

The Royal Link in the Genealogies of Jesus in the Gospels

God's one-thousand-year-old covenant with David was on the verge of being fulfilled.

God had promised David three things; a house, a throne and a "kingdom shall be established for ever,"¹

[2 Samuel 7:11-16](#)

"and as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. 12And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

For almost six-hundred years since the Babylonian captivity, Israel had either been under foreign governance. The calendar of Israel's postponed regency was soon to restart.

The time had come to fulfill Jacob's deathbed prophecy of a scepter rising out of Judah.² [Genesis 49:10](#)

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh come; And unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

David's LORD would actually become his son³ through the seed of a woman.⁴ [Genesis 49:10](#)

and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. [Genesis 49:10](#)

The imminent incarnation of Immanuel must have intrigued his heavenly imagination.

From across the galactic expanse in lightning speed, Gabriel appeared in a Nazareth hovel to a lowly young lady. Her heart could barely ponder the magnitude of the prophecy of her child, "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever."⁵ [Luke 1:32,33](#)

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The Messianic royal heir from her virgin womb meant she was the chosen one of Isaiah 7:14.

the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Miriam was a bonified descendant of King David according to Luke chapter 3:23-31

¹ [2 Samuel 7:11-16](#)

² [Genesis 49:10](#)

³ [Psalm 110:1](#)

⁴ [Genesis 3:15](#)

⁵ [Luke 1:32,33](#)

23And **Jesus himself** began to be about thirty years of age, **being** (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was **the son of Heli**, 24which was *the son* of Matthat, which was *the son* of Levi, which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Janna, which was *the son* of Joseph, 25which was *the son* of Mattathias, which was *the son* of Amos, which was *the son* of Naum, which was *the son* of Esli, which was *the son* of Nagge, 26which was *the son* of Maath, which was *the son* of Mattathias, which was *the son* of Semei, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Juda, 27which was *the son* of Joanna, which was *the son* of Rhesa, which was *the son* of Zorobabel, which was *the son* of Salathiel, which was *the son* of Neri, 28which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Addi, which was *the son* of Cosam, which was *the son* of Elmodam, which was *the son* of Er, 29which was *the son* of Jose, which was *the son* of Eliezer, which was *the son* of Jorim, which was *the son* of Matthat, which was *the son* of Levi, 30which was *the son* of Simeon, which was *the son* of Juda, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Jonan, which was *the son* of Eliakim, 31which was *the son* of Melea, which was *the son* of Menan, which was *the son* of Mattatha, which was *the son* of **Nathan, which was the son of David,**

If Matthew chapter 1 had been the only genealogy of Jesus, then he could not be the Messiah because the descendants of David's thirteenth heir, Jechonias (Jehoiachin/Jehoiakim)⁶, were banned from the Davidic dynasty.⁷ [Jeremiah 22:24-30](#)

24 As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; 25and I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of *them* whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. 27But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

28 *Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure?* wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? 29O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. 30Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man *that* shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

No Messiah King could be tarnished by this divine curse.

Luke however, doesn't trace Jesus' lineage back to Solomon, but to Nathan, another son of David.

Miriam was a member of the house of David, through Nathan.

The absence of Mary's name has caused some to question this connection.

The key is found in Luke 3:23. "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son* of Heli..."

Setting aside Joseph out of the reading, simplifies the syntax. When it is read, "Jesus himself...which was the son of Heli," taking into account His virgin birth, Jechonias' prohibited progeny is avoided.

Gabriel's identification of Miriam's offspring as being from David, verified that she obviously was of his lineage. Therefore, Jesus was the descendant of "Heli," through Mary.

Since her name was listed in chapter 1 and 2 it was not necessary to do so in chapter 3 because she was the initial subject of this narrative, "the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary..."⁸ [Luke 1:26,27](#)

⁶ [1 Chronicles 3:16](#)

⁷ [Jeremiah 22:24-30](#)

⁸ [Luke 1:26,27](#)

26And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Jesus wasn't from the wrong line and Gabriel didn't arrive the wrong address.

Jesus could rule on the "throne of David" because his mother was one of David's daughters.

Here's an interesting article for other views but not an endorsement by Jewish Awareness Ministries

The Two Genealogies of Jesus, the Curse of Jeconiah, and the Royal Line of David

Posted on December 21, 2015 by Victoria Emily Jones

Several passages in the Hebrew Bible (which Christians refer to as the Old Testament) prophesy that David's throne will be established forever: [2 Samuel 7:12–16](#); [Psalm 89:3–4, 132:11](#); [Isaiah 16:5](#); and [Jeremiah 33:17](#). Jews, therefore, have taken that to mean that the messiah, the future deliverer of Israel, will be descended from David. Christians interpret these prophecies as having been fulfilled in the person of Jesus, to whom they attach the title *Christ* (Gr.; Heb. *Messiah*), the "anointed one" of God.

The Christian confession of these two truths—that Jesus is the messiah in the line of David who God promised to Israel, and that he was conceived by a virgin—creates some complications of ancestry and inheritance.

How does one reconcile the two very different genealogies of Jesus given by Matthew and Luke?

The Bible contains two different genealogical records for Jesus: one in Matthew ([1:1–17](#)), the other in Luke ([3:23–38](#)). Matthew, whose purpose is to present Jesus as king of the Jews, starts with Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, and traces the line of descent through the royal line of David all the way down to Jesus. He skips several generations, though, omitting the names of some of the wicked kings of Judah.

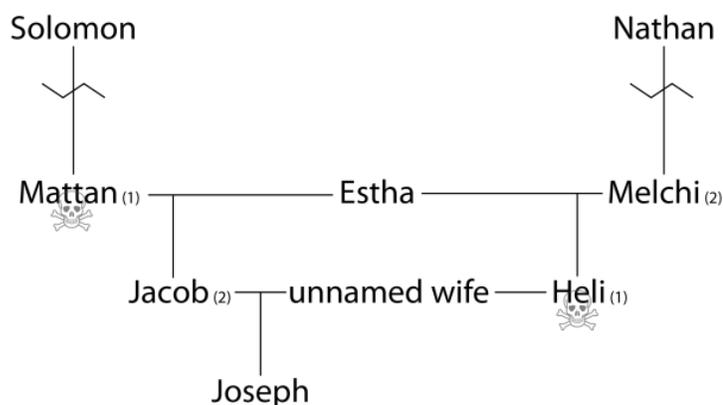
Luke, in backward fashion, starts with Jesus and moves all the way back to Adam, showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of the hopes of all people.

The problem is, the two lists don't match. Not even close. Well, they match up until David's name, then they diverge, with Matthew tracing a line of descent through David's son Solomon, and Luke tracing a line of descent through David's son Nathan. They come together again at Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, but then they diverge again until finally arriving at Joseph.

Biblical scholars have developed various theories to account for such differences. I'll summarize the two most common ones.

OPTION 1: Matthew's genealogy goes through Joseph's biological father, whereas Luke's goes through Joseph's legal father by levirate marriage. Julius Africanus was the first to attempt a solution to the problem, ca. 225 AD. In his *Letter to Aristides* he claims that Joseph's grandfather Mattan was the first husband of a woman named Estha, through whom she bore Jacob, but after Mattan died, she remarried Melchi and bore Heli; Jacob and Heli, therefore, were half brothers. Heli married but then died without any offspring, so Jacob married his brother's widow, in accordance with the Jewish laws of [levirate marriage \(Deuteronomy 25:5–10\)](#). As the offspring of this levirate union, Joseph would have been seen as a perpetuation of the deceased brother's line, not of that of his natural father.

Because all these relationships Africanus posits are difficult to process in paragraph form, I've attempted to render them schematically:



The “Africanus solution” to the two disparate lineages of Jesus presented in the New Testament—the left side showing the names given by Matthew; the right side, those given by Luke. The squiggles represent the omission of multiple generations, for the sake of space, and the parenthetical numerals indicate the sequence of husbands in the given row: each woman’s second marriage was prompted by the death of her first husband.

This theory is still presented as a valid option in Bible commentaries, with several scholars holding to it. One academic paper I found that’s available to online lay readers is [“Jesus’ Family and their Genealogy according](#)

[to the Testimony of Julius Africanus”](#) by New Testament studies scholar Christophe Guignard.

OPTION 2: *Matthew’s genealogy traces Joseph’s ancestry; Luke’s traces Mary’s.*

It appears to me that this is the most widely accepted view among Christians today, even though it arose later in church history, being initially proposed by John of Damascus in the first half of the eighth century.

The obvious objection to this theory is that Luke explicitly lists Joseph as Jesus’s predecessor, with no mention of Mary: “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son of Heli*” (Luke 3:23, KJV). Supporters, though, say that the genealogical language is not as precise here as it is in Matthew. The early Greek manuscripts read “Joseph, of Heli”—“the son” is an editorial insertion, acknowledged by italics in the King James Version. Luke does not use the verb *gennaō* (Hebrew for “to father” or “to beget”) that Matthew uses to describe the relationship between the two generations, which leaves it open to speculation that perhaps Joseph was the *son-in-law*, not the biological son, of Heli.

The punctuation of this verse was also not present in the original, and some translators suggest that the closed parenthesis belongs after “Joseph” instead of after “supposed,” as in “Jesus . . . being the son (as was supposed of Joseph) of Heli.” With this formulation the implication would be that Jesus’s maternal grandfather, Heli, is his closest male ancestor.

Some commentators have gone even further to suggest that Mary’s father, Heli, had so sons, so he made Joseph his adoptive heir when he and Mary wed. (See [Numbers 27:1–11](#), [1 Chronicles 2:34–35](#), [Ezra 2:61](#), and [Nehemiah 7:63](#) for Jewish precedents.) If Luke really is tracing Mary’s ancestry, then why not just say so? Because like most ancient cultures, the Hebrews omitted women’s names from genealogical records. Luke (unlike Matthew, who very brazenly cites four women in his genealogy for Jesus) is simply following custom by sticking to male names only. It would have been natural for Luke, who acknowledges the unique case of the virgin birth, to give the maternal genealogy of Jesus, even if that meant expressing it a bit awkwardly in the traditional patrilineal style. Not only that, but Luke’s Gospel often focuses on Mary’s perspective, which has led some to believe that she served as a source for some of its material. The Gospel of Matthew, on the other hand, tends to focus on Joseph’s perspective.

How does one explain the convergence at Shealtiel and Zerubbabel?

Scholars have proposed the possibility of two levirate marriages to solve this problem. Less commonly, it is claimed that the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel in the Lukan genealogy are entirely different individuals than the more famous ones listed by Matthew.

Doesn’t the curse of Jeconiah disqualify Jesus from claiming the throne of David?

One common objection to Jesus’s messianic qualifications is that Matthew traces his descent through Jeconiah (also known as Jehoiachin, or Coniah), whose bloodline was cursed by God in [Jeremiah 22:30](#): “Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.” In response, some biblical scholars claim that after this curse, the legal right to David’s throne was passed to the house of Nathan—an ancestry that Luke ascribes to Jesus. To use the language of Isaiah, the throne

“branched.” God’s unconditional promise to David—that his offspring will reign forever—was still good; it was just transferred to the lineage of a different son of his.

Other scholars, however, argue that the curse of Jeconiah was lifted, as history bore out: the curse said that Jeconiah’s offspring would not rule, yet his grandson Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 3:16–19) became governor of Judah (Haggai 2:2, 23). Not only that, but after Jeconiah was released from prison, he prospered (Jeremiah 52:31–34), suggesting that God’s favor toward him had returned, perhaps because of his (unrecorded) repentance. Rabbinical tradition actually supports this view.

Or else scholars claim that the curse was meant only for the lifetime of Jeconiah: Jeremiah 22:30 says that he would not see his descendants on the throne “in his days.” Or perhaps the curse applied only to those immediately fathered by Jeconiah, which is why his son Shealtiel never held power but his grandson did.

These same scholars point out that for Matthew, Jesus’s standing as the Jewish messiah is predicated on his descent from the royal line of David, which included Jeconiah. Matthew certainly would have been aware of the curse, yet he felt no need to explain his inclusion of the name in Jesus’s genealogy; to him the curse was apparently a nonissue.

If Jesus is not the natural son of Joseph, then how does he have any right to David’s throne?

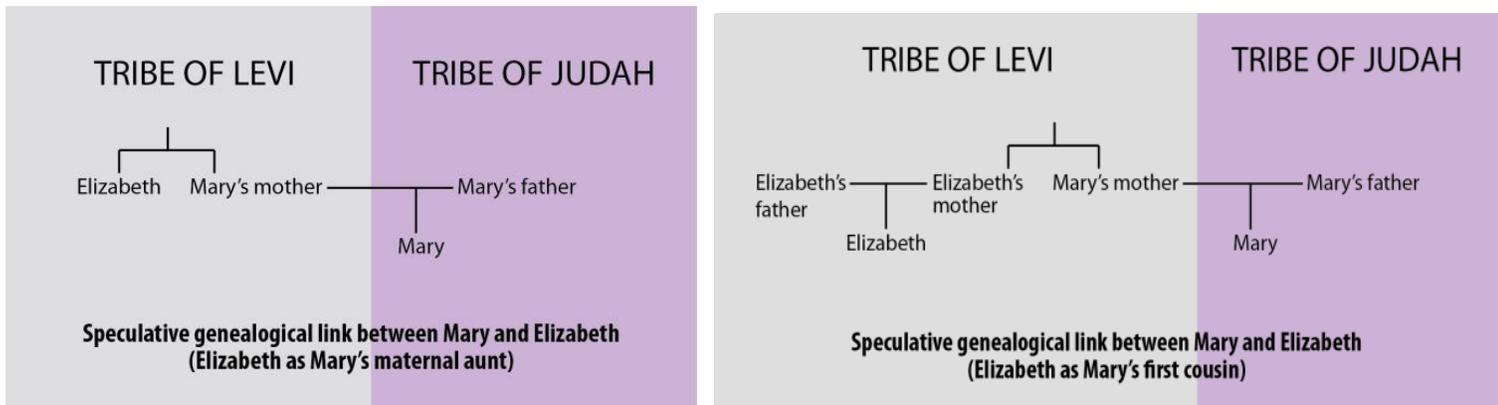
Opponents of Jesus’s messianic claims say that only gene-carrying descendants of the royal line of David are eligible to inherit the throne of Israel. This is simply not true. It was not unusual for a king to adopt an heir to his throne when he lacked natural children, and furthermore, the laws of levirate marriage stipulated that if a childless widow were to marry her deceased husband’s brother, her first husband’s name and inheritance would be passed on to the child of that union. Legal and kinship standing, therefore, was related to either genes *or* adoption *or* marriage.

Even though Jesus didn’t share Joseph’s DNA, he was Joseph’s adopted son, and as such he would have been David’s legal royal heir through Solomon. Those who believe the curse of Jeconiah is still in effect, however, would claim that Jesus’s maternal connection to David is of utmost important because it is through Mary that he inherits the throne. Even though thrones were inherited through the male line, there were some exceptions, most notably that of the daughters of Zelophehad, who, lacking brothers, became the ancestresses of clans within the tribe of Manasseh that were named after them—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Why do some people claim that Mary was from the tribe of Levi, not Judah?

Luke 1:5 states, “In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.” Then later in verse 36, Elizabeth is referred to as a “relative” (*syggenēs*) of Mary—translated in some versions as “cousin,” even though their precise relationship is unknown. Because a kinswoman of Mary’s belonged to the priestly tribe of Levi, it is sometimes assumed that she, too, was a Levite. Some Christians have latched on to this speculation as supportive of the notion that Jesus came to earth as both king (from Judah) and priest (from Levi).

Church tradition and modern scholarship, however, maintain that Mary was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi, and the house of David. The apostle Paul seems to support this view in Romans 1:3, where he writes that Jesus was descended from David “according to the flesh.” Just because Mary had a relative from outside Judah does not mean that she, too, hailed from outside. Mary’s mother was likely from Levi but married into the line of Judah. Here are just two of several possible scenarios I sketched out to explain Mary’s relationship to Elizabeth, with her Judahite affiliation still intact.



Christians often insist vigorously on the critical importance of both genealogies, and how only together can they show that Jesus is uniquely qualified to be the messiah. I disagree: both genealogies show Jesus's descent from David, which is what was repeatedly prophesied, so either one, I think, is sufficient to establish Jesus's messianic eligibility. I don't know whether Jesus inherited the throne through Joseph or through Mary, and—perhaps controversially—I don't think it matters, so long as we see that he *is* on the throne, the Son of David, the Root of Jesse.

People get caught up in tracing the “royal line,” but it's not clear where that line went after the end of the monarchy in the sixth century BCE—whether it was to stay with Solomon's descendants or, because of God's frustration with Jeconiah, branch over to Nathan's. All we know is that

the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.” (Jeremiah 23:5–6)

<https://thejesusquestion.org/2015/12/21/the-two-genealogies-of-jesus-the-curse-of-jeconiah-and-the-royal-line-of-david/>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/curse-of-Jeconiah.html>

<https://jewsforjesus.org/answers/the-problem-of-the-curse-on-jeconiah-in-relation-to-the-genealogy-of-jesus/>