

“What’s The Big Deal?”

Matthew 1:1-2a

January 14, 2024

INTRO:

What would you do if Jesus showed up here today?

What do you want... & *how committed are you?*

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Week 2 in The Gospel/“good news” of Matthew
- Series: **miracle MESSIAH mission** (m M m)
- Last week we covered 1:1... Today: **1:1-2a**
- **Matthew miraculously messages the Messiah's mission!** *His Biblos, Genesis & Holiness*
- We will **ask & answer:** *“What’s the big deal?”*

ILLUSTRATION

What do the following things have in common...
and how do they all relate to you & the rest of us?

- Wars in Gaza, Israel, and across the Middle-East
- Artificial intelligence (AI) & global identity-theft
- Cultural corruption... like Sodom to Laodicea
- Today’s sermon unites & ANSWERS them all...

BIG IDEA: BE READY!

Both the devil & the divine
can be found in The Holy Bible's details!

Remember 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6; & 1 Timothy 4:16

PREVIEW:

1. Perspective
2. Purpose
3. Problem
4. Promise
5. People
6. Power
7. Path

TEXT:

Matthew 1:1-2a

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,
the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

Abraham was the father of Isaac,

- Think back to how 1st Peter closes...
- A letter of ***“declaration & exhortation...”***
- *Matthew's Gospel genealogy is not up for discussion*
- Matthew's Gospel genealogy is a DECLARATION!
- I pray you'll see & believe why before we're done.

I. Our **PERSPECTIVE** is a *BIG DEAL*

“Biblos genesis”
“The book of the genealogy...”

- i. Whose Word are you going to take?
- ii. **Matthew 1:1; Genesis 1:1; John 1:1**
- iii. **Whose Word are you going to take?**
 - 1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - 2. 2 Peter 1:20
 - 3. **Hebrews 1:1**

II. Our **PURPOSE** is a *BIG DEAL*

- i. **Genesis 1:17-28** = our genesis of purpose!

*Man was built for and blessed by... filling
the world with God's worship & works.*

- ii. ***Do ALL you do to the glory of God!***
 - 1. **Colossians 3:17**
 - 2. **1 Corinthians 10:31**

- iii. **The Great Commandments in FULL CONTEXT**

*Do you exist to make much of Creator-Christ
or do you think He died to much of you?*

The “i” in Christ is for HIM... not us. - JDP

- iv. **John 14:15...** *love = faithful obedience*
- v. **John 3:36...** *obedience = life... disobey = wrath*

III. Our **PROBLEM** is a *BIG DEAL*

- i. **Genesis 3:1-14**
- ii. **Romans 3:23**
- iii. **Romans 6:33**
- iv. **Romans 7:15-24**
- v. **John 15:4,5b**

Ok... now let's go back to our Scripture text...

“Biblos genesis”

***“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ...
the son of David, the son of Abraham”***

REMEMBER:

***“What’s the big deal &
how does this connect to me?”***

In the same way that our problem is directly connected to our purpose and perspective, so is our problem's promised Solution...

IV. Our PROMISE is a BIG DEAL

“Biblos genesis”

***“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ...
the son of David, the son of Abraham”***

VIDEO: *The Bible*

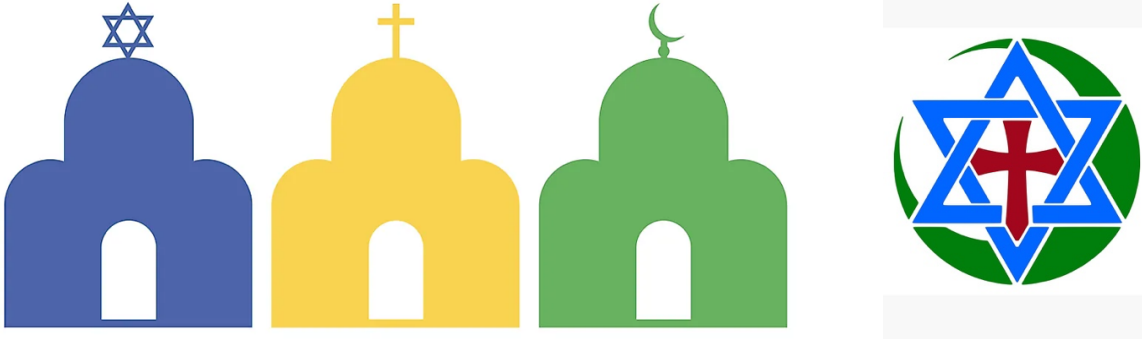
No one enjoys being cross-examined or accused of having something wrong in their lives. But as we grow in Christ, we come to the painful recognition that we have an almost unlimited capacity for self-deception.

*We slowly learn that we need to be stopped in our tracks by God. He uses Scripture to do this... **We cannot reach our destination if we are travelling in the wrong direction.** - Sinclair B. Ferguson*

T/S: Critical... even ETERNAL question here...

Which ABRAHAM?

(What's the big deal?)



i. JEWS

a. Abraham to Isaac to... *Isaac's near sacrifice!*

b. Abraham to Isaac... to Malachi to silence

ii. MUSLIMS

a. Abraham to Ismael... and **his copy-cat lies!**

b. Abraham to Ismael to Muhammad to war

iii. CHRISTIANS

a. Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Jesus to cross

b. Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Jesus to *GOSPEL*

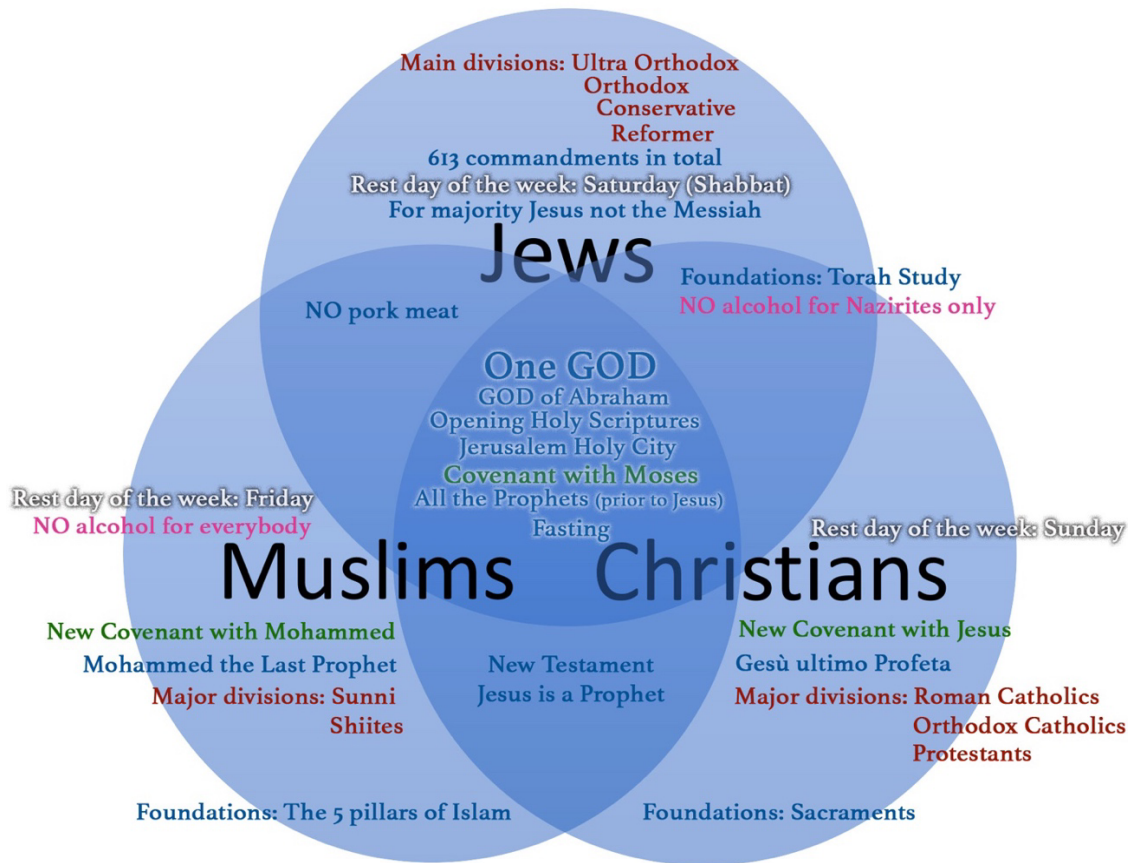
V. Our PEOPLE is a *BIG DEAL*

i. CHOSEN

ii. CHRISTIAN

iii. CREATOR-KING's children

iv. CHURCH-eternal



VI. Our **POWER** is a BIG DEAL

i. SOVEREIGN's Power

1. *Anointed*
2. *Ambassadors*
3. *Army*

ii. SPIRIT's Power

1. *Word* – “Sword of the Spirit”
2. *Walking* – “Fruit of the Spirit”
3. *Worshipping* – “in Spirit & in truth”
4. *Warring* – “in the full armor of God”
5. *Witnessing* – “locally, regionally, globally”

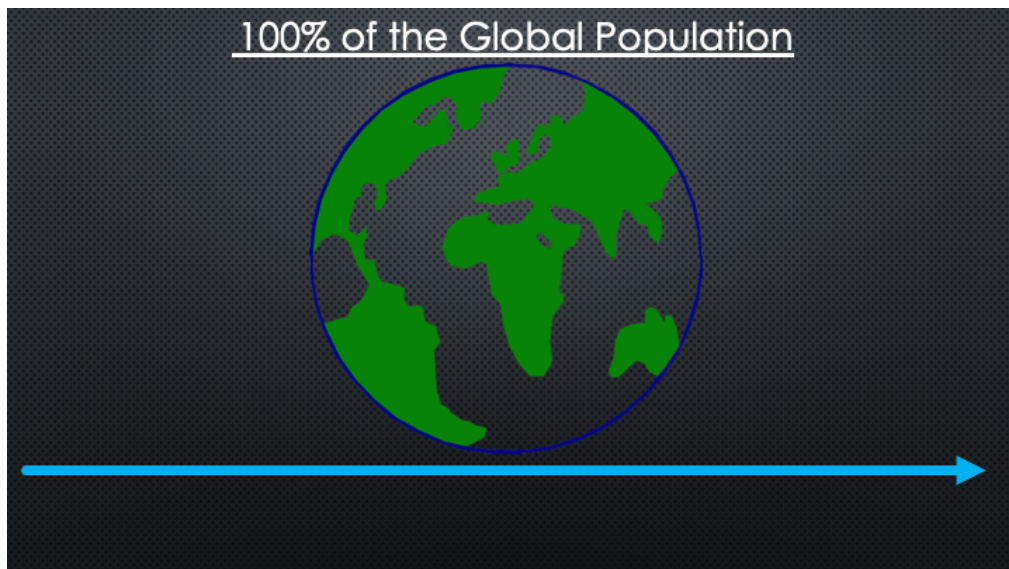
T/S: OK... now let's pull everything together...

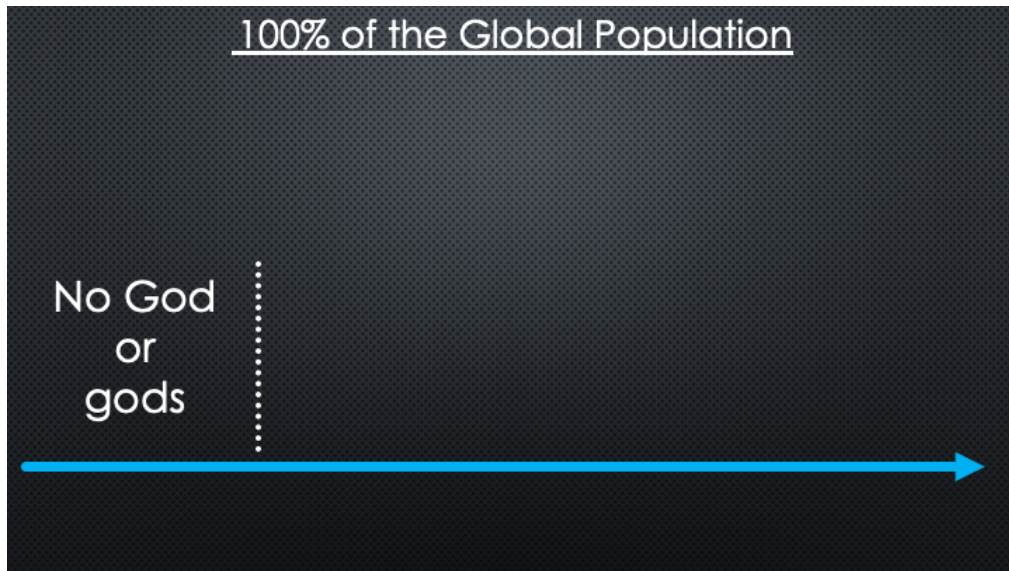
VII. Our **PATH** is a *BIG DEAL*

Our relationship to the details at the beginning...
often determines our results in the end. – JDP

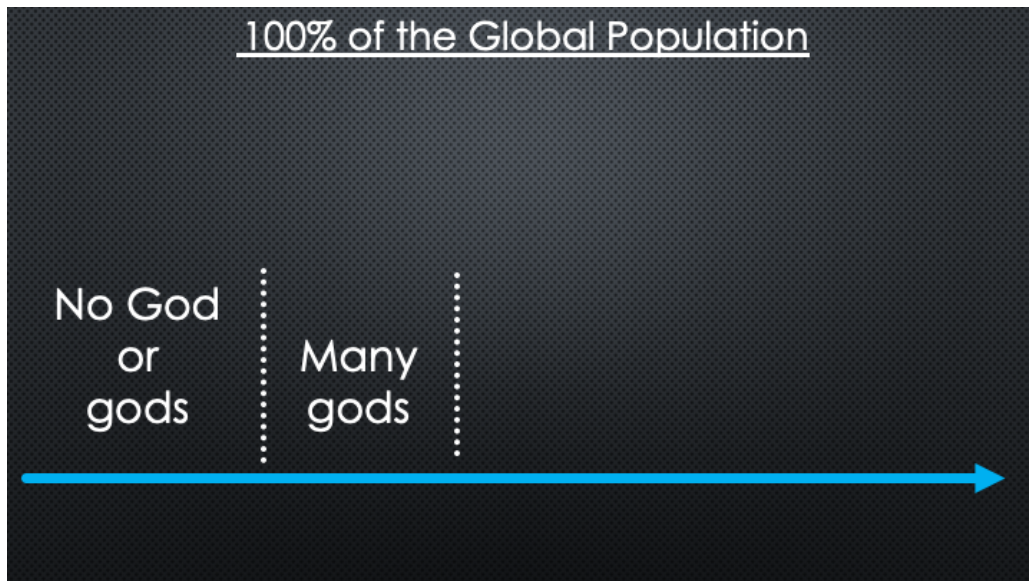
*When it comes to picking a path... your Perspective,
Problems, Purpose, Promise, People, & Power
are ALL a BIG DEAL!*

- Start with the right map
- Trust the right map
- Read the right map correctly
- Follow the right map accurately





- All atheists... agnostics... Communists & Marxists



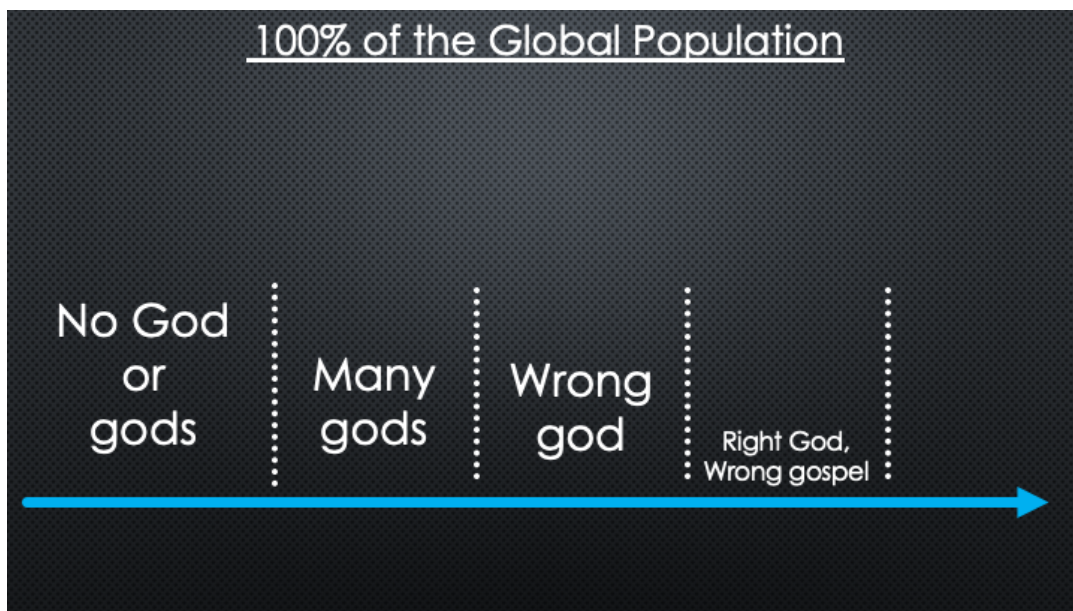
- Hindus, Sikhism, Taoism, Animists, etc.



- Jews; Jehovah's Witness; Mormons; **Muslims**...

"The God of the Bible is NOT the god of Islam."

- Sign outside Kampala's slums

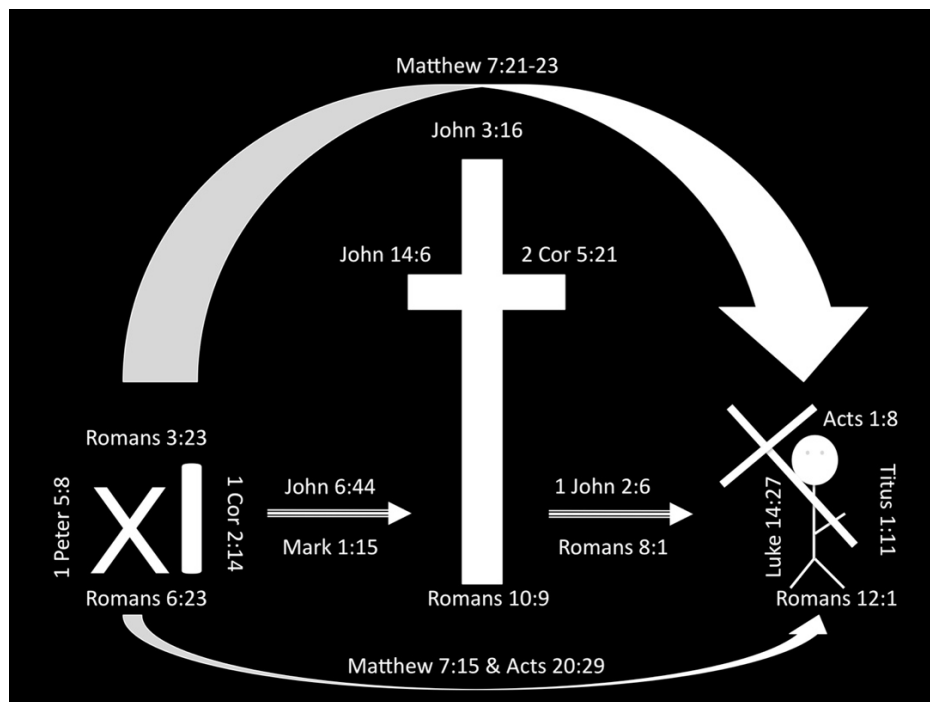


- Church-going holy-hammers & holy hippies...
- Some cross-jumpers and sincere goats...

*“What’s in a name?
That which we call a rose,
by any other name, would smell as sweet.”*

- William Shakespeare / Romeo & Juliet

**While that makes for great theater...
it’s deadly & damnable theology!**



- **There’s only ONE NARROW WAY...**
- *Think about all who are on the outside tracks!*

Matthew’s Gospel is filled with 3 types of people:

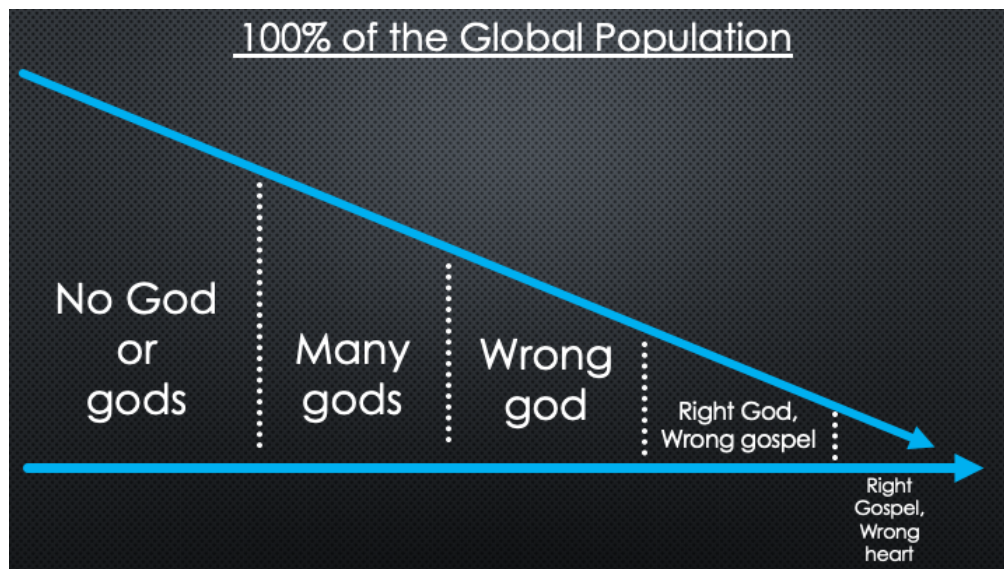
- Religious deniers
- Lukewarm liars
 - Loving lessons from Revelation 2-3
 - Matthew 7:21ff
- Devoted followers

Wait... there are two (2) more groups...



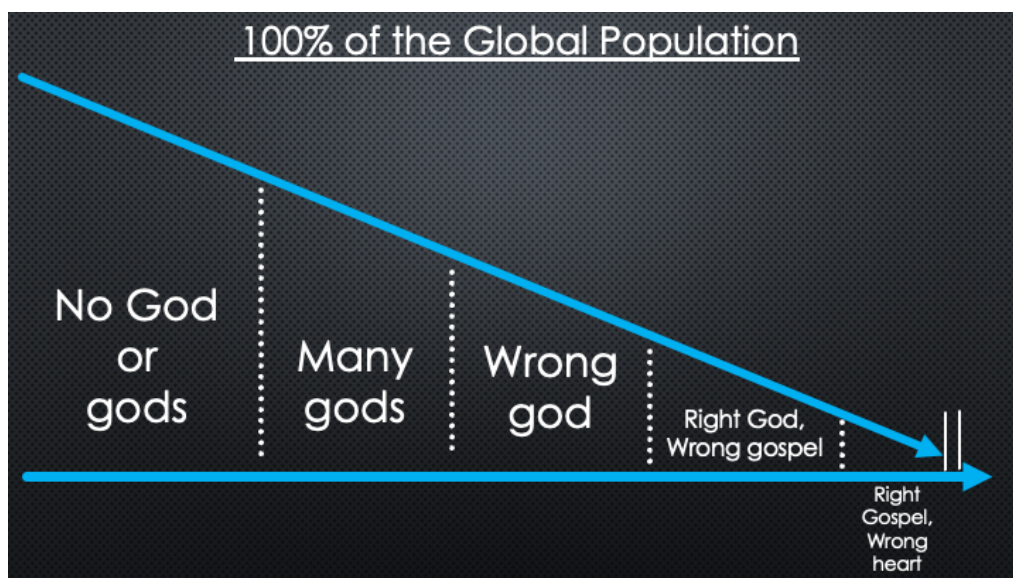
- These are the folks who are around the Church, even around The Christ, but whose knowledge of the Truth is merely superficial or hypocritical, NOT supernatural and hopeful.
- PLEASE take this to heart... mine and the Bible's teaching is NOT to mock or minimize such people... NO!
- This declaration & exhortation is a loving invitation to surrender to victory in THE Jesus who is also the ONLY WAY to help, hope, and eternal healing.

**So, let's look at the global population again...
This time... notice the trend-line...**



- i. **Matthew 1:1**
- ii. **Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1**
- iii. **Genesis 3:15 & John 3:16**
- iv. **NOW ADD ON Hebrews 1:1**

WATCH THIS... & don't miss the narrow path...



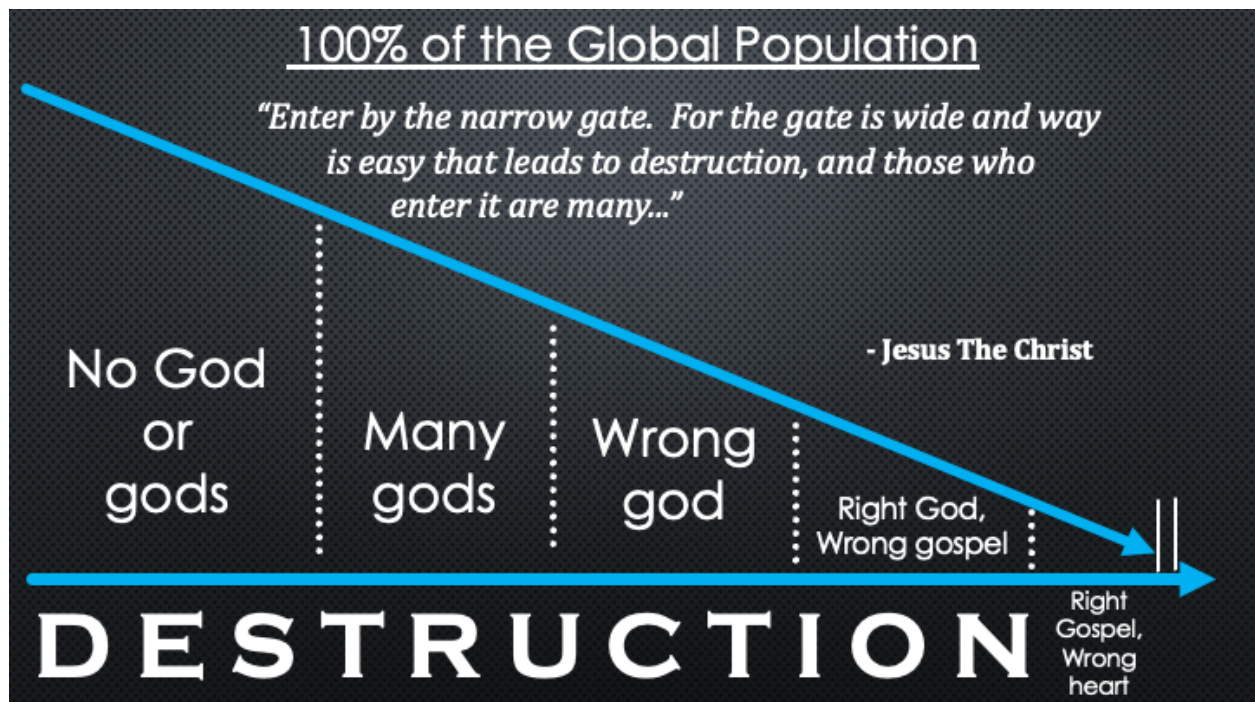
Which path are you on?
What's the big deal?

*"To some, the pursuit of holiness sounds like legalism and man-made rules. To others, an emphasis on grace seems to open the door to irresponsible behaviors based on the notion that God's unconditional love means we're free to sin as we please. **Grace and the personal discipline required to pursue holiness however, go hand in hand. An understanding of how grace and personal, vigorous effort work together is essential for a lifelong pursuit of holiness.**"*
- Jerry Bridges

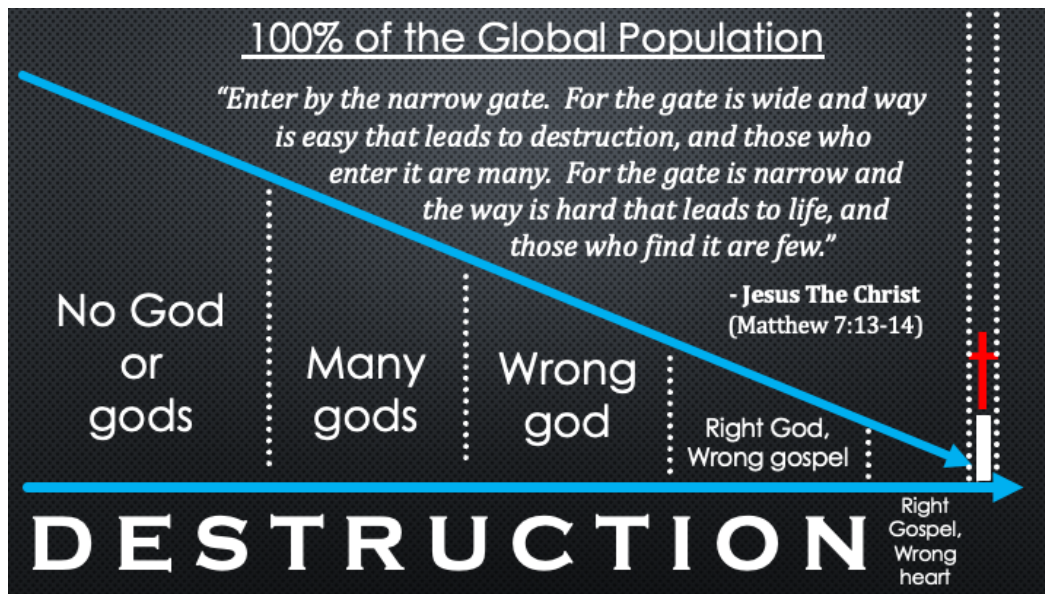
Beware the dangers of echo chambers...
...itchy ears & ear ticklers...

Remember Proverbs 29:18
(Those who perish do so together... in the popular majority.)

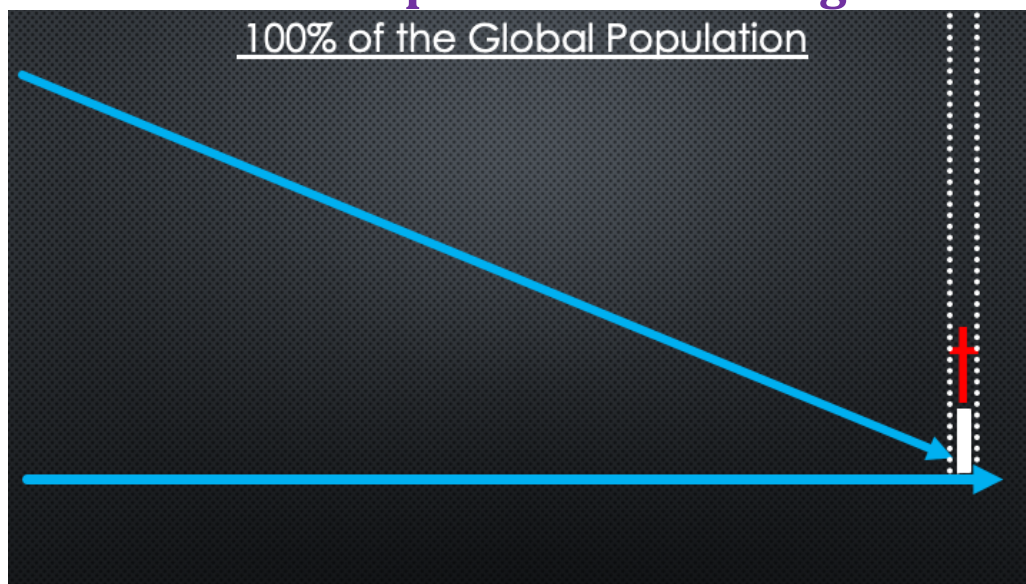
HERE IS A PEEK AT PART OF THE BIG DEAL...



Once again... SEE that Jesus THE CHRIST is the Big DEAL!



Here is the simple view of the big deal...



While it may not be popular, it is truth in love!
GROWING IN CHRIST (alone)...

Spiritual growth depends on two things: first a willingness to live according to the Word of God; second, a willingness to take whatever consequences emerge as a result.

- Sinclair B. Ferguson

Growth in grace is growth downward. It is the forming of a lower estimate of ourselves. It is a deepening realization of our nothingness. It is a heartfelt recognition that we are not worthy of the least of God's mercies.

- A. W. Pink

All growth that is not toward God is growing to decay.

- George Macdonald

Isaiah 29:13 & Matthew 15:8

*“This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;*

The ways, and fashions, and amusements, and recreations of the world have a continually decreasing place in the heart of a growing Christian. He does not condemn them as downright sinful, nor say that those who have anything to do with them are going to hell. He only feels they have a constantly diminishing hold on his own affections and gradually seem smaller and more trifling in his eyes.

- J. C. Ryle

“Christ says, ‘Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree cut down. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent, as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.”

- C.S. Lewis

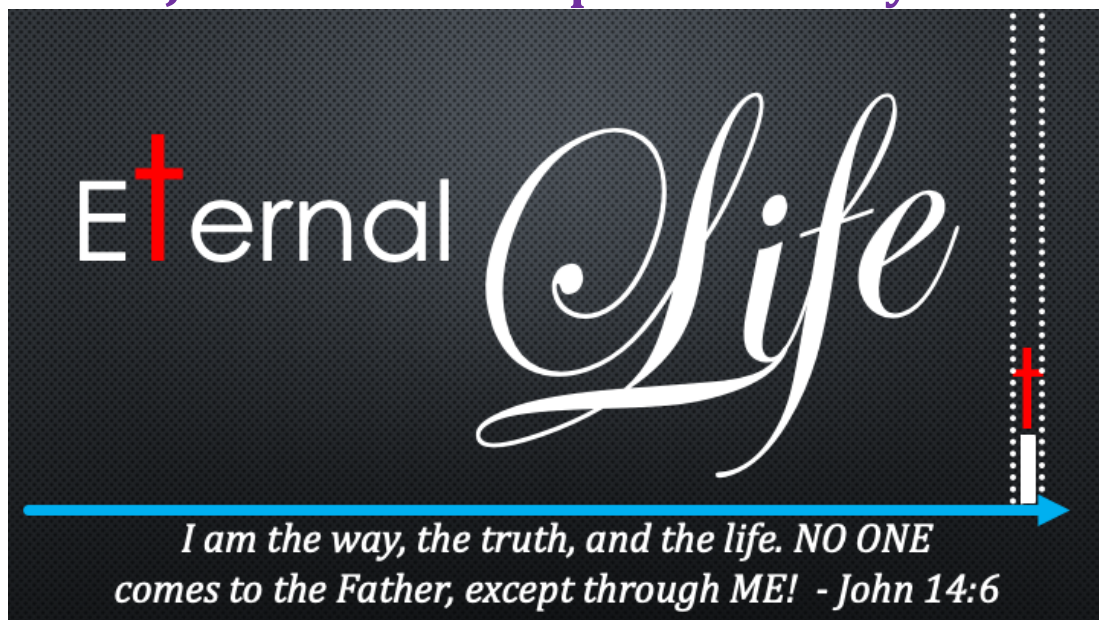
Mere Christianity

Here's the big deal...

It's as big as heaven vs. hell.



Jesus The Christ put it this way...



REVIEW:

OK... so here's the hook...

Remember where we began?

What if Jesus were to show up here today... literally?

What's the big deal??? Here's the big deal!

Both the Muslims & the Christians are expecting Him...

Let me tell you about the Muslim expectations...

Now here's John MacArthur's commentary on this...

In Islamic eschatology, there are three great signs of the end of history; . . . and each of them is a man. . . . the first man that will come in the end of history is the Mahdi . . . sometimes he's called the Twelfth Imam. . . . Their writings say the Mahdi will come and make - at first - a peace agreement with the Jews and the West for seven years; the reign of Mahdi lasts seven years, in which he establishes Islam on the earth. Their holy writings say this: the Mahdi will come riding on a white horse - and it even says in their writings, "As it says in Revelation 6:1 and 2." . . . the Mahdi will be a messianic figure. He will be a descendant of Mohammed. He will be an unparalleled, unequaled leader. He will come out of a crisis of turmoil. He will take control of the world. He will establish a new world order. He will destroy all who resist him. He will

invade many nations. He will make a seven-year peace treaty with the Jews. He will conquer Israel and massacre the Jews. He will establish Islamic world headquarters at Jerusalem. He will rule for seven years, establish Islam as the only religion. He will come on a white horse with supernatural power. He will be loved by all people on earth. If that sounds familiar, that is a precise description of the biblical Antichrist – absolutely, step-by-step-by-step-by-step - the Bible's Antichrist is their Mahdi. . . . the description of the Mahdi is exactly the description of the biblical Antichrist, the beast of Revelation 13; and you go into any kind of a study of that, and you will find that all the details match up perfectly.

Don't ever forget...

Your Abraham determines your Isaac or Ishmael...

Your Abraham determines your Jesus...

Your Abraham determines your messiah...

Your messiah determines your eternity...

It's your ***"biblos genesis"*** determines your Abraham...

God's Biblos Metaphors:

"Belt of Truth" – Ephesians 6:10ff

"Sword that pierces" – Hebrews 4:12-13

"Mirror that reveals" – James 1:23

"Seed that reproduces" – 1st Peter 1:23

"Milk that nourishes" – 1st Peter 2:2

"Lamp/light that shines" – Psalm 119:105

"Fire that consumes" – Jeremiah 23:29a

"Hammer that shatters" – Jeremiah 23:29b

I call you this day to wield the sword, to hold forth the mirror, to scatter the seed, to serve the milk, to hold up the lamp, to spread the flame, to swing the hammer, to stop with the secular wisdom in the pulpit, cancel the entertainment in the church, and fire the drama team. Get rid of the shtick, unplug the colored lights, put the pulpit back in the center of the building, stand up like a man, open the Bible, lift it up, let it out, and let it fly. It is the invincible power of the inerrant Word. - Standbridge

CLOSE:

Matthew 28:18-20

18Then Jesus came to them and said,
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 19Therefore, **go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded** you. And surely, **I am with you always**, even to the very end of the age.”

So... as we press into Matthew... **What DO you want?**

PRAYER

WORSHIP: *In Christ Alone; We Believe!*

STUDY NOTES:

mMm 2

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

[1](#)The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[2](#)Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, [3](#)and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ^a[4](#)and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, [5](#)and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, [6](#)and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, [7](#)and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, ^b[8](#)and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, [9](#)and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, [10](#)and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, ^cand Amos the father of Josiah, [11](#)and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

[12](#)And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, ^d[13](#)and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, [14](#)and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, [15](#)and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, [16](#)and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, [17](#)and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

[18](#)So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

[19](#)Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way...

The Expositor's Commentary: D.A. Carson

The Genealogy of Jesus (1:1–17)

In each Gospel Jesus' earthly ministry is preceded by an account of John the Baptist's ministry.

This formal similarity does not extend to the introductions to the Gospels.

Mark 1:1 opens with a simple statement. Luke begins with a first-person preface in which he explains his purpose and methods, followed by a detailed and often poetic account of the miraculous births of John and Jesus (Lk 1:5–2:20) and brief mention of Jesus' boyhood trip to the temple (2:21–52). **Luke reserves Jesus' genealogy for chapter 3.**

John's prologue (**Jn 1:1–18**) traces Jesus' beginnings to eternity and presents the Incarnation without referring to his conception and birth.

In each Gospel the introduction anticipates major themes and emphases.

*In Matthew the prologue (**Mt 1:1–2:23**) introduces such **themes** as the son of David, the fulfillment of prophecy, the supernatural origin of Jesus the Messiah, and the Father's sovereign protection of his Son in order to bring him to Nazareth and accomplish the divine plan of salvation from sin (cf. esp. Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew*, pp. 123–28).*

1 The first two words of Matthew, *biblos geneseōs*, may be translated “*record of the genealogy*” (NIV), “*record of the origins,*” or “*record of the history.*” NIV limits this title to

the genealogy (1:1–17), the second could serve as a heading for the prologue (1:1–2:23), and the third as a heading for the entire Gospel. The expression is found only twice in the LXX: in Genesis 2:4 it refers to the creation account (Gen 2:4–25) and in Genesis 5:1 to the ensuing genealogy. From the latter it appears possible to follow NIV (so also Hendriksen; Lohmeyer, *Matthäus*; McNeile); but because the noun *genesis* (NIV, “birth”) reappears in Mt 1:18 (one of only four NT occurrences), it seems likely that the heading in 1:1 extends beyond the genealogy. No occurrence of the expression as a heading for a book-length document has come to light. Therefore, we must discount the increasingly popular view (Davies, *Setting*; Gaechter, *Matthäus*; Hill, *Matthew*; Maier; Zahn) that Matthew means to refer to his entire Gospel, “A record of the history of Jesus Christ.” Matthew rather intends his first two chapters to be a coherent and unified “record of the origins of Jesus Christ.”

The designation *“Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham”* resonates with biblical nuances. (For comments regarding “Jesus,” see on 1:21.) **“Christ” is roughly the Greek equivalent to “Messiah” or “Anointed.”** In the OT the term could refer to a variety of people anointed for some special function: priests (Lev 4:3; 6:22), kings (1 Sam 16:13; 24:10; 2 Sam 19:21; Lam 4:20), and, metaphorically, the patriarchs (Ps 105:15) and the pagan king Cyrus (Isa 45:1). Already in Hannah’s prayer “Messiah” parallels “king”: the Lord “will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed” (1 Sam 2:10).

With the rising number of OT prophecies concerning King David’s line (e.g., 2 Sam 7:12–16; cf. Ps 2:2; 105:15), “Messiah, or “Christ,” became the designation

*of a figure representing the people of God and bringing
in the promised eschatological reign.*

In Jesus' day Palestine was rife with
messianic expectation.

Not all of it was coherent, and **many Jews expected two different
“Messiahs.” But Matthew’s linking of “Christ” and “son of David”
leaves no doubt of what he is claiming for Jesus.**

In the Gospels “Christ” is relatively rare (as compared with
Paul’s epistles). More important it almost always appears as a
title, strictly equivalent to “the Messiah” (see esp. 16:16).

But it was natural for Christians after the
Resurrection to use “Christ” as a name not less
than as a title; increasingly they spoke of “Jesus
Christ” or “Christ Jesus” or simply “Christ.”

Paul normally treats “Christ,” at least in part as a name; but it is
doubtful whether the titular force ever entirely disappears (cf. N.T.
Wright, “The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline
Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to
the Romans” [Ph. D. diss., Oxford University, 1980], p. 19). Of
Matthew’s approximately eighteen occurrences, all are exclusively
titular except this one (1:1), probably 1:16, certainly 1:18, and possibly
the variant at 16:21. **The three uses of “Christ” in the
prologue reflect the confessional stance from which
Matthew writes; he is a committed Christian who**

has long since become familiar with the common way of using the word as both title and name.

At the same time it is a mark of Matthew's concern for historical accuracy that Jesus is not so designated by his contemporaries.

"Son of David" is an important designation in Matthew.

Not only does David become a turning point in the genealogy (1:6, 17), but the title recurs throughout the Gospel (9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30–31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45).

God swore covenant love to David (Ps 89:29) and promised that one of his immediate descendants would establish the kingdom—even more, that David's kingdom and throne would endure forever (2 Sam 7:12–16).

Isaiah foresaw that a "son" would be given, a son with the most extravagant titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace: "Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this"

(Isa 9:6–7).

In Jesus' day at least some branches of popular Judaism understood "son of David" to be messianic (cf. Ps Sol 17:21; for a summary of the complex intertestamental evidence, cf. Berger, "Die königlichen Messiastraditionen," esp. pp. 3–9).

The theme was important
in early Christianity

(cf. Luke 1:32, 69; John 7:42; Acts 13:23;
Rom 1:3; Rev 22:16).

*God's promises, though long delayed,
had not been forgotten; Jesus and his
ministry were perceived as God's
fulfillment of covenantal promises now
centuries old. The tree of David, hacked
off so that only a stump remained, was
sprouting a new branch
(Isa 11:1).*

Jesus is also **“son of Abraham.”**

It could not be otherwise, granted that he is son of David. Yet **Abraham is mentioned for several important reasons.**

“Son of Abraham” may have been a recognized messianic title in some branches of Judaism (cf. T Levi 8:15).

The covenant with the Jewish people had first been made with Abraham (Gen 12:1–3; 17:7; 22:18), **a connection Paul sees as basic to Christianity ([Gal 3:16](#)).**

More important, Genesis 22:18 had promised that through Abraham’s offspring “all nations” (*panta ta ethnē*, LXX) would be blessed;

so with this allusion to Abraham, Matthew is preparing his readers for the final words of this offspring from Abraham—the commission to make disciples of “all nations” (Mt 28:19, *panta ta ethnē*).

Jesus the Messiah came in fulfillment of the kingdom promises to David and of the Gentile-blessings promises to Abraham (**cf. also [Matt 3:9](#); [8:11](#)**).

2–17

Study has shown that genealogies in the Ancient Near East could serve widely diverse functions: economic, tribal, political, domestic (to show family or geographical relationships), and others

(see Johnson; also Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977]; R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, pp. 64–66).

The danger in such study is that Matthew's intentions may be overridden by colorful backgrounds of doubtful relevance to the text itself. Johnson sees Matthew's genealogy as a response to Jewish slander. H.V. Winkings ("The Nativity Stories and Docetism," NTS 23 [1977]: 457–60) sees it as an answer to late first-century Docetism that denied the essential humanity of Jesus. One wonders whether a virgin birth would have been the best way to go about correcting the Docetists.

D.E. Nineham ("The Genealogy in St. Matthew's Gospel and Its Significance for the Study of the Gospels," BJRL 58 [1976]: 491–44) finds in this genealogy the assurance that God is in sovereign control. Yet it is unclear how he reconciles this assurance with his conviction that the genealogy is of little historical worth. If Matthew made much of it up, then we may admire his faith that God was in control. But since Matthew's basis was (according to Nineham) faulty it gives the reader little incentive to share the same faith.

Actually,

Matthew's chief aims in including the genealogy are hinted at in the first verse—viz.,

...to show that Jesus Messiah is truly in the kingly line of David, heir to the messianic promises, the one who brings divine blessings to all nations.

Therefore, the genealogy focuses on King David (1:6) on the one hand, yet on the other hand includes Gentile women (see below).

Many entries would touch the hearts and stir the memories of biblically literate readers, though the principal thrust of the genealogy ties together promise and fulfillment. **“Christ and the new covenant are securely linked to the age of the old covenant.** Marcion, who wished to sever all the links binding Christianity to the Old Testament, knew what he was about when he cut the genealogy out of his edition of Luke” (F.F. Bruce, NBD, p. 459).

For many, whatever its aims, the historical value of Matthew's genealogy is nil. R.E. Brown (*Birth of Messiah*, pp. 505–12) bucks the tide when he cautiously affirms that Jesus sprang from the house of David. Many ancient genealogies are discounted as being of little historical value because they evidently intend to impart more than

historical information (cf. esp. Wilson, *Genealogy and History*). To do this, however, is to fall into a false historical disjunction; for many genealogies intend to make more than historical points by referring to historical lines.

Part of the historical evaluation of Matthew 1:2–17 rests on the reliability of Matthew's sources: the names in the first two-thirds of the genealogy are taken from the LXX (1 Chronicles 1–3, esp. 2:1–15; 3:5–24; Ruth 4:12–22). After Zerubbabel, Matthew relies on extrabiblical sources of which we know nothing.

But there is good evidence that records were kept at least till the end of the first century. Josephus (Life 6 [1]) refers to the “public registers” from which he extracts his genealogical information (cf. also Jos. *Contra Apion* I, 28–56 [6–10]). According to Genesis R 98:8, Rabbi Hillel was proved to be a descendant of David because a genealogical scroll was found in Jerusalem. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3. 19–20) cites Hegesippus to the effect that Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96) ordered all descendants of David slain. Nevertheless two of them when summoned, though admitting their Davidic descent, showed their calloused hands to prove they were but poor farmers. So they were let go. But the account shows that genealogical information was still available.

While no twentieth-century Jew could prove he was from the tribe of Judah, let alone from the house of David, that does not appear to have been a problem in the first century, when lineage was important in gaining access to temple worship.

Whether Matthew had access to the records himself or gleaned his information from intermediate sources, we cannot know from this

distance; but in any case we “have no good reason to doubt that this genealogy was transmitted in good faith” (Albright and Mann).

More difficult is the question of the relation of Matthew’s genealogy to Luke’s, in particular the part from David on (cf. Luke 3:23–31). There are basic differences between the two: Matthew begins with Abraham and moves forward; Luke begins with Jesus and moves backward to Adam. Matthew traces the line through Jeconiah, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel; Luke through Neri, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel. More important, (Luke 3:31) traces the line through David’s son Nathan (cf. 2 Sam 5:14), and Matthew through the kingly line of Solomon. It is often said that no reconciliation between the two genealogies is possible (e.g., E.L. Abel, “The Genealogies of Jesus Ο ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ”, NTS 20 [1974]: 203–10). Nevertheless two theories are worth weighing

1. Some have argued that Luke gives Mary’s genealogy but substitutes Joseph’s name (Luke 3:23) to avoid mentioning a woman. And there is some evidence to support the notion that Mary herself was a descendant of David (cf. Luke 1:32). That Mary was related to Elizabeth, who was married to the Levite Zechariah (Luke 1:5–36), is no problem, since intermarriage between tribes was not uncommon. Indeed, Aaron’s wife may well have sprung from Judah (cf. Exod 6:23; Num 2:3) (so Beng., CHS, Luther). H.A.W. Meyer rearranges the punctuation in Luke 3:23 to read “being the son (of Joseph as was supposed) of Heli [i.e., Mary’s father], of Matthat.” But this is painfully artificial and could not easily be deduced by a reader with **a text without punctuation marks or brackets, which is how our NT Greek MSS were first written.** Few would guess simply by reading Luke that he is giving Mary’s genealogy. The theory stems, not from the text of Luke, but from the need to harmonize the two genealogies. On the face of it, both Matthew and Luke aim to give Joseph’s genealogy.

2. Others have argued, more plausibly, that Luke provides Joseph's real genealogy and Matthew the throne succession—a succession that finally jumps to Joseph's line by default. Hill (*Matthew*) offers independent Jewish evidence for a possible double line (Targ. Zech 12:12). This hypothesis has various forms. The oldest goes back to Julius Africanus (c. A.D. 225; cf. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 1. 7), who argued that Matthew provides the natural genealogy and Luke the royal—the reverse of the modern theory (so Alf, Farrer, Hill, Taylor, Westcott, Zahn). In its modern form the theory seems reasonable enough: where the purpose is to provide Joseph's actual descent back to David, this could best be done by tracing the family tradition through his real father Heli, to his father Matthat, and thus back to Nathan and David (so Luke); and where the purpose is to provide the throne succession, it is natural to begin with David and work down.

As most frequently presented, this theory has a serious problem (cf. R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah*, pp. 503–4). It is normally argued that Joseph's father in Matthew 1:16, Jacob, was a full brother of Joseph's father mentioned in Luke 3:23, Heli; that Jacob, the royal heir, died without offspring; and that Heli married Jacob's widow according to the laws of levirate marriage (Deut 25:5–10). (Though levirate marriages may not have been common in the first century, it is unlikely that they were completely unknown. Otherwise the question of the Sadducees [Mt 22:24–28] was phrased in irrelevant terms.) But if Jacob and Heli are to be reckoned as full brothers, then Matthan (Matt) and Matthat (Luke) must be the same man—even though their fathers, Eleazar (Matt) and Levi (Luke) respectively, are different. It seems artificial to appeal to a second levirate marriage. Some have therefore argued that Jacob and Heli were only half-brothers, which entails a further coincidence—viz., that their mother married two men, Matthan and Matthat, with remarkably similar names. We do not know whether levirate marriage was practiced in the case of half-brothers. Moreover since the whole purpose of levirate marriage was to raise up a child in

the deceased father's name, why does Luke provide the name of the actual father?

R.E. Brown judges the problems insurmountable but fails to consider the elegant solution suggested by Machen (pp. 207–9) fifty years ago. If we assume that Matthat and Matthan are *not* the same person, there is no need to appeal to levirate marriage. The difficulty regarding the father of Matthat and the father of Matthan disappears; yet their respective sons Levi and Jacob may have been so closely related (e.g., if Levi was an heirless only son whose sister married Jacob or Joseph) that if Levi died, Jacob's son Joseph became his heir. Alternatively, if Matthan and Matthat *are* the same person (presupposing a levirate marriage one generation earlier), we “need only to suppose that Jacob [Joseph's father according to Matthew] died without issue, so that his nephew, the son of his brother Heli [Joseph's father according to Luke] would become his heir” (p. 208).

Other differences between Matthew and Luke are more amenable to obvious solutions. As for the omissions from Matthew's genealogy and the structure of three series of fourteen, see on 1:17.

2 Of the twelve sons of Jacob, Judah is singled out, as his tribe bears the scepter (Gen 49:10; cf: Heb 7:14). The words “and his brothers” are not “an addition which indicates that of the several possible ancestors of the royal line Judah alone was chosen” (Hill, *Matthew*), since that restriction was already achieved by stipulating Judah; and in no other entry (except 1:11; see comment) are the words “and his brothers” added. The point is that, though he comes from the royal line of Judah and David, Messiah emerges within the matrix of the covenant people (cf. the reference to Judah's brothers). **Neither the half-siblings of Isaac nor the descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau, qualify as the covenant people in the OT. This allusive mention of the Twelve Tribes**

as the locus of the people of God becomes important later (cf. Mt 8:11 with 19:28). Even the fact that there were twelve apostles is relevant.

St. Andrews Commentary: R.C. Sproul

A JEWISH LOOK AT JESUS

Matthew 1:1–17

We do not know definitively who wrote the Gospel of Matthew, but the universal testimony of the early church is that it was penned by Matthew, one of the twelve disciples. **Matthew was called from his labor as a tax collector, which was one of the most despised vocations any Jew could hold, yet because of his training as a tax collector, Matthew was acquainted with lists and genealogies from the public registry, so he would know the family history of the people being taxed.** He was also, obviously, literate and probably spoke two or three languages. Therefore, his work as a tax collector, under the providence of God, was the Lord's preparation for Matthew to begin his most important and celebrated task.

This book has been called, even by critics of historic Christianity, the greatest book ever written.

The Genealogy

Matthew begins his Gospel with these words: ***The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ*** (v. 1). Here is a Jew writing principally for Jews, and his first assertion is that he is writing about Jesus Messiah. *Christ* is not the name of Jesus. His name is Jesus bar Joseph or Jesus of Nazareth. The term ***Christ* is His title, and it means “Jesus the Anointed One” or “Jesus the promised Messiah.”**

Matthew mentions another important title that would resonate with his Jewish audience: ***the Son of David*** (v. 1). This title for Jesus, Son of David, is used more by Matthew than by any other Gospel writer, because the Messiah was to come from the loins of the greatest king of the Old Testament; He would be of the seed and lineage of David. So from the very beginning of his Gospel Matthew calls Jesus “Christ, the Son of David.”

Matthew then adds, ***the Son of Abraham*** (v. 1). One of the great difficulties of harmonization in sacred Scripture is the relationship between the genealogy presented by Matthew and that presented by Luke in his Gospel. There are many places where these two genealogies do not agree. The first point of difference is that **Luke traces the genealogy of Christ back to Adam, indicating that this Christ is not simply the Savior of the Jews but that the scope of Jesus’ redemptive activity is universal. He is the new Adam, who recovers the promise that God made originally to Adam and Eve in the garden.**

Matthew, on the other hand, goes only as far back as Abraham because he is writing to a Jewish audience, to

people who would want to know about the ancestry of Jesus as well as that of Matthew. It is important that His ancestry can be taken back to Abraham.

Ancestry was important to Jewish people, as it has been to people of all cultures throughout history. **Probably the culture that is least concerned about ancestry is our own, which is why we often fail to understand the import of lists such as this.**

When I enrolled as a student at the Free University of Amsterdam, I had to fill out a form with personal information. One of the questions on the form asked, "What was your father's station in life?" The university wanted to know my cultural class standing. That was also important for the Jew, which is why Matthew begins by giving us Jesus' ancestry. Additionally,

the ancestry was important to demonstrate that Matthew's Gospel did not pertain to a mythical character or hero. To the Jew, the ancestry testified to historical reality.

Several years ago a friend of mine, a missionary with Wycliffe Bible Translators, worked among a people who had never heard the gospel in their language. The people could not write or read, so all their communication was oral. The missionary's first task was to learn the language of the tribe. Then she had to change that oral language into written form and teach the people to read and write it. It was a laborious task that took many years. Only after all that was accomplished could she undertake the task of translating the Bible into this language. She began with the Gospel of Matthew. To expedite the project she skipped the genealogy to get to the meat and substance of the story of Christ, and

then she sent her translation work off to be printed by a publisher in a distant city. She waited months for the first copies of Matthew to arrive at the compound, and when the trucks came in with the Bibles, or, at least, the Gospel of Matthew, the people were much more interested in the trucks than they were in the translation. After having spent ten years on the project, she was crushed when she saw that the people didn't care at all. Nevertheless, she persevered in her task, and in the second edition of Matthew she included the genealogy. When that arrived the missionary explained the genealogy to the tribal chief, and he said, "Are you trying to say that this Jesus you've been telling us about for ten years was a real person?"

She replied, "Yes, of course."

He said, "I thought you were telling us a story about some mythical character."

...Once he understood that this Christ was real in space and time, the chief came to Christ, and shortly thereafter the whole tribe came to Christ.

There are three sections in the genealogy, and Matthew divides these three sections into three groups, each of which has fourteen names.

The significance of that has puzzled New Testament scholars.

The Hebrew language uses a *gematria*, which is a kind of numerical symbolism. We find an **example of this in the book of Revelation, where we read that the number of the beast is 666 (Rev. 13:18).** Those numbers can be applied to real persons to identify the beast.

If you look at this same kind of structure in the genealogical table, you will see the number **fourteen (14) is the number of David.**

David is the central character of the ancestry, and Matthew is taking great pains to show that Jesus is from the line and lineage of David and that He has come to restore the fallen booth of the great king of the Old Testament.

Another difference between the genealogy in Matthew and the genealogy in Luke is that Matthew lists the father of Joseph as Jacob; in Luke's Gospel it is Eli. However, Luke does not use the term *begat*; he uses simply *of* someone. **If you look through the genealogies, you will see that both the lists are selective, and that Matthew and Luke do not select the same people.** The most notable difference is that in Matthew, the list moves from David to Solomon, whereas in Luke, it moves from David to Nathan. Solomon and Nathan were both sons of David, and, actually, the elder son was Nathan, not Solomon. Nevertheless, the kingship passed from David to Solomon rather than to Nathan. This gives us a clue as to why these genealogies are different.

What scholars tend to agree on is that Matthew's genealogy is the royal lineage of the kings of David.

When Matthew gets to the sons of Jacob, he lists not the firstborn, Reuben, but Judah. The tribe of Judah was given the kingdom: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh comes" (Gen. 49:10).

In Matthew's genealogy the heirs to the throne of David come down finally to the father of Joseph, whose name is Jacob. In Luke's Gospel the genealogy does not come through the lines of the kings but from the son of Nathan.

The genealogies differ past David, and we do not know why.

Suggested repeatedly throughout church history is that **Matthew is giving us the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke is giving us the genealogy of Mary. This suggestion is highly disputed, but I am inclined to think it is the right solution.**

We have every reason to believe that Mary also was descended from David, and Jesus, of course, gets His human nature not from Joseph but from Mary. However, in Jewish society the fatherhood of Joseph, even though he was merely Jesus' stepfather, as it were, is important for legal genealogical considerations.

So why does Luke tell us that Joseph is of Eli while Matthew tells us that Jacob begot Joseph? Obviously, Joseph didn't have two different fathers. I think Matthew is giving us the physical descendants from Jacob to Joseph. In Luke's Gospel, Joseph is not called "the son of Eli" but "of Eli." In other words, Joseph is "of Eli" in the sense that he was Eli's son-in-law.

Noticeable by its absence in Luke's genealogy is any reference to King Jeconiah, who is mentioned twice in Matthew's list. Jeconiah came under the curse of God such that his seed would never be on the throne of David. This means that if Luke had traced Jesus' genealogy through Joseph, Jesus couldn't have been king, but since Jeconiah does not appear in Luke's list, it is likely that Luke's list traces the line through Mary.

In Martin Luther's study of the genealogies, *he sees Jesus as the Son of David who restores the kingdom to Israel, but as the Son of Abraham He brings the kingdom of God to the whole world.*

All of that is pointed to by what appears, in the beginning, to be nothing but a list of names.¹

¹ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 15–19.

The Gospel Of The Kingdom

MATTHEW 1:1-17

Main Idea: The Gospel of Matthew is an account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Messiah and King predicted by the Old Testament.

I. The Gospel of the Kingdom

- A. The book of Matthew is a Gospel (an account of good news).
- B. The book of Matthew is one of four Gospels.
 - 1. John: Jesus is the Son of God.
 - 2. Luke: Jesus is the Son of Man.
 - 3. Mark: Jesus is the Suffering Servant.
 - 4. Matthew: Jesus is the Sovereign King.

II. Introduction of the King

- A. He is the Savior.
- B. He is the Messiah.
- C. He is the son of David.
- D. He is the son of Abraham.

III. Overview of the Kingdom

- A. Gospel: The message of the kingdom
- B. Disciples: The citizens of the kingdom
- C. Discipleship: The demands of the kingdom
- D. Church: The outpost of the kingdom
- E. Mission: The spread of the kingdom
- F. Demons: The enemies of the kingdom
- G. Hope: The coming of the kingdom

IV. Salvation through the King

- A. God saves only by His sovereign grace.
- B. God saves ultimately for His global purpose.

V. The Bottom Line

- A. Like the leaders, will you completely reject Jesus?
- B. Like the crowds, will you casually observe Jesus?
- C. Like the disciples, will you unconditionally follow Jesus?

The book of Matthew is a Gospel, an account of good news. That point may sound obvious, but we can't overlook it as we consider this first book of the New Testament.

“Gospel” literally means “good news,” and Matthew’s purpose in this book is to write an account of the good news of Jesus Christ—how Jesus came, what Jesus did, what Jesus said, and what Jesus accomplished in His death and resurrection.

These truths are intended to change our lives and the entire world.

In order for us to rightly interpret Matthew’s Gospel, we need to understand what it is and what it is not.

1. First, as we consider this Gospel, we need to remember that it is not a congregational letter. Matthew is not like 1 Timothy, a letter written by Paul sent to Timothy and the church at Ephesus. This Gospel is not primarily addressing a certain congregation in a certain situation; rather, it is presenting Jesus Christ—who He is and what He has done—to all people.

2. Second, as you read through Matthew you will also notice that it is not a comprehensive biography. Matthew was not trying to include every minute detail of Jesus' life. There are many things that have been left out. Matthew chose various stories and abbreviated teachings from Jesus' life in order to accomplish a specific purpose. This Gospel includes what it does because the author wants to say something specific about the person and work of Jesus Christ.
3. Finally, concerning the purpose of Matthew's Gospel, we see that it is not a chronological history. Obviously, time plays a role in Matthew's arrangement, since he begins with Jesus' birth and ends with Jesus' death and resurrection. However, within this broad framework, Matthew has intentionally arranged his material around specific emphases. In particular, Matthew organizes his Gospel around five distinct teaching sections, and in between sections he tells us different stories, or narrative accounts. After the first four chapters of narrative in Matthew, we come upon the first teaching section in chapters 5–7, a section we know as the Sermon on the Mount. Immediately following Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew says, *"When Jesus had finished this sermon ..." (7:28)*. We might think of these summary statements to be the "seams" stitching together the major teaching sections.

Consider the following five seams:

1. 7:28–29— *"When Jesus had finished this sermon ..."*

2. 11:1— “When Jesus had finished giving orders to His 12 disciples”
3. 13:53— “When Jesus had finished these parables ...”
4. 19:1— “When Jesus had finished this instruction ...”
5. 26:1— “When Jesus had finished saying all this ...”

Matthew's structure is not accidental.
It is intentional—even beautiful.

After each of the five key teaching sections, he gives us one of these summary statements.

By this organization, Matthew gives us a beautiful portrait of Jesus' words and deeds. In considering this structure, we need to remember the main point of this Gospel, namely, to give us an account of the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Next, we'll consider Matthew's portrait of Jesus in relation to the other Gospels.

The book of Matthew is one of four Gospels.

Each Gospel writer gives us an account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Now there are certainly similarities among all four Gospels, but each one uses different stories at different times and in different ways in order to emphasize different truths about Jesus.

It's as if the good news about Christ is a multi-colored diamond that you can look at from a variety of different angles, with each angle giving you a unique and glorious glimpse of the Lord Jesus. Still, at the end of the day, it's the same diamond.

While Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are composed by different writers and written with different emphases, each Gospel is written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16).

The following is admittedly an oversimplification, but it may help us to see some of the different emphases of the four Gospels. These emphases are even evident in the way that the Gospels begin:

- **John:** Jesus is the Son of God.

Instead of including a genealogy like Matthew, John begins by saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1). **John is showing us Jesus’ divinity from the start.** He even gives us a purpose statement toward the close of the book: *“But these [signs] are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (20:31).*

- **Luke:** Jesus is the Son of Man.

Jesus’ significance for all humanity is emphasized from the very beginning of Luke’s Gospel. His genealogy in chapter 3, for instance, is framed differently from Matthew’s. **In ascending order, Luke traces the physical lineage of Jesus to Adam,** *whereas Matthew begins with Abraham and moves forward to Jesus.*

- **Mark:** Jesus is the Suffering Servant.

Mark doesn’t give us a genealogy. Instead, **from the very start, there is a clear emphasis on Jesus coming, not to be served, but to “serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many” (10:45).** Mark also highlights the suffering that will come to all who follow Jesus.

- **Matthew:** Jesus is the Sovereign King.

From the very beginning, Matthew makes clear that Jesus is the King, coming from the line of King David (1:1), and He is the Messiah, the promised One from the line of Abraham (1:1). In descending order, Matthew traces the legal lineage of Jesus from Abraham. Matthew shows us that Jesus came not simply from Adam, but more specifically from the line of the kings in Israel. He is the promised King!

A few more points regarding Matthew's genealogy may be helpful.

- A. First, he is not giving us a comprehensive genealogy, that is, not every descendant in the family tree is included in this list. This genealogy is specifically arranged in groups of 14, as Matthew himself tells us in 1:17: *"So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations; and from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations; and from the exile to Babylon until the Messiah, 14 generations."* Matthew has arranged his genealogy this way for a reason that goes all the way back to the Hebrew name for King David. THE HEBREWS RECOGNIZED SOMETHING CALLED GEMATRIA, A SYSTEM OF ASSIGNING NUMERICAL VALUES TO CERTAIN WORDS

**BASED ON THE CORRESPONDING
LETTERS OF THE HEBREW ALPHABET.
WHEN YOU ADD UP THE NUMERICAL
VALUES OF THE HEBREW CONSONANTS
IN DAVID'S NAME, YOU GET A TOTAL OF
14** (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 53).

- B. In addition, David's name is the fourteenth in Matthew's list (Blomberg, 53)!

Clearly, Matthew intended to connect Jesus to King David.

Once we see some of these pieces put together, it should be clear that Matthew's genealogy should not be skipped over in order to get to the "good stuff." **These opening verses help clue us in to the purpose of Matthew's Gospel.**

Introduction of the King

MATTHEW 1:1-17

...In his introduction of Jesus as the King, Matthew points out that **He is the Savior.**

Verse 1 begins, *"The historical record of Jesus Christ."*

The name “**Jesus**” is the Greek form of the name “**Joshua**” or “**Yeshua**,” which means “**Yahweh saves**,” or “**The Lord is salvation.**”

This theme fits with the angel’s instructions to Joseph later in the chapter: “She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because *He will save His people from their sins*” (v. 21; emphasis added).

Recall from the Old Testament that Joshua was the leader appointed by God to take His people into the promised land; now, Jesus is the leader appointed by God to take sinful people into eternal life.

After looking at the name “**Jesus**,” we turn to the title “**Christ**.”

By applying this title to Jesus, Matthew is telling us that **He is the Messiah**.

It is important to keep in mind that “**Christ**” is not Jesus’ last name. No,

“Christ” literally means “Messiah” or “Anointed One.”

Throughout the Old Testament there were promises of a coming anointed one, a Messiah, who would powerfully deliver God’s people. Here Matthew says of Jesus, “This is He, the One we’ve waited for!”

Next, continuing in verse 1, we learn of Jesus’ royal identity: **He is the son of David.**

When we think about the son of David, we’re reminded of David’s desire to build the temple of the Lord in 2 Samuel 7. Here is God’s response:

When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Sam 7:12–13)

The Lord informed David that he, David, would not be the one to build the temple, but that his son Solomon would. God made a covenant with

David in the context of this discussion and promised him two primary things.

1. First, David was promised that **a continual seed will endure to the end** (2 Sam 7:13). This was a promise that God would bless Solomon, David's son. However, we know that the promise extends beyond Solomon, because God was not just referring to the next generation—**the throne of this kingdom would be established “forever” (v. 13)**. That word “forever” is repeated over and over in 2 Samuel 7 (vv. 16, 24, 25, 26, and 29). God was telling David that his seed, his family, would endure forever. As readers in the twenty-first century, we should be struck by the fact that a promise given in 2 Samuel 7 is still active today. This promise is literally shaping eternity.
2. The second thing God promised to David was that **an honored son will reign on the throne**. This promise had an immediate reference to Solomon; however, God promised that the throne would be established forever: *“Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever” (2 Sam 7:16)*. The Old Testament had been pointing to a continual seed that would endure and an honored son from the seed of David who would reign on the throne. This is precisely what the prophets spoke of.

Isaiah 9:6–7:

*For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,*

*Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
The dominion will be vast,
and its prosperity will never end.
He will reign on the throne of David
and over his kingdom,
to establish and sustain it
with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.*

Isaiah 11:1–3a,10:

*Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him—
a Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a Spirit of counsel and strength,
a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.
His delight will be in the fear of the LORD*

...

*On that day the root of Jesse
will stand as a banner for the peoples.
The nations will seek Him,
and His resting place will be glorious.*

Jeremiah 23:5–6:

*“The days are coming”—this is the LORD’s declaration—
“when **I will raise up a Righteous Branch of David.**
He will reign wisely as king
and administer justice and righteousness in the land.
In His days Judah will be saved,
and Israel will dwell securely.
This is what He will be named:
Yahweh Our Righteousness.”*

Ezekiel 37:24–25:

My servant David will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them. They will follow My ordinances, and keep My statutes and obey them.

They will live in the land that I gave to My servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They will live in it forever with their children and grandchildren, and My servant David will be their prince forever.

In each of these passages there is an assumption that God's promise is continuing. For instance, in the final passage—Ezekiel 37—the people are in exile, having been ripped away from their home city, Jerusalem. The temple has been destroyed and the people are wondering, “Have God's promises failed?” And while King David was dead at this point, Ezekiel still speaks of David being king. The prophet is picking up on God's promise that through the line of David, God's kingdom would be established forever.

The covenant would be an everlasting covenant (Ezek 37:26).

To a people who for generations had longed for a Messiah from the line of David, Matthew is not just giving a list of names in this genealogy; he's announcing the arrival of the King.

After telling us that Jesus is the Son of David, Matthew then tells us that **He is the son of Abraham (v. 1).**

Once again we're thrust back into the Old Testament, all the way back to Genesis 12.

Here is God's word to Abraham:

*Go out from your land,
your relatives,
and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.
I will make you into a great nation,
I will bless you,
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
I will curse those who treat you with contempt,
and **all the peoples on earth**
will be blessed through you. (Gen 12:1–3)*

Based on this passage, we see the following:

- God will form a covenant people. God would make Israel into a “great nation.”
- God will give them a promised inheritance on earth.
This inheritance would become known as **the promised land.**
- God will use them to accomplish a global purpose.
Abraham and those who come from him will be **a blessing to all the families of the earth.**

God's promise to Abraham is reiterated in chapter 15 and then again in chapter 17. In 17:5–6 God says, “Your name will no longer be Abram, but your name will be Abraham, for I will make you the father of many nations. I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings

come from you.” Through Abraham’s line God says that **He will send a King**. Then in verses 15–16 of the same chapter, God says of Sarah, Abraham’s wife, “I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will produce nations; *kings* of peoples will come from her” (emphasis added). Speaking of Abraham’s line again in these verses, God says that **God’s kingdom will one day expand to all people groups**.

This truth is reiterated later, in Genesis 49:10, where Jacob prophesies, “*The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until He whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to Him.*” Again, God is promising a royal line.

God works out His promise to Abraham in Israel’s history and ultimately through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Nothing in history is accidental.

Every detail in the Old Testament, even from the very beginning (Gen 3:15), was pointing to a King who would come. History revolves around a King who would come—a King who now has come! Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, is the center of it all.

YOU ARE NOT AT THE CENTER OF HISTORY. I AM NOT AT THE CENTER OF HISTORY. OUR GENERATION IS NOT AT THE

CENTER OF HISTORY. THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS NOT AT THE CENTER OF HISTORY. BILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE COME AND BILLIONS HAVE GONE; EMPIRES HAVE COME AND EMPIRES HAVE GONE; COUNTRIES, NATIONS, KINGS, QUEENS, PRESIDENTS, DICTATORS, AND RULERS HAVE ALL COME AND GONE. AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL STANDS ONE PERSON: JESUS THE CHRIST. THIS IS THE BOLD CLAIM OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL. AND IF THIS JESUS IS THE KING OF ALL HISTORY, THEN IT FOLLOWS THAT HE SHOULD BE THE KING OF YOUR LIFE. WHEN YOU REALIZE HIS RULE AND SUBMIT TO HIS REIGN, IT CHANGES EVERYTHING ABOUT HOW YOU LIVE. EVERYTHING.

Overview of the Kingdom

In light of what we've seen above from Matthew's opening words and the promises of the Old Testament, **God's kingdom** figures prominently in this first Gospel.

Consider how a number of concepts fit within this **kingdom framework**:

- **Gospel:** The message of the kingdom. The central message in the mouth of Jesus is clear: *“Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!”* (Matt 4:17).
- **Disciples:** The citizens of the kingdom. In Matthew 5–7, which we refer to as The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins by telling us what kingdom citizens are like.
- **Discipleship:** The demands of the kingdom. Following this King is costly, for He says in Matthew 10, *“Anyone finding his life will lose it, and anyone losing his life because of Me will find it”* (v. 39).
- **Church:** The outpost of the kingdom. Matthew is the only Gospel writer who actually uses the word for *church—ekklesia*. We’re going to see that Jesus has designed His people under His rule to be a demonstration, a living picture, of the kingdom of God at work. Do you want to see what people look like who live under the rule and reign of King Jesus? Look at the church, Matthew says.
- **Mission:** The spread of the kingdom. The church proclaims the gospel of the kingdom, and not even the gates of hell will be able to stop it (Matt 16:18).

- **Demons:** The enemies of the kingdom. The Gospel of Matthew makes very clear that the Devil and all his minions are absolutely opposed to this King and everyone and everything in His kingdom, including you and me. But, Satan's power is limited and his doom is assured.
- **Hope:** The coming of the kingdom. In the Gospel of Matthew we get a dual picture of the coming of God's kingdom.
 - A. On the one hand, the kingdom is a present reality. The great announcement in the book of Matthew is that the King is here! Jesus Christ has broken into a dark and hurting world, bringing healing and forgiveness. *He binds up the brokenhearted, He gives rest to the weary, He gives sight to the blind, and He gives life to the dead.*
 - B. On the other hand, Matthew will also show us that the kingdom is a future realization. Jesus dies on the cross, rises from the grave, and before departing from His disciples, He promises to return. The King is coming back. At His first coming, Jesus came as a crying baby. At His second coming, Jesus will come as the crowned King.

Salvation through the King

We've seen already that Matthew's genealogy is so much more than a list of names or simply a historical record for first-century Jewish readers. It presents Jesus Christ as the climactic fulfillment of God's promises of a coming King and His kingdom. Also included in this genealogy

is a picture of how God saves. Matthew tells us at least two things in this opening section about the nature of God's salvation.

First, God saves only by His sovereign grace.

The list of names in verses 1–17 is full of evil kings and sinful men and women, a description that includes Abraham and David as well. Abraham was a polygamist patriarch who lied about his wife twice. David was an adulterous murderer. And the list goes on and on. It's amazing to think that the great, great, great, great, great grandparents of Jesus hated God and were leading other people to hate Him too.

Clearly, then,
Jesus came not because of Israel's righteousness, but in spite of Israel's sinfulness.

Throughout Scripture we see the sinful responsibility of man.

Evil kings and evil men lived their lives in rebellion against God, and they were responsible for their sin. Nevertheless, God was working in and through these people.

In the midst of man's sinfulness,

we also see the supreme will of God.

At no point were any of the men and women mentioned in this genealogy outside of the sovereign control of God. Yes, *they* were choosing to disobey God, and *they* were responsible for that. At the same time, God was ordaining all of this to bring about the birth of His Son.

In addition to the men mentioned earlier, the list of sinful women on Matthew's list is equally stunning. The message is clear:

Jesus came for (and through) the morally outcast.

So why is this theme of sexual immorality so prominent in this genealogy, and why are *these* people included in the line that leads to Christ? For the same reason *your* name is included in the line that leads *from* Christ—solely because of the sovereign grace of God. Praise be to God that He delights in saving sinful, immoral outcasts! This theme of sovereign grace even applies to Matthew, the author of this Gospel. Matthew was a tax collector, a Jew who made his living by cheating other Jewish people. When Jesus called Matthew to follow Him, the only people Matthew knew to invite to his house for a party were moral reprobates (9:10–13)! Matthew knew he was the least likely person to be writing this Gospel, which is fitting for a book that announces good news. God saves not based on any merit in us, but totally on sovereign mercy in Him. If He didn't save like that, we would all be damned.

Matthew shows us repeatedly that Jesus fulfills God's promise to bless His chosen people. This helps explain why his Gospel is loaded with Old Testament references.

Jesus came to bring salvation to the people of Israel, a point Matthew makes clear (15:24). But that wasn't all: Just as God promised to bless His chosen people Israel for the sake of *all* peoples, so Jesus accomplishes God's purpose to bless all peoples.

Jesus would pour His life into twelve Jewish disciples, and then He would tell them, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (28:19). The end will not come, Jesus says, until the "good news of the kingdom" is "proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations" (24:14).

Matthew's Gospel teaches us that an emphasis on missions is not just a made-up program that man has come up with; it's all over the Bible.

Missions have been the purpose of God from the very beginning of history, with His saving acts culminating in the person and work of Christ.

Now all followers of Christ are on a global mission to make this King known among all nations, to spread the gospel of this kingdom at home and among every people group on the planet.

At the end of the day, how does God save us? Solely by His sovereign grace. Why does God save us? Ultimately for His global purpose. This is at the heart of Matthew's genealogy.

The question then becomes how we will respond.

The Bottom Line

As we move forward in the book of Matthew, we are going to see three distinct groups of people:

(1) Religious leaders who deny Jesus,

(2) Crowds of people who follow Jesus as long as He gives them what they want and attracts their interest (but who ultimately and eternally walk away), and

(3) the very small group of disciples who are going to follow Jesus, learn from Him, and eventually lose their lives for Him.

As you read Matthew's Gospel,

you must decide which group you are in.

Like the leaders, will you completely reject Jesus?

We are going to see attacks on Jesus' character and attacks on Jesus' claims throughout this book by people who pridefully choose to deny that Jesus is King.

Like the crowds, will you casually observe Jesus?

This is the place where many church attenders, probably even many church members, find themselves today.

CONTENT TO OBSERVE JESUS, TO GIVE HIM TOKEN ALLEGIANCE, THEY ADD HIM AS A PART OF THEIR LIFE. THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO DO GOOD THINGS AND ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE CHURCH IN DIFFERENT WAYS. THEY ARE, IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER, ASSOCIATED WITH JESUS.

And one day they will say, *"Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?"* (7:22).

And Jesus will say to them, *"I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!"* (7:23).

Like disciples, will you unconditionally follow Jesus?

In a day when nominal Christianity and lazy discipleship are rampant in America and in many places around the world, will you rise up and say to Jesus,

“You are King, and because You are King, there are no conditions on my obedience to You. I will follow You wherever You lead me, I will give You whatever You ask of me. I will abandon all I have and all I am because You are King and You are worthy of nothing less”?

This is the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus the Christ.

How will you respond?

Reflect and Discuss

1. What is Matthew’s overall purpose in writing this Gospel?
2. How is it possible for the four Gospel writers to each have a purpose in mind yet write accurate historical accounts?
3. How is Matthew’s Gospel different from a New Testament letter?
4. Which person in the genealogy do you most resonate with, and why?
5. What is the significance of the term “Christ”?
6. What did the Old Testament prophets promise the Jewish “Messiah” would be, and how is He also good news for the Gentiles?
7. How did morally outcast people figure in to Jesus’ coming?
8. In what way does this Gospel have a global purpose?
9. Explain how the kingdom has arrived *and* is yet to arrive.
10. How should true disciples respond to Jesus as a result of Matthew’s Gospel?²

² David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in Matthew*](#), ed. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 3–16.

TGC – The Gospel Coalition

5 Reasons Matthew Begins with a Genealogy

JANUARY 1, 2020 | [Patrick Schreiner](#)

The Bible contains 66 books by at least 40 different authors, is written in three different languages, describing three different continents, all written over a period of at least 1,500 years. It has hundreds of characters and numerous genres. Sometimes it's narrative; other times you have beasts flying around with a bunch of different eyes; and then there are love poems.

We don't read many books this complex anymore. So it seems a compelling and summative introduction would be in order for the New Testament. But *modern readers are confused by Matthew's introduction*.

On his first page, Matthew begins speaking about Jesus with a genealogy. We might be tempted to let our eyes skim down and get to the real action. But **Matthew begins this way intentionally. In many ways, this is the most fitting and compelling introduction to the New Testament imaginable.**

Here are **five reasons Matthew's genealogy is the introduction of introductions.**

1. Matthew's Genealogy Summarizes the Story of the Bible

The first 16 words in English (eight in Greek) summarize the entire story of the Bible so far. Do you want to know how a disciple of Jesus shortened the Old Testament story? Look no further than Matthew 1:1. The story of the Bible can be understood by looking to key characters who carry the story along: Adam, Abraham, David, and Jesus.

Adam is not explicitly named, but his story is contained in words “the book of the genealogy,” which could also be translated “the book of Genesis.” The explicit phrase (βίβλος γενέσεως) occurs in the Greek Old Testament in only two places, Genesis 2:4 and 5:1. Genesis 2:4 is about the origin of heaven and earth (place), while Genesis 5:1 concerns the origin of Adam and Eve (people).

Though the Old Testament can be a confusing literary piece, Matthew tells us to look at these key people and the promises given to them to help structure how we read the entire story. From the beginning, God was in the business of establishing his people in his place by his power. It began with Adam and Eve, and it continued in the covenants given to Abraham and David. These are finally fulfilled in Jesus: the Davidic king who will establish Israel's kingdom.

Though the Old Testament can be confusing as a literary document, Matthew tells us to look at these key people—and the promises given to them—to help frame how we read the entire story. Matthew's first words summarize the whole storyline so far.

2. Matthew's Genealogy Reminds Us This Is a True Story

A list of names. It's an odd way to begin. But the list shows readers this isn't a fairytale, but a true story. The New Testament doesn't begin with “once upon a time,” but with a family tree. Matthew is drawing on a rich tradition of genealogical texts, for genealogies are important in the Tanak (an acronym for the Hebrew Bible's three main divisions: Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim).

Genesis, the first book of the Tanak, is structured around ten genealogies. Chronicles, the last book of the Tanak, begins with nine. The formal similarities between Genesis and Chronicles are [hard to miss](#). Both are virtually the only books in the Hebrew Bible filled with genealogies. Chronicles commences with Adam and moves rapidly through human history until arriving at David. Genesis also begins with Adam, but moves quickly until Abraham comes on the scene. Most of the book of Genesis follows Abraham's descendants.

So Matthew seems to have detected the “offspring” theme not only in the specific words but also in the specific genre that bookends the Jewish canon. The Jewish hopes centered around a genealogy, because they were promised a child from the family of Israel. Matthew shows us his story is no myth—this is the narrative of the historical Jesus Christ, who has a family lineage and was born in the line of David.

3. Matthew's Genealogy Highlights Jesus's Inclusive Family

Matthew's genealogy also demonstrates that ancient texts deal with modern issues. Notice, for example, the women Matthew includes. In a patriarchal society, it's surprising to include females at all. Even so, one might expect to see the matriarchs of the faith: Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, or Leah. But instead, Matthew includes less likely females who are (1) Gentiles, (2) have rough sexual pasts, (3) but are tenacious in their loyalty to Yahweh.

Though it's only explicit that Rahab and Ruth are non-Israelites, a good case can also be made for Tamar and Bathsheba. Bathsheba is listed as “the wife of Uriah” (1:6), probably because it makes her Gentile status explicit—Uriah was a Hittite (2 Sam. 11:3, 6). Tamar is also not explicitly identified as a Gentile in the Old Testament, but a Jewish tradition asserts she was a Syrian proselyte. Thus, all the evidence taken together—Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites, Ruth a Moabite, and Bathsheba a Hittite's wife. Jesus's family includes all nations.

Readers might be surprised to discover that an ancient genealogy has quite a bit to say to a #MeToo and #ChurchToo generation.

Second, Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba have sexual histories. Not only are they Gentiles, but their past is also overcast with shame and abuse. Each was taken advantage of sexually. Tamar is shunned by Judah, who imposes on her in a moment of sin. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute, and Bathsheba was

taken advantage of sexually by King David. Readers might be surprised to discover that an ancient genealogy has quite a bit to say to a #MeToo and #ChurchToo generation.

Finally, three of these women (Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth) are characterized by tenacious fidelity. Tamar is loyal to her family; Rahab is loyal to the Yahweh despite not being a part of the nation; Ruth forsakes her idols and follows Naomi's God. Jesus welcomes those who are fiercely loyal to him.

4. Matthew's Genealogy Shows Us God Is Faithful

Matthew's genealogy isn't primarily about the people in the genealogy, but about God. He carries along this family line despite their failures. He has been and will be faithful to his promises. One of God's most significant promises was to King David (2 Sam. 7)—and even the form of the genealogy points to David's importance.

Clearly this is a theological retelling, for Matthew omits many generations. His emphasis on 14 is purposeful and an example of gematria—when a set of letters' numerical value makes a theological point. In Hebrew, *David* consists of three letters and has the numeric value of fourteen (*dalet* [4] + *waw* [6] + *dalet* [4]).

The periods are then divided to emphasize both the kings and the success or failure of the kingdom. This fits Matthew's theological retelling of the Old Testament story in the triadic structure of three. The name *David* is also placed at the 14th and 15th spot in the genealogy, putting him at the pivot of the list (1:6). He is also named at the beginning and the end (1:1, 17).

If God has pledged himself to you, he isn't letting you go, no matter what you do. Israel couldn't out-sin the promises of God—and neither can you.

From the outset, Matthew wants readers to see Jesus through the person of David. The genealogy—and Matthew's entire Gospel, for that matter—is about how Jesus is David's son.

God made a binding promise to David concerning one of his sons; the genealogy shows how he's fulfilled it. Human promises are flawed, but when God promises something, we can take it to the bank. If he has pledged himself to you, he isn't letting you go, no matter what you do. Israel couldn't out-sin the promises of God—and neither can you.

5. Matthew's Genealogy Displays Jesus as Our Only Hope

Matthew speaks into the darkness. There have been 400 years of silence, and so the redemptive-historical context is ongoing exile. Indeed, the one "event" Matthew names outside of Jesus's birth is the exile (1:11–12), which acts as a hinge for the genealogical structure and provides perspective for the Gospel as a whole. Matthew views the plot of Israel under the banner of exile and return. The king therefore comes to rescue Israel from exile; he has been sent for her lost sheep. This exile stretches farther back than the Babylonian exile, though: it begins with Adam (Gen. 3).

But though God's people are in exile, hope bursts through the shadows. A light has dawned because a child has come. While Genesis 5 is a picture of genealogical death, the ending of Matthew's βίβλος γενέσεως is resurrection life. A child has been born who will never perish.

Matthew's genealogy has a past, a present, and future. In Jesus Christ we're now brought into this family; Abraham and David become our fathers. It becomes our genealogy, our family tree. Though this world seeks historical rooting and future life in various ways, only one child establishes the new creation. Jesus is the point of this genealogy, for Jesus is the point of the Bible.

Editors' note:

This is part of TGC's 2020 [Read the Bible](#) initiative, encouraging Christians and churches to read together through God's Word in a year.

GotQuestions.org

What is the relevance of the genealogies in the Bible?

The Bible contains multiple genealogical records. Many of us either skim these sections or skip them altogether, finding them largely irrelevant and perhaps even boring.

However, they are part of Scripture, and, [since all Scripture is God-breathed \(2 Timothy 3:16\)](#), they must bear some significance. There must be something we can learn from these lists.

First, the genealogies help substantiate the Bible's historical accuracy. These lists confirm the physical existence of the characters in the Bible. By knowing family histories, we understand that the Bible is far from a mere story or a parable for how we should live our lives. It is authentic, historical truth. An actual man named Adam had actual descendants (and, therefore, his actual sin has actual consequences).

The genealogies also confirm prophecy. The Messiah was prophesied to come from the line of David ([Isaiah 11:1](#)). By recording His lineage in Scripture, God confirms that Jesus was descended from David (see [Matthew 1:1-17](#) and [Luke 3:23-38](#)). The genealogy is yet another attestation of Jesus Christ's fulfillment of the Old

Testament prophecies.

The lists also demonstrate the detail-oriented nature of God and His interest in individuals. God did not see Israel vaguely, as a nebulous group of people; He saw with specificity, with precision and detail. **There is nothing detached**

about the genealogies. They show a God involved. The inspired Word mentions people by name. Real people, with real histories and real futures. God cares about each person and the details of his or her life ([Matthew 10:27-31](#); [Psalm 139](#)).

Finally, we can learn from various people listed in the genealogies. Some of the lists contain narrative portions that give us glimpses into the lives of the people. For instance, the [prayer of Jabez](#) is found within a genealogy ([1 Chronicles 4:9-10](#)). From this, we learn about God's character and the nature of prayer. Other genealogies reveal that [Ruth](#) and [Rahab](#) are in the Messianic line ([Ruth 4:21-22](#); [Matthew 1:5](#)). We see that God values the lives of these individuals, even though they were Gentiles and not part of His covenant people.

While genealogies may at first glance appear irrelevant, they hold an important place in Scripture.

Genealogies bolster the historicity of Scripture, confirm prophecy, and

provide insight into the character of God and the lives of His people.

[God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ by Stephen Wellum](#)

Who are the descendants of Ishmael?

[Ishmael](#) was a son of Abraham, born of Sarah's maidservant Hagar in an attempt to bring into the world the son God had promised to [Abraham and Sarah](#). Later, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah, and Hagar and Ishmael were driven away because of Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac ([Genesis 21:9–10, 14](#)). But God still had plans for Ishmael.

God promised [Hagar](#) that Ishmael, as a son of Abraham, would become a great nation ([Genesis 21:17–18](#)). The fulfillment is recorded in [Genesis 25:12–18](#)—Ishmael had twelve sons who became great rulers and eventually a nation of people. That came about in this way: Hagar, who was Egyptian herself, found a wife from Egypt for her son, and Ishmael settled in the desert of Paran ([Genesis 21:21](#)). Ishmael's descendants "settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt as you go toward Ashur" ([Genesis 25:18](#)). The Bible lists Ishmael's sons as Nebaioth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah (verses 13–15).

The area of Havilah where Ishmael's descendants lived is in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula; Shur is a wilderness area between Beersheba in the Negev Desert and Egypt. [Isaiah 60:7](#) mentions the descendants of Nebaioth and Kedar as those who raise flocks. The descendants of Ishmael became known as Arabs, which basically means "nomads." From the beginning, the descendants of Ishmael were a warlike people, as "they lived in hostility toward all the tribes related to them" ([Genesis 25:18](#)). This fulfilled God's earlier word that Ishmael would be "a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers" ([Genesis 16:12](#)).

Later, others settled in the Arabian Peninsula as well, including the descendants of [Keturah's](#) sons ([1 Chronicles 1:32–33](#)) and some of [Esau's](#) descendants, among them the Amalekites ([Genesis 36:12](#)).

There is a popular theory common among Muslims and some Christians that Arabian Muslims are direct descendants of Ishmael. In fact, Muhammad was a major proponent of this idea, claiming to be a descendant of Ishmael according to the Quran.

There is most likely some truth in this theory. According to missionary and author Kenneth Fleming, "what we know for certain seems to support the theory that the Ishmaelites are, at the very least, a major element in the Arab genetic line. Old records clearly link the north Arabians with Ishmael's descendants" ("Ishmael and the Bible," *Emmaus Journal* 13:2, 2004). But it's unlikely that all of those in Arabia are descendants of Ishmael, as the descendants of Keturah and the children of Esau also lived in the Arabian Peninsula.

Although some modern Arabians could trace their lineage back to Ishmael, not all Arabians are descendants of Ishmael as Muslims try to claim. We know from the Bible that God made Ishmael into a great nation. His descendants can share in the blessings of Abraham by putting their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Who were the Ishmaelites?

Simply put, the Ishmaelites were the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abram by his wife's handmaiden, Hagar ([Genesis 16:1–12](#)). From small beginnings, the Ishmaelites became a numerous and mighty people.

The origin of the Ishmaelites was fraught with difficulty. When Sarai was unable to produce a child with Abram, she followed the common cultural practice and gave Hagar to him, and Hagar conceived his child. But **Sarai later became jealous**

and mistreated Hagar, who fled from her mistress into the wilderness. There Hagar met the Angel of the Lord who pronounced the first of three prophecies concerning the child she was bearing.

She would give birth to a son, and his descendants would multiply greatly. It was at this time that God told Hagar to name him Ishmael, which means "God hears" ([Genesis 16:10–11](#)).

In the wilderness the Angel of the Lord also predicted that Ishmael—and therefore the Ishmaelites—would be stubborn, untamable, and warlike: "He will be a wild donkey of a man; / his hand will be against everyone / and everyone's hand against him, / and he will live in hostility / toward all his brothers" (Genesis 16:12).

After hearing the angel's words, Hagar returned to her mistress and eventually gave birth to Ishmael.

Later, God changed the names of Sarai and Abram to Sarah and Abraham and established a covenant with Abraham's son Isaac.

But Ishmael also had a promise from God: he would be blessed, too, and he would be the father of a great nation, beginning with twelve sons, the first of the Ishmaelites ([Genesis 17:20](#)).

The names of the twelve are listed in [Genesis 25:12–16](#); it is from the Ishmaelites that the Arab nations descended.

Ishmael was about fourteen years old when Isaac was born. A year or a few later, when Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking her son. Sarah asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away, **and God told Abraham to comply.**

The Angel of God met Hagar and her son once again and predicted for the third time that Ishmael would father a great nation ([Genesis 21:18](#)).

Later in Israel's history, the **Ishmaelites** **were also called Midianites** (although not all Midianites were descendants of Ishmael), and they engaged in the buying and selling of slaves ([Genesis 37:28](#); [39:1](#)). [Judges 8:24](#) tells us that it was a custom for the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.

During the reign of King David, the
Ishmaelites joined a confederacy
against God and against His
people, Israel (**Psalm 83:5–6**).

Their goal was to “destroy them as a nation, / so that Israel’s name is remembered no more” (verse 4).

Considering the current turmoil in the Middle East and the hatred often directed against Israel by her neighbors, the prophecies concerning the descendants of Ishmael continue to prove true.

Islamic antichrist? Will the antichrist
be a Muslim?

With the increasing tensions in the Middle East in

recent years, the statements by Shiite Muslim extremists regarding the Twelfth Imam are causing many people to ask how Muslim prophecy relates to Bible prophecy. Specifically, many ask if an Islamic / Muslim antichrist is a probability. To answer, we must first find out who the Twelfth Imam is and what he is expected to do for Islam. Second, we must examine the statements by Shiite Muslims in relation to those hopes, and, third, we need to look to the Bible to shed light on the whole issue.

Within the Shiite branch of Islam, there have been twelve imams, or spiritual leaders appointed by Allah. These began with Imam Ali, cousin to Muhammad, who claimed prophetic succession after Muhammad's death. Around AD 868, the Twelfth Imam, Abu al-Qasim Muhammad (or Muhammad al Mahdi), was born to the Eleventh Imam. Because his father was under intense persecution, the Mahdi was sent into hiding. About the age of 6, when his father was killed, he briefly came out of hiding but then disappeared again. It is said that the Mahdi has been hiding in caves ever since and will supernaturally return just before the day of judgment to eradicate all tyranny and oppression, bringing harmony and peace to the earth.

he is the savior of the world in Shiite theology.
According to one writer, Imam Mahdi will combine the
dignity of Moses, the grace of Jesus, and the patience
of Job in one perfect person.

The predictions about the Twelfth Imam have a striking similarity to Bible prophecies of the end times. According to Islamic prophecy, the Mahdi's return will be preceded by a number of events during three years of horrendous world chaos, and he will rule over the Arabs and the world for seven years. His appearance will be accompanied by two resurrections, one of the wicked and one of the righteous. According to Shiite teachings, Jesus will accept the Mahdi's leadership, and the two great branches of Abraham's family will be reunited forever.

The former President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is a deeply committed Shiite and claims that he is to personally prepare the world for the coming Mahdi.

In order for the world to be saved, it must be in a state of chaos and subjugation, and Ahmadinejad feels

he was directed by Allah to pave the way for that.

Ahmadinejad has repeatedly made statements about destroying the enemies of Islam.

The Iranian President and his cabinet have supposedly signed a contract with al Mahdi in which they pledge themselves to his work. When asked directly by ABC reporter Ann Curry in September 2009 about his apocalyptic statements,

Ahmadinejad said, *"Imam ... will come with logic, with culture, with science. He will come so that there is no more war. No more enmity, hatred. No more conflict. He will call on everyone to enter a brotherly love. Of course, he will return with Jesus Christ. The two will come back together. And working together, they would fill this world with love."*

What does all this have to do with the Antichrist, the powerful "man of sin" in the end times?

According to [Revelation 6:2](#) and [Daniel 9:27](#), the Antichrist will pose as a man of peace, ready to set the world right. It is easy to see how the Antichrist, promising a false peace, could be welcomed by a world hungry for a ceasefire and security. Some may see him as the Mahdi, and others may

see him as the Messiah. In fact, Jesus warned that the Antichrist would mimic the true Messiah and be accepted by those who rejected Christ (John 5:43).

There are **a few other parallels between the Bible and Shiite theology** that we should note.

1. **First**, the Bible says that the tribulation will last for seven years, and Islam claims that the Twelfth Imam will rule the world for the same amount of time.
2. **Second**, Muslims anticipate three years of chaos before the revealing of the Twelfth Imam, and the Bible speaks of three and a half years of tribulation before the Antichrist reveals his true nature by desecrating the Jewish temple.
3. **Third**, the Bible describes the Antichrist as a deceiver who claims to bring peace but who actually brings widespread war; the expectation of the Twelfth Imam is that he will bring peace through massive war with the rest of the world.

Will the Antichrist be a Muslim? Only God knows. Are there connections between Islamic eschatology and Christian eschatology? **There certainly seem to**

be direct correlations, though they are like reading the descriptions of a great battle, first from the perspective of the loser trying to save face, and then from the perspective of the victor. Of course, prophecies of the Twelfth Imam should not be considered equal to biblical prophecies. Only the Bible is the inspired Word of God; it's possible to interpret some elements of Islamic eschatology in a way that agrees with Daniel and Revelation, but that does not lend any credence to the rest of Shiite theology.

Until we see the fulfillment of these things, we need to heed the words of 1 John 4:1–4,

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

John MacArthur:

In Islamic eschatology, there are three great signs of the end of history; . . . and each of them is a man. . . . the first man that will come in the end of history is the Mahdi . . . sometimes he's called the Twelfth Imam. . . . Their writings say the Mahdi will come and make - at first - a peace agreement with the Jews and the West for seven years; the reign of Mahdi lasts seven years, in which he establishes Islam on the earth. Their holy writings say this: the Mahdi will come riding on a white horse - and it even says in their writings, "As it says in Revelation [6:1](#) and 2." . . . the Mahdi will be a messianic figure. He will be a descendant of Mohammed. He will be an unparalleled, unequaled leader. He will come out of a crisis of turmoil. He will take control of the world. He will establish a new world order. He will destroy all who resist him. He will invade many nations. He will make a seven-year peace treaty with the Jews. He will conquer Israel and massacre the Jews. He will establish Islamic world headquarters at Jerusalem. He will rule for seven years, establish Islam as the only religion. He will come on a white horse with supernatural power. He will be loved by all people on earth. If that sounds familiar, that is a precise description of the biblical Antichrist – absolutely, step-by-step-by-step-by-step - the Bible's Antichrist is their Mahdi. . . . the description of the Mahdi is exactly the description of

the biblical Antichrist, the beast of Revelation [13](#);
and you go into any kind of a study of that, and you
will find that [all the details match up perfectly.](#)

[The Center for FAITH & CULTURE:](#)

5 Reasons You Should Read the Bible's Genealogies

DAVID W. JONES | OCTOBER 13, 2020

One of the unique aspects of the Bible are the many lengthy genealogical lists it contains. Apart from DNA researchers and ancestry enthusiasts, most contemporary believers are likely not accustomed to reading such long lists. Indeed, the way Christians have viewed biblical genealogies has changed over time. In the early church, believers focused upon genealogies so much that Paul had to warn his readers twice (!) not to “give heed to . . . endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith (1 Tim. 1:4; cf. Titus 3:9). In the modern

church, however, many—if not most—believers who are reading Scripture are prone to skip over the genealogical lists in the Bible, as they seem to have little practical relevance to Christian living.

God is pleased to use imperfect people, for it highlights His glory.

Some of the more important genealogies in the Old Testament are given at Gen. 5:1–32, Genesis 10, Ruth 4:18–22 and 1 Chronicles 1–10. In the New Testament, the two most important genealogies are recorded at Matt. 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–28. *These genealogies in the Gospels are essential, for they reveal the family lineage of Christ.*

Believing that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16), many contemporary Christians sense that the biblical genealogies are important; nevertheless, it is often difficult to understand how these ancient lists of hard-to-pronounce names apply to the church. Yet, *upon consideration of the biblical genealogies—especially those that record the lineage of Jesus in Matt. 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–28—we can make the following five observations that show the importance of genealogies.*

- 1. Biblical genealogies show that God is working in history.** Given the fallenness of the world, it is sometimes tempting to believe that the world is out of control. Yet, **Jesus’ genealogy reveals that God was always at work,**

sometimes through otherwise unknown people, to bring about the birth of Jesus in an unremarkable small town in Palestine. The fact that we often cannot detect God's hand never means that He is not at work.

2. Biblical genealogies show that God can use imperfect people for His

purposes. *Christ's lineage names five women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary—all of whom were involved in sexual scandals for different reasons.* Furthermore, **in Jesus' genealogy we read the names of evil kings whom God used, including Amon and Manasseh. God is pleased to use imperfect people, for it highlights His glory.**

3. Biblical genealogies show God's

grace. The fact that God uses imperfect people to accomplish His purposes reminds us that not only are God's purposes not contingent upon mankind, but also God's grace extends to mankind. Just as God was patient with and forgave imperfect people in the past, so is God longsuffering toward us and full of grace. Note, too, that **the Gentiles in Jesus' lineage hint at the universality of the gospel.**

4. Biblical genealogies show that God cares about families.

Just as we care about our own families, so **God cares about His family**. Observe that **the Bible is full of family language, such as God adopting believers, God calling His children sons and daughters, and God inviting those in relationship with Him to call Him Father.**

Human families are the foundation of society, and God's family is the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

5. Biblical genealogies show that God fulfills His promises.

Note that the genealogies in Matt. 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–28 differ, for Matthew begins with Abraham and follows Joseph's line through one of David's sons, while Luke starts with Adam and follows Mary's line through another of David's sons. Yet, **both genealogical lists show that Jesus was the fulfillment of promises God made to David in 2 Samuel 7:1–17.**

So, for these five reasons, and surely for others, biblical genealogies ought not be viewed as just a curiosity in Scripture, but as essential revelation in the Word of God. **In reading through the account of the lineage of Christ in the Gospels we can locate Him in history. More importantly, however, reading through and learning about Jesus' genealogy can help us to understand our own history, for in addition to being our Savior, the Bible tells us that we have been adopted into God's family (cf. Eph. 1:5), Christ is our brother (cf. Heb. 2:11), and Jesus is our husband (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2).** In fact,

...the book of life that will be read at Christ's second coming, contains a much longer

genealogical list—including the names of all believers

—which will prove that those who have taken on the name of Christ are members of God’s family.

David W. Jones

Dr. Jones is a Professor of Christian Ethics and serves as the Associate Dean of Theological Studies and Director of the Th.M. Program at Southeastern Seminary. He is the author of many books, including *Every Good Thing*, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* and is the co-author of *Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. He comments on the Bible over at redeemedmind.com.

Ligonier Ministries:

MAY 23, 2022

Does the Bible Contain Contradicting Genealogies of Jesus?

By Gregory R. Lanier

Several times the New Testament declares Jesus to be the heir of King David and, thus, the descendant of Abraham (e.g., [John 7:42](#); [Rom. 1:3](#); [2 Tim. 2:8](#); [Rev. 5:5](#)). But only twice do we get a lengthy genealogy tracing the steps down to Jesus: [Matthew 1:1–17](#) and [Luke 3:23–38](#).

Without ancestry.com and 23andme.com, it is not surprising that these two genealogies differ. Some differences are mere spelling variations. But sometimes they involve whole sections of names. It may be surprising to learn that the genealogies in Matthew and Luke align for only approximately seventeen names out of one hundred. But do such differences mean that the genealogies contradict each other? Are there errors, or **can the genealogies be reconciled?**

Skeptics have attacked Scripture on this point since the AD 200s (e.g., Porphyry and Julian the Apostate), and theologians have responded with various solutions (e.g., Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Ambrose, and Augustine). No comprehensive solution has won the day, but that does not mean there is none. It just means we must keep working at it. To that end, **keep in mind four things when navigating the genealogies.**

Intention of the Authors

A genealogy is a compact narrative. The names bring with them the stories. If so, then both Matthew and Luke have authorial freedom in how to tell the genealogical story:

- Matthew uses descending order ending with Jesus (A "begat" B), while Luke uses ascending order starting from Jesus (B "son of" A).
- Matthew selects Abraham as the starting point, while Luke starts back at Adam.
- Matthew places his genealogy at the beginning (Matt. 1), while Luke places it after Jesus' baptism (Luke 3).

- Matthew organizes the names in a 14/14/14 scheme (Matt. 1:17), while Luke may be adopting a subtle 11x7 scheme.

These choices are not contradictions. They simply reflect how the two evangelists have different goals. **Matthew**, for instance, **stresses the Abraham–David–Jesus linkage** (Matt. 1:1), while Luke stresses Jesus as “son of God” via Adam (Luke 3:38).

Lineal Principle: Royal or Blood Line

A major choice when compiling a genealogy in antiquity is whether to offer the legal/royal lineage or the actual birth/blood lineage. The two are not the same: the legal heir may not reflect physical birth order (illustrated by Julius Caesar’s notoriously complex genealogy).

These choices are not contradictions. They simply reflect how the two evangelists have different goals.

The most common theory is that Matthew on the whole offers the royal lineage, while Luke may largely trace actual birth descent. A telltale sign is this:

- Matthew 1:6–12 David → Solomon → . . . Shealtiel
- Luke 3:27–31 David → Nathan → . . . Shealtiel

Nathan was the third son of David (2 Sam. 5:14) and older brother of Solomon, but the throne passed to the latter. Jesus, then, would have blood ties to David via Nathan and legal ties via Solomon. Adding further complexity, birth descent could be traced through the father or mother, though the former was more common.

Adoption Practices

Extending the prior point, it was not uncommon, [even among Jews], for a father to adopt someone who was not his birth son to be legal heir. Such fusing of lineages via adoption may help explain other complexities:

- [Matthew 1:12](#) Jeconiah → Shealtiel → Zerubbabel
- [Luke 3:27](#) Neri → Shealtiel → Zerubbabel

God's curse of Jeconiah involved Jeconiah's offspring not receiving the throne ([Jer. 22:30](#)). Perhaps Neri was the biological father of Shealtiel, who was then—via adoption—grafted into the royal line of Jeconiah.

Compression

Lastly, the compiler of a genealogy may choose to skip generations, just as one could summarize, "Prince William is heir of Elizabeth I," omitting several steps in between.

[Matthew 1:8](#) compresses the genealogy from Joram to Uzziah (skipping Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah). Compression may also help explain why the genealogy of [Matthew 1:12–16](#) from Zerubbabel to Jesus is so much shorter (nine names) than [Luke 3:23–27](#) (nineteen names).

Putting it Together

Let's apply some of these principles to a final difference in the genealogies:

- [Matthew 1:15–16](#) Matthan → Jacob → Joseph → Jesus
- [Luke 3:23–24](#) Matthat → Heli → Joseph → Jesus

From a human perspective, who was Jesus' grandfather?

One option is that Matthan/t (if the same person) had two sons, Jacob and Heli. One of them had Joseph as a son, but the other adopted him upon his birth father's death.

Another option is that Jacob was Joseph's father, but Heli was Mary's father (implying that Matthan and Matthat are not the same person). Heli is listed by Luke as the closest physical male ancestor of Jesus and/or the adoptive father of Joseph (if, say, Heli had no male offspring).

There are other options, but these two illustrate the possibilities.

So What?

It can be intimidating to try to wrap our heads around the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. We should not ignore the differences. But we also should avoid the trap of automatically assuming that such differences are unsolvable contradictions or errors. **With various tools or principles in place, plausible explanations are out there.**

But amid the effort of reconciling the genealogies, let us not lose sight of what they both teach: Jesus Christ is the miraculously conceived son of a virgin yet is also—through Israel's winding history—heir of the kingdom of David and the promises of Abraham.

TheBIBLEsays.COM

Genesis 17:18-20 meaning

Abraham presumes God meant that His promises to bless him and his descendants would come through Ishmael. But God says His covenant will be established through a son born to Sarah. His name will be Isaac.

In Genesis chapter 15, Abram suggested that his servant Eliezer would be his heir, now he considers Ishmael as his apparent heir. Ishmael did fit all the criterion to this point, since he was a child from Abraham's own body.

Abraham had bowed in reverential awe, he laughed, then reasoned, and now makes a plea, *"Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"* Abraham cried out to God for Ishmael's sake. He apparently thinks that God has misspoken, and might be offering Him a polite correction.

God assures Abraham that Abraham had heard Him right, *that Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac.* The word "Isaac" in Hebrew is *Yishaq*, which is similar to the Hebrew word translated "laughed" (*Sahaq*) in verse 17. In verse 17 Abraham laughed (*Sahaq*), apparently being amused or being amazed at what God was saying (Judges 16:25, Genesis 18:12-15, 21:3,6).

Therefore, ***God instructs Abraham to name his son Isaac (Yishaq) which means "he laughs."***

Perhaps God was also laughing at the idea He has limitations. Isaac represents the triumph of the power of God over the limitations of nature.

Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Through him, God would bless the nations and keep his covenant and promises to Abraham (Genesis 21:8-10, 25:1-6). **Isaac's birth was a special act of God (Genesis 21:1-7) and his preservation**

as the promised son was just as much a miracle (Genesis 22).

For the fourth time in this chapter, we encounter the term *an everlasting covenant* (v. 7, 8, 13, 19) enduring even for his descendants after him.

God tells Abraham, *as for Ishmael, I have heard you.*

The name Ishmael means “God will hear.”

God indeed “heard” Abraham’s request concerning Ishmael. Although Ishmael is not to be Abraham’s spiritual heir, he receives God’s blessing. God gives four promises to Ishmael.

(1) “I will bless him.”

(2) “will make him fruitful.” Although Ishmael was not the promised son, God kept His promise to make him fruitful. Ishmael will have many descendants.

(3) “He shall become the father of twelve princes.” Just as 12 sons and eventually 12 nations were to come from Isaac’s son Jacob (**Genesis 29:31**), God promises that 12 princes and ultimately 12 tribes would come from Ishmael (**Genesis 25:12-18**). And

(4) ***"I will make him a great nation."*** Gods promises to Ishmael represent a considerable enhancement over the words spoken to Hagar about Ishmael (i.e. **Genesis 16:11-12**). Ishmael will become the father of a great people, but he and his offspring will be outsiders; however, Isaac will assume his father's inheritance.

"great" =

Biblical Text

¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" ¹⁹ But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. ²⁰ "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

The Two Genealogies of the Son of Man (ModernReformation.org)

MONDAY, AUGUST 8TH 2022

In 1930, amid growing tensions within the church over the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, the great Princeton theologian J. Gresham Machen published a short work titled *The Virgin Birth of Christ*. He sought to defend the biblical account of Christ's miraculous birth against those who not only questioned its historicity but denied its importance as a "fundamental" Christian doctrine. Machen worked through the scriptural accounts of Jesus' birth, as recorded in Matthew and Luke, demonstrating their reliability, and rebutting all other theories other than the orthodox position: the account of the virgin birth is historical truth.

Along the way, Machen spends time considering a perennial question that every student of Scripture committed to its historicity must ask: why do Matthew and Luke provide different genealogies of Jesus Christ? The problem is obvious: If one is to believe the birth narratives are true in every respect, then how does one account for these significant differences in Jesus' ancestry? Put another way, **if the genealogical differences are found to be a result of error on the part of either Gospel writer, that puts doubt on the virgin birth, Jesus' divinity, and all other claims made in the Gospel accounts.** My aim in this article, then, is to summarize in what ways these accounts differ, to provide typical explanations for those differences, and to leave readers asking a more satisfying question about the theological significance of these genealogies.

Two Different Accounts

In comparing the genealogies found in Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38, Darrell Bock highlights six ways in which they differ.^[1] They differ in terms of 1) **sequence**: Matthew begins with Abraham and goes forward in time, while Luke begins with Joseph and goes backward in time; 2) **endpoint**: Matthew only goes back to Abraham, Luke goes back to Adam; 3) **detail**: Matthew stops occasionally to explain the significance of certain entries, or to provide extra detail about an individual but Luke never does this; 4) **structure**: Matthew structures his genealogy around three groups of fourteen, Luke's structure is ostensibly eleven groups of seven names each, though he does not explicitly bring attention to this structure the way Matthew does. 5) **women**: Matthew lists four prominent women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and 'the wife of Uriah'), while Luke surprisingly, regarding his emphasis on women throughout Luke-Acts, lists none; and 6) **lineage**: from David to Joseph, Matthew and Luke list completely different names (other than two or possibly three).

Of those differences, only the last one presents any possible problems. Why do the lists diverge so significantly after David, even to the point of recording two different fathers of Joseph (In Matthew, Jacob; in Luke, Heli)? **The easiest solution is to assert, as did those who denied the virgin birth and the inerrancy of Scripture, that these lists are irreconcilable; they simply contain error. For Machen, and all Christians resolutely asserting an inerrant Bible, this answer is unacceptable.** Thankfully, such an assertion is not misplaced as there are better options for explaining these differences.

Let's begin with the end. **Only Luke traces Jesus' genealogy back from Abraham to Adam. His list is (nearly) identical to the genealogies found in Genesis 5:1–32; 11:10–32; and 1 Chronicles 1:1–4, 17–27.**^[2] Since Matthew does not share this portion of the genealogy, this section poses the reader of the Gospels no problems.

Moving to the portions of overlap (from Abraham to David), Matthew and Luke agree except for one instance. In Matthew, Jesus' family line goes Hezron-Ram-Amminadab ([Matt. 1:4](#)), whereas Luke has Hezron-Arni-Admin-Amminadab ([Luke 3:33](#)). Various explanations have been given. It is possible that one of the names in Luke is the same person as Ram in Matthew. It is also possible that the names in Luke are skipped over in Matthew, as in Ruth's genealogy ([Ruth 4:19–20](#)) on which Matthew's is based. Though uncertainty remains about where this specific divergence originated, it also poses little serious problem.

The real divergence in the genealogies begins with David. In Matthew, David's son is Solomon; in Luke, Nathan is listed. From there, the lists diverge, then connect again briefly at Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, diverging again down to Joseph. There are virtually endless explanations as to why this is the case, and unfortunately there is no conclusive evidence to determine exactly which solution should be preferred. There are two explanations, however, that are the most common, both of which could be considered satisfactory by those of us committed to the historical accuracy of the Gospels. **Either Matthew gives Joseph's line and Luke gives Mary's line, or both trace Joseph, Matthew tracing the royal line, and Luke tracing the physical/biological line.**

Matthew gives Joseph's line, Luke gives Mary's line

This first option seems the cleanest. In this explanation, Heli is not Joseph's father, but Mary's. Thus Luke is tracing Mary's biological parents all the way back to Adam, demonstrating how she is the woman who produced the Offspring who would crush the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). The parenthetical statement "as was supposed" is an indicator to readers that Luke intends to give Mary's lineage and

not Joseph's. Further, there is rabbinic tradition that lists a "Miriam" whose father is Heli. Many believe this Miriam/Mary to be Mary, mother of Jesus. This view avoids the problem of accounting for two different fathers to Joseph.

But there are problems with this solution. First, the rabbinic sources appealed to are difficult to support.[3] The Miriam listed as the daughter of Heli could be any Miriam/Mary; she is not recorded specifically as the mother of Jesus. Second, and more significant, the best grammatical reading of the Greek in Luke is that this is a genealogy of Joseph. If Luke intended to give Mary's lineage, many assert he would have listed her specifically.

Matthew gives the royal line, Luke gives the physical line

This second solution requires a bit more explanation but is just as plausible.

Machen, who defended this view as the most likely, provides this description:

"Matthew gives the *legal* descendants of David—the men who would have been legally the heir to the Davidic throne if that throne had continued—while Luke gives the descendants of David in that particular line to which, finally, Joseph, the husband of Mary, belonged." [4] In other words, Luke gives the biological

bloodline, what one normally considers an account of genealogy or ancestry.

Matthew, on the other hand, gives the royal line of succession from David to Joseph. A royal lineage will often follow bloodline, but can be broken when a king does not have an heir of his own and the throne is passed to another family line.

This solution is free from the difficult grammatical and textual maneuvering of the first, but now must account for the two different fathers listed for Joseph. To solve this problem, Matthan (Matt. 1:15) and Matthat (Luke 3:24) must be the same person, making Jacob and Heli brothers. This means Jacob would have died childless, and his brother Heli—through a levirate marriage—would have borne a biological son, Joseph, to be his deceased brother's legal heir. **Thus, both Matthew and Luke are correct.** Solving the problem this way, however, only extends the problem back a generation. If Matthan/Matthat are the same person, then one must also account for *his* two fathers! This is not a deal breaker for Machen, who asserts that Eleazar's (Matt. 1:15) line must have gone extinct, and Matthan/Matthat, the biological son of Levi (Luke 3:24), was adopted as Eleazar's heir. In this way, the line of royal succession continued.

Obviously, this explanation is not free of its own shortcomings. Though technically possible, the supposition of at least one levirate marriage (Heli's) and the adoption of one extinct line (Eleazar's) is too far a stretch for some commentators. Others have taken the basic principle of this explanation and adjusted various names and

degrees of kinship to provide a better solution, though no consensus has been reached.

Making the decision even harder is the support that both options have from well-respected biblical commentators and exegetes. In one form or another, many accept the second option, that Matthew traces the line of royal succession, and Luke traces the physical descendants. As already mentioned, Machen supported this second option, as did Calvin before him, and many conservative commentators today. The explanation that Luke traces Mary's ancestry, however, still has modern support, including historical support from many (such as Matthew Henry and J. C. Ryle). The possible solutions are virtually endless, and it is unlikely that consensus among scholars will be achieved. Though this specific question will likely remain unresolved, given the two options above it would be wrong to insist that biblical error or outright contradiction is the only explanation for the difference between these Gospel genealogies. Both common solutions are compatible with biblical inerrancy, and one may feel comfortable with either. But more than that, one should feel content leaving behind these questions about names and identities, because there is a better question to ask.

A question that moves beyond the technical and historical debate and arrives at the theological intent motivating each author.

A Better Question

Instead of only asking why they are different, one should ask, what purpose does each genealogy serve?

1. Why do Luke and Matthew both record genealogies of Christ?
2. And most pointedly, **why do they record them in different places in their Gospel accounts?** By asking these questions, the reader begins to see the theological purpose behind each ancestral list. Matthew and Luke both make profound theological statements through their different genealogies, though in different ways. Since Matthew is more direct in his purpose, let's consider his Gospel first.

MATTHEW:

Writing to a Jewish audience, Matthew is explicit in his genealogy that Jesus is connected both to the throne of David and to the offspring of Abraham.

He communicates this by presenting three successive sets of fourteen generations that connect Abraham to David, David to the exile, and the exile to Jesus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

That makes him the promised Messiah-King, the one for whom the Jewish people have waited through all these generations.

It makes sense, then, for Matthew to focus on the royal line of succession. He was answering the question, “Who is the heir to David’s throne?” **The answer to that question leads from David’s son Solomon all the way through Joseph to Jesus.**

Luke, unlike Matthew, provides no explicit statement on the theological purpose of his genealogy. That does not mean he has no such purpose, but his approach requires a more thorough examination. **Because he is writing to a Gentile audience, Luke desires to connect Jesus not only to his Jewish heritage but to all mankind.** This purpose leads Luke to ask the question, “Who, ultimately, was Joseph’s (or Mary’s, if the first option above is preferred) father?” The answer to that question is Heli, and from there back through Nathan to David, then to Abraham, *and all the way to Adam*. When viewing it from this perspective, one begins to understand the theological significance of Luke’s genealogy and why it differs from Matthew’s.

Rather than placing his genealogy at the beginning of his Gospel, like Matthew, or placing it somewhere closer to Jesus’ actual birth—which might make more sense chronologically—Luke places Jesus’ genealogy right between the account of his baptism (Luke 3:21–22) and his temptation (Luke 4:1–13). Why does he do this? In Jesus’ baptism, the Triune God is seen acting in time and space. The Son is praying, the Spirit descends upon him, and the Father calls from heaven, “You are my beloved Son.” In this verse, the divine Sonship of the man Jesus is declared. He is the Son of God. The next verse begins the genealogy, and **it turns out that the Son of God is also the Son of Man, having his lineage traced all the way back to the first man, Adam. Surprisingly, this Adam is also called the son of God, indicating the intimate relationship that God shared with this creature who was fashioned by his own hands and given the breath of life.** But it was not long after that moment, remember, when this original human son rebelled against his heavenly Father. *In the fall, Adam plunged himself, his posterity, and all creation into sin and corruption. But instead of Adam dying that day and perishing, God once again sought his son and gave him the promise of the gospel: that one of his offspring, the seed of the woman, would crush the serpent’s head and undo the curse (Gen 3:15).*

From that moment on, the story of redemptive history revealed in Holy Scripture has been the story of the search for this promised son, the offspring and seed. We move on in Luke's genealogy (in reverse chronology) from Adam to the Patriarchs. God called Abraham and gave him the promise that through his offspring all nations would be blessed. Yet the son born to him, Isaac, was not *the* son, but followed in his father's disobedient footsteps. Perhaps Isaac's son Jacob, who would be named Israel, would be the true son. Yet this son, who eventually became the nation of Israel (Hos. 11:1), grumbled against his Father and fell in the wilderness. He did not pass the test. The search—and the genealogy—continues to David and his sons.

After the nation rejected God as king over them and suffered under king Saul, God raised up king David, a man after his own heart. Yet even David sinned against the Lord, most prominently through his affair with Bathsheba. Even so, God made a covenant with him, that a son of David would be raised up, his kingdom established forever, and God himself would be a Father to him (2 Sam. 7:11–16). Was king Solomon, then, *the* son? It seemed possible for a time at the height of his kingdom, until Solomon the wise abandoned his own wisdom, sinned against God, and the kingdom split in two and both were eventually destroyed.

And now, many generations later, at the end of Luke's genealogy, there is a new son. Could he be the one? He is both a physical descendant of David and a successor to his throne. He is the offspring of Abraham. In his baptism he was declared to be the Son of God, and through his ancestry shown also to be the Son of Man. And now, as Luke moves from Jesus' baptism and his genealogy to his temptation, he presents his readers with the question, "Will this New Man succeed where all the others have failed?" "Will this Son treasure wisdom and serve only the Lord?" "Rather than murmuring against God in the wilderness, will this Son pass the test?" "Will this Son of God succeed in place of his father Adam, submitting to His Father's Word and resisting the serpent's temptations?"

Rather than spending countless hours struggling to find answers to the presence and order of every name on these two lists, these theological questions are the better questions to ask. **Matthew's genealogy shows that Jesus is the promised Messiah-King, and every verse afterward proves Matthew's claim to be true.** Luke, by putting his genealogy between Jesus' baptism and temptation, leads his readers to ponder, "Is this Jesus truly the Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, the only one who is able to seek and save the lost?" One need only read on to find the answer.

Levi Bakerink is the Assistant Pastor at All Saints Reformed Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Richmond, VA. He and his wife Jessica enjoy playing pickle-ball together and watching (mostly Levi) the St. Louis Cardinals.

[1] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), pp. 918-919.

[2] For Luke's inclusion of the name Cainan between Arphaxad (Arpachshad) and Shelah, contra to Genesis and 1 Chronicles, many scholars believe Luke was working from the LXX, which included this name, rather than the original Hebrew of Genesis and 1 Chronicles.

[3] Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 919.

[4] J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (London: James Clarke, 1958), p. 204.

Misc.

Too often we fail to appreciate that (the) apprehension of God is not only the test of our worship, but also the test of our spiritual growth. A Christian's real development in spiritual life will always be revealed by how he or she thinks about God - how much he thinks about Him, and how highly he thinks about Him.

- Sinclair B. Ferguson

Tamar was guilty of incest (Gen 38). Rahab was a prostitute (Josh 2). Ruth spent a rather shady night at Boaz's feet (Ruth 3), but more importantly she was a Moabitess, a people known for their sexual immorality. Finally, the wife of Uriah is mentioned (Matthew doesn't actually record her name—Bathsheba), even though she committed adultery with David. So we have adultery, sexual immorality, prostitution, and incest; you'd think Matthew would have chosen

some different women to include here! You may also have recognized the last woman on this list—Mary, the mother of Jesus. As an unwed, pregnant woman, she was surrounded by rumors of sexual scandal (1:18–25). This is a surprising way to introduce the Savior of the world.

Not only did He come for (and through) the morally outcast, but also **Jesus came for (and through) the ethnically diverse**. These women—Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, and Ruth—were all Gentile women. Bathsheba may have been an Israelite, yet Matthew calls her “Uriah’s wife,” for Uriah was a Hittite (2 Sam 11:3). This ethnically diverse genealogy leads to the second aspect of God’s salvation in this genealogy: **God saves ultimately for His global purpose**. Recall the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, that “all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” God’s promise to His people is for the sake of all peoples. This universal plan will reappear throughout Matthew’s Gospel, and at the center of this plan is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.