THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
SAINT MATTHEW

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

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

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Abiah, and Abiah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziiah, and Uzziiah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Elia’kim, and Elia’kim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Levi, and Levi the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

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.

1:1 book of the genealogy: A title for the following ancestry (1:2–16) and the entire Gospel. The opening words recall the Greek OT in Gen 2:4 and 5:1. Christ: A title (Gk. Christos) meaning the “Anointed One.” It is the Greek rendering of the OT word for “Messiah.” According to Lk 4:18–19, Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 10:36–38). It is this title for Jesus that Matthew elucidates throughout his Gospel. See word study: Christ at Mk 14:1 (CCC 436).

1:2–17 The Abrahamic and Davidic ancestry of Jesus establishes his credentials to be the royal Messiah of Israel (1:1, 16). God long ago promised that “kings” would stem from Abraham’s line (Gen 17:6) and later swore a covenant oath that David would always have a dynastic heir (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:3–4). Note that Matthew’s genealogy reaches back to Abraham, the forefather of Israel, whereas Luke’s genealogy of Jesus stretches back to Adam, the father of all nations (Lk 3:23–38). This difference is heightened by numerous discrepancies between the two genealogies, especially in the generations spanning from David to Jesus. More than a dozen solutions have been proposed to harmonize them. At the very least, it should be recognized that gaps are a common feature in genealogical registries from antiquity. There are also many examples in Scripture of a person having more than one name—a fact that must be considered when attempting to identify the ancestors of Jesus (e.g., Solomon/Jedidiah, 2 Sam 12:24–25). For the possibility that Matthew gives Jesus’ paternal genealogy (Joseph’s ancestry) and Luke his maternal genealogy (Mary’s ancestry), see note on Lk 3:23–38.

1:3–6 The inclusion of women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah) in a Jewish genealogy is unusual, but not unprecedented (1 Chron 1:32, 39, 50; 2:4). All are Gentiles (Canaanite, Moabite, and Hittite, respectively), and three (all but Ruth) are associated with sexual immorality (Gen 38:12–26; Josh 2:1; 2 Sam 11:2–5). These irregularities may reflect an apologetic strategy. (1) Gentile blood within Jesus’ lineage anticipates the international scope of the gospel for men and women of “all nations” (28:19). (2) Matthew defuses Jewish accusations that the women in Jesus’ genealogy undermine his messianic credentials. By listing the immoral women in the generations before Solomon, Matthew implies that these women did not disqualify Solomon as the royal son of David, then neither do they disqualify Jesus, who assumes the same title as the Messiah (1:1). Indeed, Solomon’s birth through the immorally arranged marriage of David and Uriah’s wife (2 Sam 11) stands in vivid contrast to Mary’s virginal conception of Jesus by the Spirit (1:18).

1:16 the husband of: The final link in the genealogy breaks with the preceding pattern. Joseph is not called the father of Jesus but only the spouse of Mary. This prepares for the virginal conception of Jesus in 1:18–25. Joseph is, however, the legal foster-father of Jesus and exercises his paternal duty by naming the Child (1:25) and protecting the Holy Family (2:13–22). Following Jewish custom, Jesus received full hereditary rights through Joseph, even though he was adopted (CCC 437, 496). In Catholic tradition, the fatherhood of Joseph is also held to be spiritual and real, albeit virginal, just as the Fatherhood of God is spiritual and non-physical.

1:17 fourteen generations: Matthew divides the genealogy into three units of 14. It is not exhaustive, since several OT names are omitted and the divisions cover unequal periods of time. Matthew stresses the number 14 to show Jesus as the new Davidic king: (1) David and Jesus are the only names listed with their respective titles (king, 1:6; Christ, 1:16);