

General Comments on Matthew 1

The genealogy presented in Matthew 1 differs from that presented in Luke 3:24-38. Some commentators suggest Matthew's is through Joseph per Matt. 1:16 while that in Luke is through Mary. This is unlikely as Luke cites Joseph and not Mary's father.

Careful examination of the two genealogies reveals some of the reason for the differences. In the following table, the discrepancies between the two accounts are marked in bold italics. Obscure spellings of well known characters have the common spellings given in parenthesis.

Luke's Genealogy (reversed) -----	Matthew' Genealogy -----
God	
Adam	
Seth	
Enos	
Cainan	
Maleleel	
Jared	
Enoch	
Mathusala	
Lamech	
Noe	
Sem	
Arphaxad	
Cainan	
Sala	
Heber	
Phalec	
Ragau	
Saruch	
Nachor	
Thara	
Abraham	Abraham
Isaac	Isaac
Jacob	Jacob
Juda	Juda
Phares	Phares
Esrom	Esrom
Aram	Aram
Aminadab	Aminadab
Naasson	Naasson
Salmon	Salmon
Booz	Booz
Obed	Obed
Jesse	Jesse
David	David
Nathan	<i>Solomon</i>
Mattatha	<i>Roboam (Rehoboam)</i>

Menan	Abia (Abijah)
Melea	Asa
Eliakim	Josaphat (Jehoshaphat)
Jonan	Joram
Joseph	Ozias (Uzziah)
Juda	Joatham (Jotham)
Simeon	Achaz (Ahaz)
Levi	Ezekias (Hezekiah)
Matthat	Manassas (Manasseh)
Jorim	Amon
Eliezer	Josias
Jose	Jechonias (Jehoichin) in Babylon
Er	
Elmodam	
Cosam	
Addi	
Melchi	
Neri	
Salathiel	Salathiel
Zorobabel	Zorobabel
Rhesa	Abiud
Joanna	Eliakim
Juda	Azor
Joseph	Sadoc
Semei	Achim
Mattathias	Eliud
Maath	Eleazar
Nagge	
Esli	
Naum	
Amos	
Mattathias	
Joseph	
Janna	
Melchi	
Levi	
Matthat	Matthan
Heli	Jacob
Joseph	Joseph
Jesus	Jesus

The major discrepancy between the two lists is due to Matthew listing kings begetting kings while Luke is listing fathers begetting sons. For example, in Matthew's account David begets Solomon, the next king of Judah, where Luke's account lists Nathan. Thus, it is safe to conclude Luke's account is the more genealogically accurate where Matthew's account is intended to trace royalty.

After the sack of Babylon, Matthew's genealogy of kings becomes problematic as there were no sitting kings of Judah anymore. Judah from that point on was subject to various outside political regimes, they never had an independent "king" again.

Matthew's account is also selective in its presentation. He omits kings like Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah before Uzziah, as well as later skipping Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim before Jehoiachin. It is generally assumed he did this to make the 14 x 14 x 14 generations work (see the comments on v. 17 below).

As an aside, Jesus never appears to have appealed to his genealogy in order to establish his calling as Messiah. In general, when dealing with the Pharisees he is evasive when they demand of him to say he is the Messiah. When dealing with more humble common Jews and the Samaritans, he states plainly he is the Messiah. He does provide witnesses for himself when pressed (cf. John 5:31-37), yet he doesn't appeal to his genealogy. Why not? It is entirely possible there were others who had suitable genealogy, and so attempts to do so were inconclusive. Also, Joseph wasn't Jesus' father, God the Father was, so that makes that kind of appeal problematic.

Comments on Matthew 1

1 THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; 4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; 5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her [that had been the wife] of Urias; 7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; 8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; 9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; 10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; 11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: 12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; 13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; 16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David [are] fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon [are] fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ [are] fourteen generations.

v1-16 The genealogy of Jesus is recounted. The genealogy at hand is noteworthy because it contains four women as well as the

succession of fathers: Tamar, Rachab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. These are prominent Biblical women whom Matthew presumably includes so as to place Mary among her peers.

Note Bathsheba is not referenced by name but rather by marriage. Failing to reference a person by name is an insult in a Semitic context. While Bathsheba is a prominent woman she is excluded from the present company. Thus, Mary is set apart from her while being put together with Ruth, Tamar, and Rachab. Who exactly this Rachab is we know not, but one would assume that she is in the same category as Ruth and Tamar, and so she probably isn't the harlot Rahab from Joshua 2 (although it is possible she changed her ways as Joshua 6:25 informs us she lived among Israel after that).

v16 Note Joseph is presented as the husband of Mary and not the father of Jesus.

v17 Matthew's intent with the 14 x 14 x 14 generations is to convey the idea that every 14 generations something important happens in Israel's history: Abraham, David, Babylonian Captivity, and this latest 14th results in the birth of the Messiah.

It is common for commentators to point out there aren't exactly 3 sets of 14 generations presented in v. 2-13, assuming 14 by 3 equals 42 generations. They make various excuses and criticisms, but a careful look at the text shows that is not necessary. Each begotten son is also referenced as a begetting father. Counting the ending son both as an ending son and the begetting father for each of the 14 generations turn out exactly 14 for each. For example Abraham to David is 14, then David to Jeconiah is 14, then Jeconiah to Jesus is 14.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just [man], and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25 And knew

her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

v18-25 Joseph and Mary are engaged to be married when he discovers she is pregnant (v. 18). Rather than subject her to public ridicule for the apparent adultery, he chooses to put her away quietly (v. 19). Upon deciding to do so, Joseph is visited in a night vision by an angel who informs him the child is not a product of adultery (v. 20) and is in fact the promised Messiah (v. 21). Matthew then inserts a parenthetical comment to the reader that this thing was accomplished according to the prediction from Isaiah that the Lord would be among His people (v. 22-23). Joseph awakes from the vision, and does according to the angel's commands and takes Mary as his wife (v. 24). Joseph does not consummate the marriage until after the birth of Jesus (v. 25).

v18 "espoused to Joseph, before they came together", they were betrothed, or engaged, but not married yet. Our present marriage traditions do not coincide with those of the ancient Jews. The ancient Jews observed a betrothal period, typically of one year, wherein the man and woman were effectively legally espoused but not in effect married (i.e., they were legally bound to each other but could not consummate the marriage). At this point, Mary and Joseph are in the betrothal period.

The traditional one year betrothal period was apparently performed to publicly prove it wasn't a "shotgun" wedding. In some cases when the marriages were arranged between two people who had never met the betrothal period was waived (e.g., Isaac and Rebekah).

"with child of the Holy Ghost", clearly a parenthetical statement by Matthew to the reader as at this point Joseph doesn't yet know the child is by the Holy Spirit until v. 20.

v19 The point of Law in question is that detailed in Deut. 22:13-27.

v20 Luke's account has an angel appearing to Mary, Mark's account has neither. Fortunately, we have multiple witnesses to preserve details such as this.

v21 "call his name Jesus", the Hebrew would be "Yeshua" a contraction of "Yehoshua", which literally translates to "Help of the Lord".

"for he shall save his people from their sins", a paraphrase of Isaiah's statements in Isa. 43:24-25, Isa. 53:11.

v23 "they shall call his name Emmanuel", Matthew's quotation of Isa. 7:14 as a proof text for Jesus being the Lord incarnate is something hotly debated among various commentators as it is an acontextual usage. The context of Isa. 7:14 is the fall of Damascus and Syria in a short amount of time, so short that were a young woman to have a baby, before that baby could talk those two nations would be sacked (equating Isa. 7:14 with Isa. 8:4). Thus, the Lord is with Judah and against Damascus and Samaria, hence "Immanuel".

The "virgin" in the KJV in Isa. 7:14 is a misleading translation. A better translation would be "young woman". The young woman may be a virgin, but that is not required by the Hebrew.

Thus, Matthew appears to be using a proof-text taken out of context to argue for virgin birth and the incarnation of the Lord. However, perhaps this isn't his intent at all.

The idea of "Immanuel" as "God is with us" in the sense of the Lord's incarnation is not acontextual to the book of Isaiah, cf. Isa. 43:24-25, Isa. 53:11. Matthew's providing the translation of "Immanuel" with the quotation suggests his intent is to forward the general idea of the incarnation of the Lord. If this is the case, then Matthew is simply quoting a passage that refers to Immanuel. The contents of v. 21 support this general reading as it too paraphrases Isaiah in an effort to explain the importance of Jesus' name. Furthermore, Matthew cannot be holding this passage up as though it has been literally fulfilled as he just quoted the angel as stating the baby's name was to be "Jesus" and not "Immanuel", and then Matthew states Joseph named him Jesus.

Thus, the paraphrase of Isaiah in the preceding verse, and the translation of the name for the reader's benefit both suggest Matthew's intent is not to use the Isa. 7:14 quote as a messianic proof text, but rather as a general theological statement regarding the incarnation of the Lord.

Copyright © 2003 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurtn@cybcon.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.