The Biblical Genealogy of Jesus Christ

The New Testament provides two accounts of the **genealogy of Jesus**, one in the Gospel of Matthew and another in the Gospel of Luke. Matthew starts with Abraham, while Luke begins with Adam. The lists are identical between Abraham and David, but differ radically from that point. Matthew has twenty-seven generations from David to Joseph, whereas Luke has forty-two, with almost no overlap between the names on the two lists. Both accounts also disagree on who Joseph's father was: Matthew says he was Jacob, while Luke says he was Heli.

Traditional Christian scholars have put forward various theories that seek to explain why the lineages are different, such as that Matthew's account follows the lineage of Joseph, while Luke's follows the lineage of Mary.
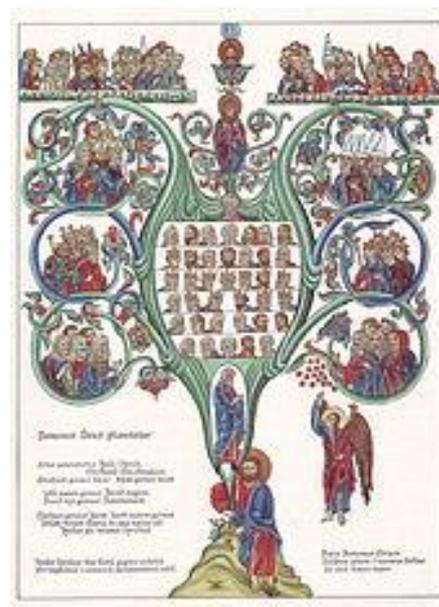
Matthew's genealogy

Matthew 1:1–17 begins the Gospel, "A record of the origin of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac…" and continues on until "…and Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ."

Matthew emphasizes, right from the beginning, Jesus' title *Christ*—the Greek rendering of the Hebrew title *Messiah*—meaning *anointed*, in the sense of an anointed king. Jesus is presented as the long-awaited Messiah, who was expected to be a descendant of King David. Matthew begins by calling Jesus *the son of David*, indicating his royal origin, and also *son of Abraham*, indicating that he was an Israelite; both are stock phrases, in which *son* means *descendant*, calling to mind the promises God made to David and to Abraham.

Matthew's introductory title (βίβλος γενέσεως, *book of generations*) has been interpreted in various ways, but most likely is simply a title for the genealogy that follows, echoing the Septuagint use of the same phrase for genealogies.

Patrilineage of Jesus according to Matthew

1. Abraham
2. Isaac
3. Jacob
4. Judah and *Tamar*
5. Perez
6. Hezron
7. Ram
8. Amminadab
9. Nahshon
10. Salmon and *Rachab*
11. Boaz and *Ruth*
12. Obed
13. Jesse
14. David and *Bathsheba*
15. Solomon
16. Rehoboam
17. Abijah
18. Asa
19. Jehoshaphat
20. Jehoram
21. Ahaziah
22. Jotham
23. Ahaz
24. Hezekiah
25. Manasseh
26. Amon
27. Josiah
28. Jeconiah
29. Shealtiel
30. Zerubbabel
31. Abiud
32. Eliakim
33. Azor
34. Zadok
35. Achim
36. Eliud
37. Eleazar
38. Matthan
39. Jacob
40. Joseph
41. Jesus

Matthew's genealogy is considerably more complex than Luke's. It is overtly schematic, organized into three tesseradecads (sets of fourteen), each of a distinct character:

- The first is rich in annotations, including four mothers and mentioning the brothers of Judah and the brother Zerah of Perez.
- The second spans the Davidic royal line, but omits several generations, ending with "Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon."
- The last, which appears to span only thirteen generations, connects Joseph to Zerubbabel through a series of otherwise unknown names, remarkably few for such a long period.

The total of 42 generations is achieved only by omitting several names, so the choice of three sets of fourteen seems deliberate. Various explanations have been suggested: fourteen is twice seven, symbolizing perfection and covenant, and is also the gematria (numerical value) of the name *David*.

The rendering into Greek of Hebrew names in this genealogy is mostly in accord with the Septuagint, but there are a few peculiarities. The form *Asaph* seems to identify King Asa with the psalmist Asaph. Likewise, some see the form *Amos* for King Amon as suggesting the prophet Amos, though the Septuagint does have this form. Both may simply be assimilations to more familiar names. More interesting, though, are the unique forms *Boes* (Boaz, LXX *Boos*) and *Rachab* (Rahab, LXX *Raab*).

Omissions

Old Testament	Matthew
David	David
Solomon	Solomon
Rehoboam	Roboam
Abijah	Abia
Asa	Asaph
Jehoshaphat	Josaphat
Joram	Joram
Ahaziah	—
Joash	—
Amaziah	—
Azariah	Ozias
Jotham	Joatham
Ahaz	Achaz
Hezekiah	Ezekias
Manasseh	Manasses
Amon	Amos
Josiah	Josias
Jehoiakim	—
Jeconiah	Jechonias
Pedaiah	Salathiel
Zerubbabel	Zorobabel
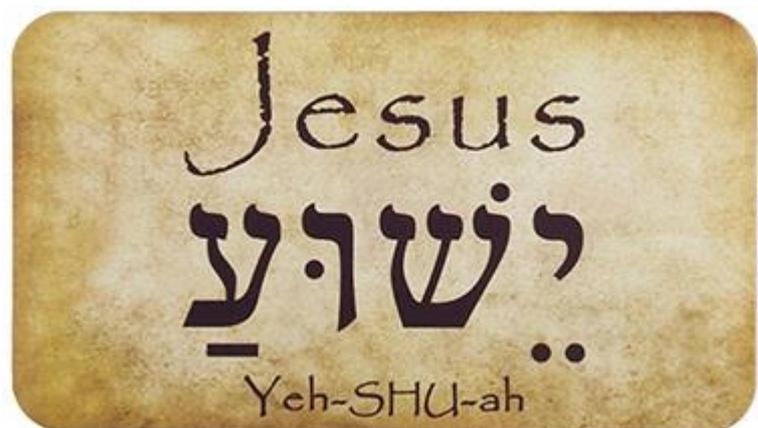
Three consecutive kings of Judah are omitted: Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah. These three kings are seen as especially wicked, from the cursed line of Ahab through his daughter Athaliah to the third and fourth generation. The author could have omitted them to create a second set of fourteen.
Another omitted king is Jehoiakim, the father of Jeconiah, also known as Jehoiachin. In Greek the names are even more similar, both being sometimes called *Joachim*. When Matthew says, "Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile," he appears to conflate the two, because Jehoiakim, not Jeconiah, had brothers, but the exile was in the time of Jeconiah. While some see this as a mistake, others argue that the omission was once again deliberate, ensuring that the kings after David spanned exactly fourteen generations.

The final group also contains fourteen generations. If Josiah's son was intended as Jehoiakim, then Jeconiah could be counted separately after the exile. Mary is counted as a generation, proceeding from her father, Joseph. Though such a reckoning is otherwise little known or understood, it fits with the fourteen generations. Otherwise, it confuses the father of Mary with the husband of Mary. Some have even proposed that Matthew's original text had one Joseph as the *father* of Mary, who then married another man of the same name.

Fourteen generations span the time from Jeconiah, born about 616 BC, to Jesus, born circa 3 BC. The average generation gap would be around forty-four years. However, in the Old Testament, there are even wider gaps between generations. Also, we do not see any instances of papponymic naming patterns, where children are named after their grandparents, which was a common custom throughout this period. This may indicate that Matthew has telescoped this segment by collapsing such repetitions.

Luke's genealogy

In the Gospel of Luke, the genealogy appears at the beginning of the public life of Jesus. This version is in ascending order from Joseph to Adam. After telling of the baptism of Jesus, Luke 3:23–38 states, "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *[the son]* of Heli, ..." (3:23) and continues on until "Adam, which was *[the son]* of God." (3:38) The Greek text of Luke's Gospel does not use the word "son" in the genealogy after "son of Joseph". Robertson notes that, in the Greek, "Luke has the article *tou* repeating *uiou* (Son) except before Joseph".

Patrilineage of Jesus according to Luke					
1. God	15. Sala	29. Aminadab	43. Judah	57. Zorobabel	71. Jannai
2. Adam	16. Heber	30. Naasson	44. Simeon	58. Rhesa	72. Melchi
3. Seth	17. Phalec	31. Salmon	45. Levi	59. Joannan	73. Levi
4. Enos	18. Ragau	32. Boaz	46. Matthat	60. Juda	74. Matthat
5. Cainan	19. Saruch	33. Obed	47. Jorim	61. Joseph	75. Heli
6. Maleleel	20. Nachor	34. Jesse	48. Eliezer	62. Semei	76. Joseph
7. Jared	21. Thara	35. David	49. Jose	63. Mattathias	77. Jesus
8. Enoch	22. Abraham	36. Nathan	50. Er	64. Maath	
9. Mathusala	23. Isaac	37. Mattatha	51. Elmodam	65. Nagge	
10. Lamech	24. Jacob	38. Menan	52. Cosam	66. Esli	
11. Noah	25. Juda	39. Melea	53. Addi	67. Naum	
12. Shem	26. Phares	40. Eliakim	54. Melchi	68. Amos	
13. Arphaxad	27. Esrom	41. Jonam	55. Neri	69. Mattathias	
14. Cainan	28. Aram	42. Joseph	56. Salathiel	70. Joseph	

This genealogy descends from the Davidic line through Nathan, who is an otherwise little-known son of David, mentioned briefly in the Old Testament.

In the ancestry of David, Luke agrees completely with the Old Testament. Cainan is included between Shelah and Arphaxad, following the Septuagint text (though not included in the Masoretic text followed by most modern Bibles).

Augustine notes that the count of generations in the Book of Luke is 77, a number symbolizing the forgiveness of all sins. This count also agrees with the seventy generations from Enoch set forth in the Book of Enoch, which Luke probably knew. Though Luke never counts the generations as Matthew does, it appears he also followed hebdomadic principle of working in sevens. However, Irenaeus counts only 72 generations from Adam.

The reading "son of Aminadab, son of Aram," from the Old Testament is well attested. The Nestle-Aland critical edition, considered the best authority by most modern scholars, accepts the variant "son of Aminadab, son of Admin, son of Arni," counting the 76 generations from Adam rather than God.

Luke's qualification "as was supposed" (ἐνομίζετο) avoids stating that Jesus was actually a son of Joseph, since his virgin birth is affirmed in the same gospel. From as early as John of Damascus, the view of "as was supposed of Joseph" regards Luke as calling Jesus a son of Eli—meaning that Heli (Ἠλί, Heli) was the maternal grandfather of Jesus, with Luke tracing the ancestry of Jesus through Mary. Therefore per Adam Clarke (1817), John Wesley, John Kitto and others the expression "Joseph, [ ] of Heli", without the word "son" being present in the Greek, indicates that "Joseph, of Heli" is to be read "Joseph, [son-in-law] of Heli". There are, however, other interpretations of how this qualification relates to the rest of the genealogy. Some see the remainder as the true genealogy of Joseph, despite the different genealogy given in Matthew.

Explanations for divergence

The holy fathers of the Orthodox Church state that both accounts are true. In his famous book *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, St John Damascene says the following."One ought also to observe this, that the law was that when a man died without seed, this man's brother should take to wife the wife of the dead man and raise up seed to his brother. The offspring, therefore, belonged by nature to the second, that is, to him that begat it, but by law to the dead. Born then of the line of Nathan, the son of David, Levi begat Melchi and Panther: Panther begat Barpanther, so called. This Barpanther begat Joachim: Joachim begat the holy Mother of God. And of the line of Solomon, the son of David, Mathan had a wife of whom he begat Jacob. Now on the death of Mathan, Melchi, of the tribe of Nathan, the son of Levi and brother of Panther, married the wife of Mathan, Jacob's mother, of whom he begat Heli. Therefore Jacob and

Heli became brothers on tile mother's side, Jacob being of the tribe of Solomon and Heli of the tribe of Nathan. Then Heli of the tribe of Nathan died childless, and Jacob his brother, of the tribe of Solomon, took his wife and raised up seed to his brother and begat Joseph. Joseph, therefore, is by nature the son of Jacob, of the line of Solomon, but by law he is the son of Heli of the line of Nathan."
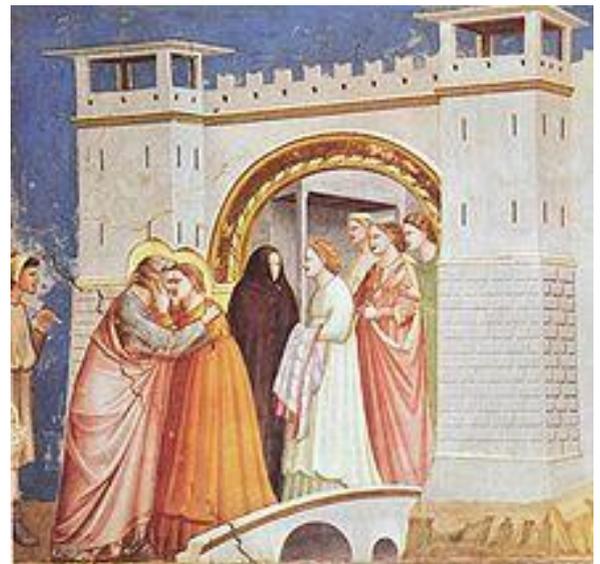
The contradictions between the lists have been used to question the accuracy of the gospel accounts since ancient times and several early Christian authors responded to this. Augustine, for example, attempted on several occasions to refute every criticism, not only because the Manichaeans in his day were using the differences to attack Christianity, but also because he himself had seen them in his youth as cause for doubting the veracity of the Gospels. His explanation for the different names given for Joseph's father is that Joseph had a biological father and an adoptive father, and that one of the gospels traces the genealogy through the adoptive father in order to draw parallels between Joseph and Jesus (both having an adoptive father) and as a metaphor for God's relationship with humankind, in the sense that God "adopted" human beings as his children.

One common explanation for the divergence is that Matthew is recording the actual legal genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, according to Jewish custom, whereas Luke, writing for a Gentile audience, gives the actual biological genealogy of Jesus through Mary. This argument is problematic, however, because both trace their genealogy through Joseph. Eusebius of Caesarea, on the other hand, affirmed the interpretation of Africanus that Luke's genealogy is of Joseph (not of Mary), who was the natural son of Jacob, though legally of Eli who was the uterine brother of Jacob.

Levirate marriage

The earliest tradition that explains the divergence of Joseph's lineages involves the law of levirate marriage. A woman whose husband died without issue was bound by law to be married to her husband's brother, and the first-born son of such a so-called levirate marriage was reckoned and registered as the son of the deceased brother (Deuteronomy 25:5 sqq.), Sextus Julius Africanus, in his 3rd-century *Epistle to Aristides*, reports a tradition that Joseph was born from just such a levirate marriage. According to this report, Joseph's natural father was Jacob son of Matthan, as given in Matthew, while his legal father was Eli son of Melchi (*sic*), as given in Luke.

It has been questioned, however, whether levirate marriages actually occurred among uterine brothers, they are expressly excluded in the Halakhah Beth Hillel but permitted by Shammai. According to Jesuit theologian Anthony Maas, the question proposed to Jesus by the Sadducees in all three Synoptic Gospels regarding a woman with seven levirate husbands suggests that this law was observed at the time of Christ.

Julius Africanus, explaining the origin of Joseph from levirate marriage, makes a mistake:
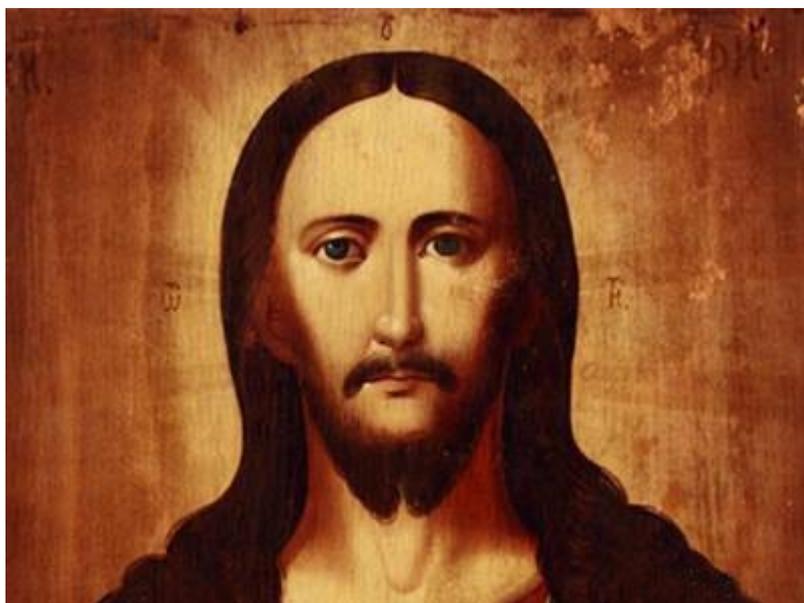
At the end of the same letter, Africanus adds: "Matthan, a descendant of Solomon, begat Jacob. After the death of Matthan, Melki [must be: Matthat], a descendant of Nathan, begat Heli by the same woman. Therefore, Heli and Jacob must be uterine brothers. Heli died childless; Jacob raised up his seed by begetting Joseph who was his son according to the flesh, and Heli's son according to the Law. So, we can say that Joseph was the son of them both

— *(Eusebius of Cesarea. The History of the Church, 1,7)*

This error, however, is uncritical:

The explanation offered by Africanus is correct, though he confused Melki with Matthat. The genealogy in Matthew lists births according to the flesh; the one in Luke is according to the Law. It must be added that the levirate links between the two genealogies are found not only at the end, but also in the beginning. This conclusion is obvious because both genealogies intersect in the middle at Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel (see Mt 1:12-13; Lk 3:27). Nathan was the older brother; Solomon was younger, next in line after him (see 2 Sam 5:14-16; 1 Cron 3:5), therefore he was the first candidate to a levirate marriage (compare Ruth 3-4; Lk 20:27-33). The Old Testament is silent on whether Nathan had children, so we may very well conclude that he had none. Solomon, however, had much capacity for love: «And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines» (1 Kings 11:3). So, in theory, he could have married Nathan's widow. If this is so, Mattatha is the son of Solomon according to the flesh and the son of Nathan according to the Law. In light of the above-mentioned circumstances, the differences between the two genealogies no longer present a problem.

Maternal ancestry in Luke

A more straightforward and the most common explanation is that Luke's genealogy is of Mary, with Eli being her father, while Matthew's describes the genealogy of Joseph. This view was advanced as early as John of Damascus (d.749).

Luke's text says that Jesus was "a son, as was supposed, of Joseph, of Eli". The qualification has traditionally been understood as acknowledgment of the virgin birth, but some instead see a parenthetical expression: "a son (as was supposed of Joseph) of Eli." In this interpretation, Jesus is called a son of Eli because Eli was his maternal grandfather, his nearest male ancestor. A variation on this idea is to explain "Joseph son of Eli" as meaning a son-in-law,[49] perhaps even an adoptive heir to Eli through his only daughter Mary. An example of the Old Testament use of such an expression is Jair, who is called "Jair son of Manasseh" but was actually son of Manasseh's granddaughter. In any case, the argument goes, it is natural for the evangelist, acknowledging the unique case of the virgin birth, to give the maternal genealogy of Jesus, while expressing it a bit awkwardly in the traditional patrilinear style.

According to R. A. Torrey, the reason Mary is not implicitly mentioned by name is because the ancient Hebrews never permitted the name of a woman to enter the genealogical tables, but inserted her husband as the son of him who was, in reality, but his father-in-law.

Lightfoot sees confirmation in an obscure passage of the Talmud, which, as he reads it, refers to "Mary daughter of Eli"; however, both the identity of this Mary and the reading are doubtful. Patristic tradition, on the contrary, consistently identifies Mary's father as Joachim. It has been suggested that *Eli* is short for *Eliakim*, which in the Old Testament is an alternate name of Jehoiakim, for whom Joachim is named.

The theory neatly accounts for the genealogical divergence. It is consistent with the early tradition ascribing a Davidic ancestry to Mary. It is also consistent with Luke's intimate acquaintance with Mary, in contrast to Matthew's focus on Joseph's perspective. On the other hand, there is no explicit indication whatsoever, either in the Gospel or in any early tradition, that the genealogy is Mary's.

After John of Damascus the claim that Luke gives Mary's genealogy is mentioned in a single extant Western medieval text, in which pseudo-Hilary cites it as an opinion held by many, though not himself. This claim was revived by Annius of Viterbo in 1498 and quickly grew in popularity.

Modern scholars discount this approach: Raymond E. Brown called it a "pious deduction"; and Joachim Gnilka "the desperation of embarrassment".

Jewish law is relevant to these matters. It does not accept maternal ancestry as applying to lineage claims, which go through the father alone. See on this the discussion in the section "Legal inheritance," below, and the footnote reference provided on this subject there.

MESSIANIC GENEALOGY
[FROM ADAM TO CHRIST]

Maternal ancestry in Matthew

A minority view holds that while Luke gives the genealogy of Joseph, Matthew gives the genealogy of Mary. A few ancient authorities seem to offer this interpretation. Although the Greek text as it stands is plainly against it, it has been proposed that in the original text Matthew had one Joseph as Mary's father and another as her husband. This neatly explains not only why Matthew's genealogy differs from Luke's, but also why Matthew counts fourteen generations rather than thirteen. Blair sees the various extant versions as the predictable result of copyists repeatedly attempting to correct an apparent mistake. Others argue that here the Aramaic original of Matthew used the word *gowra* (which could mean *father*), which, in the absence of vowel markings, was read by the Greek translator as *gura* (*husband*). In any case, an early understanding that Matthew traced Mary's genealogy would explain why the contradiction between Matthew and Luke apparently escaped notice until the 3rd century. This position is also clearly stated in *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*.

A Jewish tradition relating Mary to Luke's genealogy is recorded in the *Doctrina Jacobi* (written in 634), in which a Tiberian rabbi mocks the Christian veneration of Mary by recounting her genealogy according to the tradition of the Jews of Tiberias. A century later, John of Damascus and others report the same information, only inserting an extra generation, *Barpanther* (Aramaic for *son of Panther*, thus indicating a misunderstood Aramaic source). A certain prince Andronicus later found the same polemic in a book belonging to a rabbi named Elijah:

Why do Christians extol Mary so highly, calling her nobler than the Cherubim, incomparably greater than the Seraphim, raised above the heavens, purer than the very rays of the sun? For she was a woman, of the race of David, born to Anne her mother and Joachim her father, who was son of Panther. Panther and Melchi were brothers, sons of Levi, of the stock of Nathan, whose father was David of the tribe of Judah.

Lukan version of Levirate marriage theory

Although most accounts ascribing the Luke genealogy to Mary's line do not include a levirate marriage this is added by the above sources. Each of these texts then goes on to describe, just as in Julius Africanus (but omitting the name of Estha), how Melchi was related to Joseph through a levirate marriage.

Bede assumed that Julius Africanus was mistaken and corrected *Melchi* to *Matthat*. Since papponymics were common in this period, however, it would not be surprising if Matthat were also named Melchi after his grandfather.

Panther

Controversy has surrounded the name *Panther*, mentioned above, because of a charge that Jesus' father was a soldier named Pantera. Celsus mentions this in his writing, *The True Word*, where he is quoted by Origen in Book 1: 32. "But let us now return to where the Jew is introduced, speaking of the mother of Jesus, and saying that "when she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera." Epiphanius, in refutation of Celsus, writes that Joseph and Cleopas were sons of "Jacob, surnamed Panther."

Two Talmudic-era texts referring to Jesus as the son of Pantera (Pandera) are Tosefta Hullin 2:22f: "Jacob ... came to heal him in the name of Jesus son of Pantera" and Qohelet Rabbah 1:8(3): "Jacob ... came to heal him in the name of Jesus son of Pandera" and some editions of the Jerusalem Talmud also specifically name Jesus as the son of Pandera: Jerusalem Abodah Zarah 2:2/7: "someone ... whispered to him in the name of Jesus son of Pandera"; Jerusalem Shabboth 14:4/8: "someone ... whispered to him in the name of Jesus son of Pandera"; Jerusalem Abodah Zarah 2:2/12: "Jacob ... came to heal him. He said to him: we will speak to you in the name of Jesus son of Pandera"; Jerusalem Shabboth 14:4/13: "Jacob ... came in the name of Jesus Pandera to heal him". Because some editions of the Jerusalem Talmud do not contain the name Jesus in these passages the association is disputed.

Legal inheritance

One of the traditional explanations is that Matthew traces not a genealogy in the modern biological sense, but a record of legal inheritance showing the succession of Jesus in the royal line.

According to this theory, Matthew's immediate goal is therefore not David, but Jeconiah, and in his final group of fourteen, he may freely jump to a maternal grandfather, skip generations, or perhaps even follow an adoptive lineage in order to get there. Attempts have been made to reconstruct Matthew's route, from the seminal work of Lord Hervey to Masson's recent work, but all are necessarily highly speculative.

As a starting point, one of Joseph's two fathers could be by simple adoption, as Augustine suggests, or more likely the special adoption by a father-in-law with no sons, or could be a maternal grandfather. On the other hand, the resemblance between *Matthan* and *Matthat* suggests they are the same man (in which case Jacob and Eli are either identical or full brothers involved in a levirate marriage), and Matthew's departure from Luke at that point can only be to follow legal line of inheritance, perhaps through a maternal grandfather. Such reasoning could further explain what has happened with Zerubbabel and Shealtiel. A key difficulty with these explanations, however, is that there is no adoption in Jewish law, which of course is the relevant law tradition even according to Jesus (Matt. 23:1-3), not the Roman law tradition. If Joseph is not the biological father, his lineage does not apply to Jesus, and there is no provision available within Jewish law for this to be altered. One's natural father is always one's father. Nor is inheritance of lineage claims even possible through one's mother, in Jewish law.

New Testament Apocrypha

The apocryphal *Protevangelium of James* tells of the miraculous birth of Mary to her parents, Joachim and Anne. It further relates that Joseph, before his marriage to Mary, was an elderly widower with children of his own. Joachim and Anne are named in a number of other early sources as Mary's parents, but this apocryphal text, which was not incorporated into the biblical canon, was so widely influential that it is not clear whether the names rest on any other independent tradition.

Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel

The genealogies in Luke and Matthew appear to briefly converge at Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, though they differ both above Shealtiel and below Zerubbabel. This is also the point where Matthew departs from the Old Testament record.

Zerubbabel displays a plan of Jerusalem to Cyrus the Great

In the Old Testament, Zerubbabel was a hero who led the Jews back from Babylon about 520 BC, governed Judah, and rebuilt the temple. Several times he is called a son of Shealtiel. He appears once in the genealogies in the *Book of Chronicles*, where his descendants are traced for several generations, but the passage has a number of difficulties. While the Septuagint text here gives his father as Shealtiel, the Masoretic text instead substitutes Shealtiel's brother Pedaiah—both sons of King Jeconiah, according to the passage. Some, accepting the Masoretic reading, suppose that Pedaiah begot a son for Shealtiel through a levirate marriage, but most scholars now accept the Septuagint reading as original, in agreement with Matthew and all other accounts.

The appearance of Zerubbabel and Shealtiel in Luke may be no more than a coincidence of names (*Zerubbabel*, at least, is a very common Babylonian name). Shealtiel is given a completely different

ancestry, and Zerubbabel a different son. Furthermore, interpolation between known dates would put the birth of Luke's Shealtiel at the very time when the celebrated Zerubbabel led the Jews back from Babylon. Thus, it is likely that Luke's Shealtiel and Zerubbabel were distinct from, and perhaps even named after, Matthew's.

If they are the same, as many insist, then the question arises of how Shealtiel, like Joseph, could have two fathers. Yet another complex levirate marriage has often been invoked. Richard Bauckham, however, argues for the authenticity of Luke alone. In this view, the genealogy in *Chronicles* is a late addition grafting Zerubbabel onto the lineage of his predecessors, and Matthew has simply followed the royal succession. In fact, Bauckham says, Zerubbabel's legitimacy hinged on descending from David through Nathan rather than through the prophetically cursed ruling line.

The name *Rhesa*, given in Luke as the son of Zerubbabel, is usually seen as the Aramaic word *rēʾšāʾ*, meaning *head* or *prince*. It might well befit a son of Zerubbabel, but some see the name as a misplaced title of Zerubbabel himself. If so, the next generation in Luke, Joanan, might be Hananiah in *Chronicles*. Subsequent names in Luke, as well as Matthew's next name Abiud, cannot be identified in *Chronicles* on more than a speculative basis.

Fulfillment of prophecy

By the time of Jesus, it was already commonly understood that several prophecies in the Old Testament promised a Messiah descended from King David. Thus, in tracing the Davidic ancestry of Jesus, the Gospels aim to show that these messianic prophecies are fulfilled in him.

The prophecy of Nathan—understood as foretelling a son of God who would inherit the throne of his ancestor David and reign forever—is quoted in Hebrews and strongly alluded to in Luke's account of the Annunciation. Likewise, the Psalms record God's promise to establish the seed of David on his throne forever, while Isaiah and Jeremiah speak of the coming reign of a righteous king of the house of David.

David's ancestors are also understood as progenitors of the Messiah in several prophecies. Isaiah's description of the branch or root of Jesse is cited twice by Paul as a promise of the Christ.

More controversial are the prophecies on the Messiah's relation, or lack thereof, to certain of David's descendants:

- God promised to establish the throne of King Solomon over Israel forever, but the promise was contingent upon obeying God's commandments. Solomon's failure to do so is explicitly cited as a reason for the subsequent division of his kingdom.
- Against King Jehoiakim, Jeremiah prophesied, "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David," and against his son King Jeconiah, "Write this man childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed will prosper, sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah." Some see this prophecy as permanently disqualifying Jeconiah from the ancestry of the Messiah (though not necessarily of Joseph). More likely, the curse was limited to Jeconiah's lifetime, and even then, rabbinical tradition has it that Jeconiah repented in exile and the curse was lifted. Additionally, the Old Testament recounts that none of the punishments listed in the curse actually came to pass.
- To Zerubbabel, God declares through Haggai, "I will make you like my signet ring," in clear reversal of the prophecy against his grandfather Jeconiah, "though you were a signet ring on my right hand, yet I would pull you off." Zerubbabel ruled as governor, though not as king, and has been regarded by many as a suitable and likely progenitor of the Messiah.

The promise to Solomon and Jeconiah's curse, if applicable, argue against Matthew. Yet evidently Matthew didn't find his respective genealogy incompatible with these prophecies.

Matthew also presents the virgin birth of Jesus as fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, which he quotes. Matthew apparently quotes the ancient Septuagint translation of the verse, which renders the Hebrew word "almah" as "virgin" in Greek.

Desposyni

Desposyni (Greek δεσπόσυνοι, *desposynoi*, "those of the master") is a term used uniquely by Sextus Julius Africanus to refer to the relatives of Jesus. The Gospels mention four brothers of Jesus—James, Joses, Simon, and Jude—and unnamed sisters.

Epiphanius of Salamis relates that the four brothers and the unnamed sisters that he names as Mary and Salome (or Anna and Salome) were children of Joseph by a previous marriage. These and their descendants were prominent in the early Church down to the 2nd century. Muslim authors extend family members to the 7th century.

Since ancient times, it has been debated precisely how these siblings were related to Jesus, or rather to Joseph and Mary, with her perpetual virginity at issue. There are three principal views on who these siblings were, named for their respective proponents:

- The Helvidian view—subsequent children of Joseph and Mary.
- The Epiphanian view—children of Joseph by a previous marriage.
- The Hieronymian view—first cousins of Jesus, and that Joseph was himself a virgin.

Women mentioned

Matthew inserts four women into the long list of men. The women are included early in the genealogy—Tamar, Rachab, Ruth, and "the wife of Uriah" (Bathsheba). Why Matthew chose to include these particular women, while passing over others such as the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah, has been much discussed.

There may be a common thread among these four women, to which Matthew wishes to draw attention. He sees God working through Tamar's seduction of her father-in-law, through the collusion of Rahab the harlot with Joshua's spies, through Ruth the Moabite's unexpected marriage with Boaz, and through David and Bathsheba's adultery.

Some have suggested their possible Gentile origins. Rahab was a prostitute in Canaan, Bathsheba was married to a Hittite, Ruth resided in Moab, and Tamar had a name of Hebrew origin. The women's nationalities are not necessarily mentioned. The suggestion is that Matthew may be preparing the reader for the inclusion of the Gentiles in Christ's mission. Others point out an apparent element of sinfulness: Rahab was a prostitute, Tamar posed as a prostitute to seduce Judah, Bathsheba was an adulteress, and Ruth is sometimes seen as seducing Boaz—thus Matthew emphasizes God's grace in response to sin. Still others point out their unusual, even scandalous, unions—preparing the reader for what will be said about Mary. None of these explanations, however, adequately befits all four women.

Nolland suggests simply that these were all the known women attached to David's genealogy in the Book of Ruth.

The conclusion of the genealogy proper is also unusual: having traced the ancestry of Joseph, Matthew identifies him not as the father of Jesus, but as the husband of Mary. The Greek text is explicit in making Jesus born to Mary, rather than to Joseph. This careful wording is to affirm the virgin birth, which Matthew proceeds to discuss, stating that Jesus was begotten not by Joseph but by God.

Mary's kinship with Elizabeth

Luke states that Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was a "relative" (Greek syggenēs, συγγενής) of Mary, and that Elizabeth was descended from Aaron, of the tribe of Levi. Whether she was an aunt, a cousin, or a more distant relation cannot be determined from the word. Some, such as Gregory Nazianzen, have inferred from this that Mary herself was also a Levite descended from Aaron, and thus kingly and priestly lineages were united in Jesus. Others, such as Thomas Aquinas, have argued that the relationship was on the maternal side; that Mary's father was from Judah, Mary's mother from Levi.

Virgin birth

These two Gospels declare that Jesus was begotten not by Joseph, but by the power of the Holy Spirit while Mary was still a virgin, in fulfillment of prophecy. Thus, in mainstream Christianity, Jesus is regarded as being literally the "only begotten son" of God, while Joseph is regarded as his adoptive father.

Matthew immediately follows the genealogy of Jesus with: "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit".

Likewise, Luke tells of the Annunciation: "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

The question then arises, why do both gospels seem to trace the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, when they deny that he is his biological father? Augustine considers it a sufficient answer that Joseph was the father of Jesus by adoption, his legal father, through whom he could rightfully claim descent from David.

Tertullian, on the other hand, argues that Jesus must have descended from David by blood through his mother Mary. He sees Biblical support in Paul's statement that Jesus was "born of a descendant of David according to the flesh". Affirmations of Mary's Davidic ancestry are found early and often.

The Ebionites, a sect who denied the virgin birth, used a gospel which, according to Epiphanius, was a recension of Matthew that omitted the genealogy and infancy narrative. These differences reflect the Ebionites' awareness of Jewish law (halakhah) relating to lineage inheritance, adoption, and the status of ancestry claims through the mother.

Islam
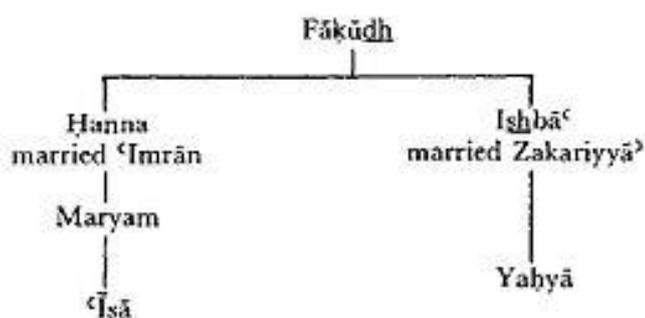
The Qur'an upholds the virgin birth of Jesus (ʿĪsā) and thus considers his genealogy only through Mary (Maryam), without mentioning Joseph.

Mary is very highly regarded in the Qur'an, the nineteenth sura being named for her. She is called a daughter of ʿImrān, whose family is the subject of the third sura. The same Mary (Maryam) is also called a sister of Aaron (Hārūn) in one place, and although this is often seen as an anachronistic conflation with the Old

Testament Miriam (having the same name), who was sister to Aaron (Hārūn) and daughter to Amram ('Imrān), the phrase is probably not to be understood literally.

According to Muslim Scholar Sheikh Ibn Al-Feasy Al-Hanbali, the Quran used "Sister of Aaron" and "Daughter of Amram" for several reasons. One of those is the "relative calling" or *laqb* that is always used in Arabic literature. Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal Abu `Abd Allah al-Shaybani, for instance, is prevalently called "Ibn Hanbal" instead of "Ibn Mohammad". Or, Muhammad bin Idris asy-Syafi`i is always called "Imam Al-Shafi'i" instead of "Imam Idris" or "Imam Muhammad". This is how the Arabs refer to famous persons in their daily life. The same applies here; Sister of Aaron refers to "daughter of Aaron's siblings'", and daughter of Amram refers to "direct lineage of Amram" (Amram's descendents). This means that Mary was from the line of Amram, but not of Aaron's generation.

Conclusion

Regardless of all the controversy regarding Jesus's linage (as interesting as it is), more than enough evidence (both biblical and non-biblical) exist to be sure that Jesus did truly walked the earth and that is a real historical figure. Christianity, Islam and many other religions agree, as does Matthew, Luke and the all the other gospels as well as the Quran, Bible and countless other religious (and historical) text.

ישוע