds that Eli died with no sons, and that Mary became his heiress (Num. 27:1-11; 36:1-12). The first of these passages seems to provide for the preservation of the name of the man who dies with daughters but no sons. In the case of Eli and his daughter Mary, this could have been accomplished by Joseph's becoming identified with Mary's family. Joseph would be included in the family genealogy, although the genealogy is really Mary's. Thus, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke diverge from David on because Matthew traces the Davidic descent of Joseph, and Luke the Davidic descent of Mary (with Joseph's name standing in).

Each of the three proposals discussed thus far would resolve the apparent conflict between the genealogies in Matthew and Luke. Each also appears to be within the realm of reasonable possibility. However, it must be pointed out that all three rely upon conjecture which is possible but far from certain. In the first two views one must appeal to levirate marriages or collateral lines to resolve difficulties. The third view rests on the conjecture that Joseph takes Mary's place in the genealogy. In addition, the first must explain why Luke rather than Matthew is interested in the legal lineage of Joseph. Both the first and second views must explain why Luke, in light of his apparent interest in and close association with Mary, would be concerned with Joseph's genealogy at all. Interested as he was in Jesus' humanity, birth, and childhood, why would Luke give the genealogy of the man who was Jesus' legal but not physical father? These questions are not unanswerable, but they do leave the field open for a view less dependent on conjecture, and that itself does not raise these questions.

4. There is such a view. Like the third proposed solution, this fourth view understands the genealogy in Luke really to be Mary's, but for different reasons. Here Eli is understood to be the progenitor of Mary, not of Joseph. Joseph is not properly part of the genealogy, and is mentioned only parenthetically. Luke 3:23 should then read,

"Jesus . . . being the son (as was supposed of Joseph) of Eli . . . " The support for this view is impressive.

- a. Placing the phrase "as was supposed of Joseph" in parentheses, and thus in effect removing it from the genealogy, is grammatically justified. In the Greek text Joseph's name occurs without the article prefixed; every other name in the series has the article. By this device Joseph's name is shown to be not properly a part of the genealogy. Jesus was only thought to be his son. This would make Jesus the son (i.e., grandson or descendant) of Eli, Mary's progenitor, and is consistent with Luke's account of Jesus' conception, which makes clear that Joseph was not His physical father (Luke 1:26-38).
- b. This view allows the most natural meaning of "begat" to stand. In other words, "begat" refers to actual physical descent rather than to jumps to collateral lines.
- c. Matthew's interest in Jesus' relation to the Old Testament and the Messianic kingdom makes it appropriate that he give Joseph's real descent from David through Solomon—a descent that is also Jesus' legal descent—and thus gives Him legal claim to the Davidic throne.
- d. Since Luke emphasizes the humanity of Jesus, His solidarity with the race, and the universality of salvation, it is fitting that Luke show His humanity by recording His human descent through His human parent Mary. His pedigree is then traced back to Adam.
- e. The objection that Mary's name is not in Luke's version needs only the reply that women were rarely included in Jewish genealogies; though giving her descent, Luke conforms to custom by not mentioning her by name. The objection that Jews never gave the genealogy of women is met by the answer that this is a unique case; Luke is talking about a virgin birth. How else could the physical descent of one who had no human father be traced? Furthermore, Luke has already shown a creative departure from customary genealogical lists by starting with Jesus and ascending up the list of ancestors rather than starting at some point in the past and descending to Jesus.
- f. This view allows easy resolution of the difficulties surrounding Jeconiah (Matt. 1:11), Joseph's ancestor and David's descendant through Solomon. In 2 Sam. 7:12-17 the perpetuity of the Davidic kingdom through Solomon (vv. 12-13) is unconditionally promised. Jeconiah later was the royal representative of that line of descent for which eternal perpetuity had been promised. Yet, for his gross sin, Jeconiah was to be written

down as childless, and no descendant of his would prosper on the Davidic throne (Jer. 22:30). This poses a dilemma. It is Jeconiah through whom the Solomonic descent and legal right to the throne properly should be traced. Solomon's throne had already been unconditionally promised eternal perpetuity. Yet Jeconiah will have no physical descendants who will prosper on that throne. How may both the divine promise and the curse be fulfilled?

First, notice that Jeremiah's account neither indicates Jeconiah would have no seed, nor does it say Jeconiah's line has had its legal claim to the throne removed by his sin. The legal claim to the throne remains with Jeconiah's line, and Matthew records that descent down to Joseph. In 1:16, Matthew preserves the virgin birth of Jesus and at the same time makes clear that Jesus does not come under the curse upon Jeconiah. He breaks the pattern and carefully avoids saying Joseph begat Jesus. Instead he refers to "Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus." In the English translation the antecedent of "whom" is ambiguous. But in the Greek text, "whom" is feminine singular in form and can only refer back to Mary. As to human parentage, Jesus was born of Mary alone, though Joseph was His legal father. As Jesus' legal father, Joseph's legal claim passed to Jesus. But because Jesus was not actually of Jeconiah's seed, although of actual Davidic descent through Mary, descendant of Nathan, Jesus escaped the curse on Jeconiah's seed pronounced in Jeremiah 22:30.

Thus the problem is resolved.

What we have then are two different genealogies of two people. Probably even the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Matthew and Luke are different persons. This view does not depend on conjecture, rests on evidence within the texts themselves, fits the purposes of the evangelists, and easily resolves the problem surrounding Jeconiah. Of this view L. M. Sweet appropriately wrote, "Its simplicity and felicitous adjustment to the whole complex situation is precisely its recommendation."

Although it is not, strictly speaking, a harmonistic problem, one other difficulty of lesser significance found in Matthew's record of Joseph's genealogy needs discussion here. In 1:17, Matthew divides the generations from Abraham to Christ into three groups of fourteen generations: from Abraham to David, from David to the deportation to Babylon, and from the deportation to Christ. In part, this was likely a device used by Matthew to aid memory; it does not imply that he mentioned every progenitor. At least five names are omitted: Ahaziah, Joash,

Amaziah, Jehoiakim, and Eliakim. As previously stated, this procedure was not unusual and presents no real problem.

However, with three groups of fourteen generations one does expect to find forty-two names. But there are only forty-one. Although one set has thirteen names, the problem is only apparent. Matthew does not speak of forty-two different names but of three groups of fourteen generations which he divides for himself. David's name concludes the first set and stands first in the second set (cf. 1:17). In other words, David is counted twice and is thus given special prominence in the genealogy that shows Jesus' Davidic throne rights through His legal father, Joseph. Possibly the Davidic emphasis is further enhanced by the number fourteen. The sum of the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in the name David is fourteen. To the modern English reader this might seem overly subtle, but it was not necessarily so to the ancient Semitic mind. However, the numerical value of David's name is not necessary to the resolution of this problem.

Again, alleged discrepancies between and in the genealogical lists of Matthew and Luke are shown to be more apparent than real. Reasonable solutions to the problems exist and even throw further light on the text.

Selected Reading List

- Johnson, Marshall D. *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus*. Cambridge: Cambridge U., 1969. Pp. 139-256.
- Machen, J. Gresham. *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. New York: Harper, 1930.
- The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The Genealogy of Jesus Christ," by L. M. Sweet.
- Waeijen, Herman C. "The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel according to Matthew." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 205-230.

CHRISTOLOGY: THE PERSON & WORK OF JESUS CHRIST



1. What is the Incarnation?

Jn.1:14

**A. The 2nd Person of the Trinity
takes on Humanity**

Rom.8:3

B. "Humanity" without the Sin

Greek

C. "En Sarki" (1Jn.4:2)

Latin

D. "In Carne" (1Jn.4:2)

English

E. "In the Flesh" (1Jn.4:2)

2. The Incarnation Foretold

Lk.24:25ff A. It Was

Is.9:6 B. "God"/"Eternal" born to Us

Is.7:14 C. "Immanuel" = God with Us

3. The "Virgin Birth"

Protestant

A. i.e., "Vi

Mt.1:18ff

B. It Fulfilled

Lk.1:26ff

C. It was

Natural Law

D. Human with 23 instantaneously
created Chromosomes

Handout

E. A Comment on Genealogy

CCC 499 *Matthew 13:53-56*
Mary's re (cf. 1Cor.7:3)
virginity even in the act of
giving birth... Christ's birth
did not diminish his
mother's virginal integrity"

***"We do better to adore the
mysteries of deity than to
investigate them."***

***"To know Christ means to
know his benefits, and not
as the Scholastics teach,
to reflect upon his natures
and the modes of his
incarnation."***



Philipp Melancthon
(A top-notch systematic theologian!)

4. Why the Incarnation?

Mt.3:14-15

Rom.8:1ff

A. To Fulfill All Required Human Righteousness

Rom.8:3

Heb.2:14ff

B. To Perfectly Pay the Penalty for Human Sins

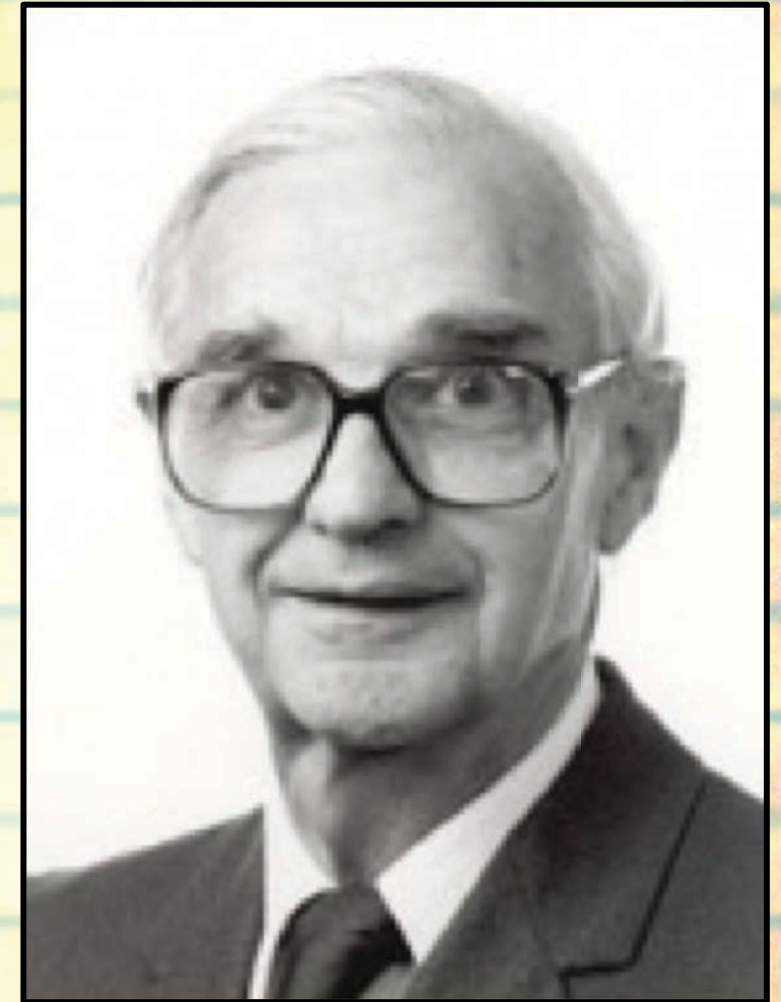
Heb.2:17

C. To Perfectly Represent Mankind (i.e., "High Priest")

Heb.2:18

D. To Sympathetically Help Us

"The man who yields to a particular temptation has not felt its full power. He has given in while the temptation has yet something in reserve. Only the man who does not yield to a temptation, who as regards that particular temptation, is sinless, knows the full extent of that temptation"



Leon Morris
(Australian NT scholar)

4. Why the Incarnation?

Jn.5:22ff

E. *To be a Perfectly Apt Judge*

Jn.1:18

F. *To Reveal God's Attributes*

1Jn.2:5-6

G. *To be a Template for Living*

Lk.1:31-33

H. *To Be a Visible King*

***Book
of the
Week...***

Millard J. Erickson

*The Word
Became
Flesh*

—A
*Contemporary
Incarnational
Christology*

CHRISTOLOGY: THE PERSON & WORK OF JESUS CHRIST





THE PERSON OF CHRIST

DONALD MACLEOD

CONTOURS *of*
CHRISTIAN
THEOLOGY