

Joseph's Genealogy

Ancestry is important to almost everyone. In the early years we want to know the names of our mother and father and usually our grandparents. Then later in life we become interested in our great-grandparents. We may want to know their names if we are named after them. The author's first and middle names come from his father and one of his great-grandparents. Sometimes we are named after someone famous. A wife might be a descendant of nobility, a king, a prime minister, or like most of us - no one special in the opinion of many in the world. Some of us keep genealogical records that date back for centuries. Others only know their family heritage for a couple of generations. But ancestry was very important to the Jews. This is obvious since the scriptures contain long lists of family names. The genealogical records did not include everyone. They included the males and sometimes not all of them either. Ancestry was especially important for the Levitical priests and lines of royalty. We will discover in this study and in the next one that ancestry was very important to Jesus' parents too! It is also important to us.

PROPHECY AND ANCESTRY. Why are we interested in Jesus Christ's parents, grandparents, greatgrand parents, and distant family? We are interested for the same reason that motivated the apostle Matthew to record Jesus' genealogy. He wanted to know and he wanted us to know that

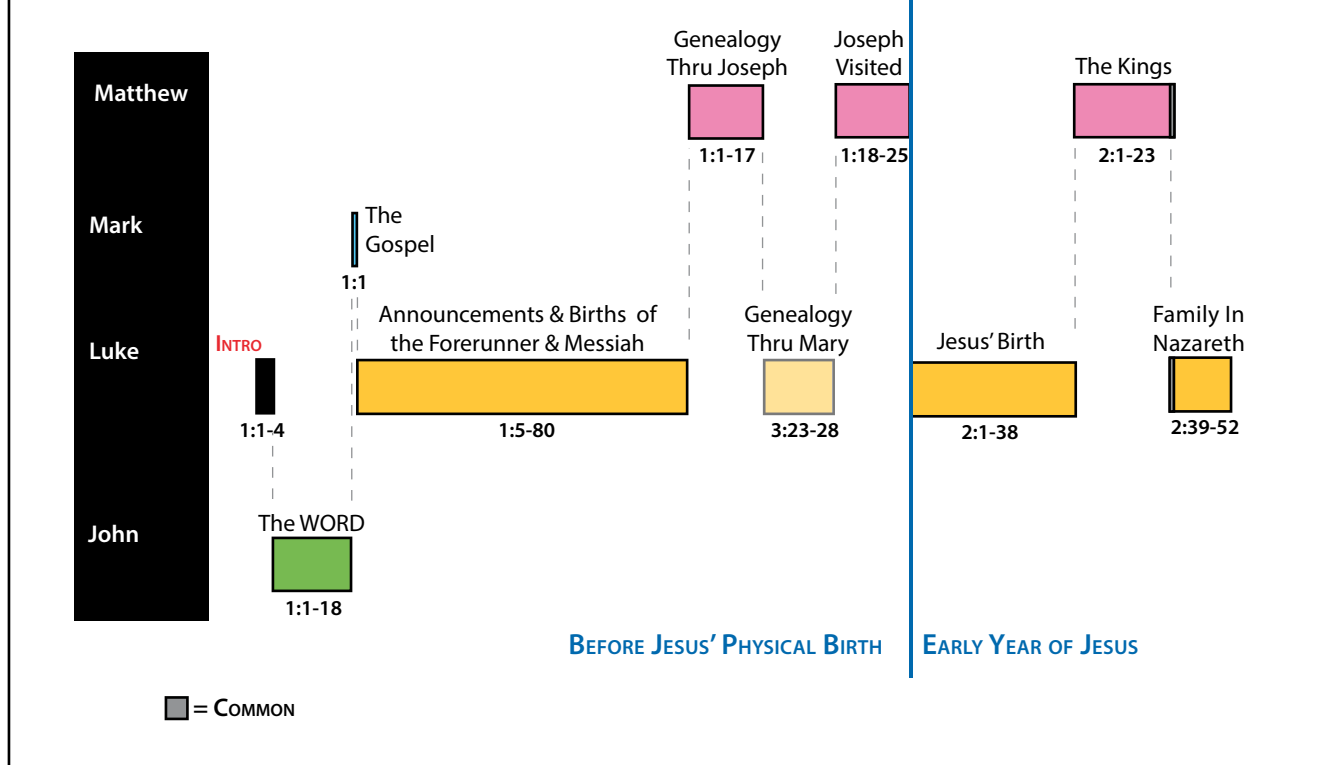
Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus. Since the Old Testament prophecies predict the Messiah's ancestors, this is important information. It helps us to identify the Messiah. Two of the key prophecies predict that the Messiah's lineage can be traced back to Abra-

Prophecies About Messiah's Ancestors

<u>Time of Prophecy</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Ancestry</u>
2066 B.C.	Genesis 22:15-18 + Gal. 3:16	Abraham
2066 B.C.	Genesis 17:18-21	Isaac
1859 B.C.	Genesis 49:10	Judah
1450 B.C.	Numbers 24:17	Jacob
740-680 B.C.	Isaiah 11:1-2	Jesse
627-585 B.C.	Jeremiah 23:5	David

Life and Heart of Jesus

Before Jesus' Physical Birth - Early Years of Jesus



ham and King David. So Matthew starts the genealogy of Jesus like this,

The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham . . . (NASB) Matt. 1:1

His first proof that Jesus was and is the Messiah is that He has the genealogy predicted for the Messiah. Many English Bibles say “Jesus the Christ” and not “Jesus the Messiah” but the meaning is the same. “Christ” is the Greek form of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” The Jews would have understood what Matthew was trying to say. Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and King David. Jesus was the son of Abraham and David. In the culture of their day, this meant that Jesus was the distant offspring of Abraham and David. This is the critical information, but it does not prove the point.

Next, Matthew gives us the details of Jesus’ genealogy and gives us more reasons to believe that Jesus was the Mes-

siah. First, the genealogy is broken up into three sections of fourteen names.

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations. (NASB) Matt. 1:17

The first fourteen names list Jesus’ ancestors from Abraham through King David. The second list of fourteen names starts with Solomon and goes to the deportation of the Israelites to Babylon. The last list of fourteen names starts after the deportation and continues to Jesus’ supposed father, Joseph. All of the names can be found in 1 Chronicles 1-3 and Ruth 4:18-22 up to the deportation to Babylon. The names listed after the deportation vary from the list in 1 Chronicles. It is important to remember that among the Jews it was acceptable not to list every name in a genealogy. It is also interest-

ing to note that the Hebrew letters of David’s name add up to fourteen. Did Matthew want the groups of names in each section to add up to fourteen? This type of symbolism was common among the Jews, and if this is true, then it explains why some names were skipped.

FIRST FOURTEEN DESCENDANTS. Now let’s look at the names and see what God has for us. Matthew’s genealogy for the Messiah through King David starts like this,

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah was the father

This is an amazing genealogy because it reveals that the series of prophecies about the Messiah being the son of Abraham, Isaac, Judah, Jacob, Jesse, and David were already in place. Now the only question left is: is Jesus a descendant of these men? As we look closer at the list, we discover that there are three Gentile women: Tamar, Rehab, and Ruth. Who are they and why are they here?

TAMAR. Tamar was a Canaanite and a daughter in-law of Judah (Gen. 38). Her first husband was Er, and Onan was her second husband by leverite marriage. She did not bear sons to either husband. Consequently, Judah promised

<i>Jesus Christ’s Genealogy</i> <i>Matthew 1:1-17</i>		
Patriarchs	Monarchy	After Deportation
Abraham	Solomon <i>of Uriah</i>	Jeconiah
Isaac	Rehoboam	Shealtiel
Jacob	Abijah	Zerubbabel
Judah	Asa	Abihud
Perez <i>by Tamar</i>	Jehoshaphat	Eliakim
Hezron	Joram	Azor
Ram	Uzziah	Zadok
Amminadab	Jotham	Achim
Nahshon	Ahaz	Eliud
Salmon	Hezekiah	Eleazar
Boaz <i>by Rahab</i>	Manasseh	Matthan
Obed <i>by Ruth</i>	Amon	Jacob
Jesse	Josiah	Joseph <i>the husband of Mary,</i>
David <i>the king</i>	Jeconiah . . . <i>at the time of the deportation to Babylon.</i>	<i>by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.</i>

of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David the king. (NASB) Matt. 1:2-6a

her his son Shelah as her third husband, but he did not keep that promise. So Tamar tricked Judah into having sex with her one day, and she finally gave birth to a son who was named Perez. This was a violation of God’s holy standard, but she gave birth to a son who would be the ancestor of the Messiah. God showed her mercy and granted her desire. Why was she included in the list? Matthew did not need to

include her name. Matthew could have just said “to Judah was born Perez.” No, he added “by Tamar.” Why was her name included?

RAHAB. The second woman in the list is Rahab. She was a Gentile who lived in Jericho and hid two Jewish spies when they came to secretly investigate this foreign land (Joshua 2:1-24; 6:22-25). The book of Hebrews calls Rahab a woman of faith; she was a Gentile who exercised faith. She had trusted God when she protected the Jewish spies. Therefore, the Israelites protected her when they invaded the land. She eventually became the wife of Salmon and gave birth to Boaz. Why was she included in this list?

RUTH. The third woman was a Moabite. Ancient history says that she was a descendant of one of Lot’s daughters who had had sex with their father. She lived in a foreign land and after her first husband died, she moved to Israel with Naomi, her mother-in-law. This foreign woman was married to Boaz by leverite marriage and gave birth to Obed. Later Obed was the father of Jesse, the father of King David. Now why was she included in this list of names? It was not necessary!

SECOND FOURTEEN DESCENDANTS. Matthew then proceeds to give us the next group of fourteen names which starts with Solomon and goes through Jeconiah.

Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. (NASB) Matt. 1:7-11

This list includes the names of kings, including one notable king named Josiah. In 2 Kings God has incredible praise for this man,

Before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him. (NASB) 2 Kings 23:25

Josiah loved God more than any king before him including King David and King Solomon. The first time I read this passage I was filled with emotion. I stopped and asked God to help me love Him more than anyone and more than anything. I wanted to love God as King Josiah had. God looks inside our hearts and He knows all about our feelings. He wants our hearts. He wants our love. He wants our friendship. King Josiah willingly loved Him. What is the cry of your heart?

WIFE OF URIA. There is also another key person in this list. She is not named. The first birth in the list is by a woman who is not named in the Greek version of the Bible. Most of our English Bibles have added the name “Bathsheba.” But the Greek version only says, “wife of Uriah.” Why was she not named? Why was she even included? Bathsheba was the Jewish woman whom King David seduced and it was she who gave birth to Solomon. Her husband’s murder was arranged by King David. What a wicked set of events.

So why were all four women included? Why were three Gentiles and one Jewess included? All of the other mothers could have been listed too! Why only these four? I believe the answer is found in Mary. They were included because the Holy Spirit wants us to know that unusual births had occurred before. The virgin birth through an innocent young girl was also very unusual. So there is a message for us. Jesus’ birth was not the only unique one in all of scripture. But He was the only one born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14).

There is also another message here for us. God does not wait until we are perfect to use us. God uses broken vessels all the time. In fact, He rejects proud vessels.

When pride comes, then comes dishonor . . . (NASB) Prov. 11:2

Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. (NASB) James 4:10

If you have ever asked yourself, “Why doesn’t God use me?” is it possible that you are a proud vessel?

THIRD FOURTEEN DESCENDANTS. The next list of fourteen names starts with Jeconiah and ends with Jacob.

After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor. Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud. Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. (NASB) Matt. 1:12-15

Notice that Jeconiah's name appears twice. It first appears at the end of the second list of fourteen names and then at the beginning of this list.

JECONIAH. A careful reading of 1 Chronicles 3:16-17 reveals that God is making a difference between Jeconiah before and after Israel's deportation to Babylon where he was a prisoner.

The sons of Jehoiakim were Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son.
The sons of Jeconiah, the prisoner, were Shealtiel his son . . .
(NASB) 1 Chron. 3:16-17

This is important because it explains a passage that has puzzled many students of the Bible. In Jeremiah 22:28-30 we find the following,

Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered jar?
Or is he an undesirable vessel?
Why have he and his descendants been hurled out
And cast into a land that they had not known?
O land, land, land,
Hear the word of the LORD!
Thus says the LORD,
"Write this man down childless,
A man who will not prosper in his days;
For no man of his descendants will prosper
Sitting on the throne of David
Or ruling again in Judah."
(NASB) Jer. 22:28-30

By comparing 1 Chron. 3:16-17 and Jer. 22:24 we discover that Coniah is a shortened form of Jeconiah. It appears to

be his throne name. This prophecy predicts that none of Jeconiah's children will sit on David's throne. The prophecy occurred before the deportation, and God fulfilled that promise. Not until after Jeconiah was deported did he have a son. Therefore, scripture included him twice in 1 Chronicles 3:16-17.

CONCLUSION. Finally, we come to the births of Joseph and Jesus the Messiah in Matthew's genealogy.

Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom
Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. (NASB) Matt. 1:16

Joseph was the son of Jacob and the husband of Mary, but he was not the physical father of Jesus. We do not read that Joseph was the "father of" Jesus. Instead, we read "Mary, by whom Jesus was born." The Greek word for "whom" is feminine because God wants us to know that Jesus was the offspring of Mary and not Joseph. Jesus' birth was miraculous. Jesus did not have an earthly father. God kept His promises and fulfilled the prophecies.

He used Gentile and Jewish mothers to bring the Messiah into the world. He worked through sinful kings, sinful women, and unusual circumstances to fulfill His promises. God is in the business of using broken vessels like you and like me. He is a wonderful God who works through men and women to accomplish His wonderful purposes.

Have you ever wondered if God can or would use you? Have you ever wondered if God was waiting for you to become better or perfect? The example of these women should scream out loud that God will use us and that He wants to use us. Tamar was a model of a woman seeking justice in a wrong way, and Bathsheba was a poor model of submission. Rahab was a model of faith, and Ruth was a model of submission and grace. Yet, God used all of them. Isn't that wonderful? God even uses broken vessels.

Yes, Jesus fulfilled the ancient prophetic genealogies of the Messiah. He used great-great-grandmothers to fulfill His promises about the Messiah. Mary was the next blessed woman. Her son would be virgin born and He would be the Messiah. He is the savior of the world. He is God with us!