

The Genealogy Of Christ

Written by Sylvester Hassell
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Having been specially requested to prepare an article on this interesting and important subject, I have just re-investigated the whole matter as thoroughly as I could, and will proceed to give the results of my inquiries.

The ancient Jews surpassed all other nations in the accuracy and length of their genealogical tables, as a certain part of the land of Canaan was allotted to each tribe as an inalienable possession, and as God designed that it might be shown from these tables that His incarnate Son, the Messiah, was descended in the flesh, according to promise, from David; Jesse, Judah, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham; and Eve. Since the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish genealogical tables in that city A. D. 70, it has become impossible to trace the pedigree of any Israelite claiming to be their promised and still expected Messiah, who must, therefore, have already come; and also impossible to disprove the accuracy of the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, as the same person sometimes has more than one name, and as different lines of descent may be given.

In a foot-note on the 181st page of the Church History, I have said: ``Matthew gives in his first chapter, the descent of Christ from David and Abraham, according to prophecies made about 1,000 and 2,000 years before, and he abridges his genealogy as the Jews frequently did, giving three lists, each containing fourteen names, probably to aid the memory. Luke, in his third chapter, gives the descent of Christ from Adam, the seed of the woman, according to the promise made in the garden of Eden, 4,000 years before. Joseph as Luke tells us, (Lu 3:23, and as also implied by the language of Matthew in Mt 1:16), was not the real, but only the supposed or reputed father of Jesus. According to Nu 36:8, Joseph and Mary must have been of the same tribe and family. It is thought that Jacob, the father of Joseph as mentioned by Matthew, was the brother of Heli, or Eli, mentioned as the father of Joseph by Luke, and that Mary was the daughter of Eli; so that Joseph and Mary were first cousins, and Joseph was the son-in-law of Eli-son-in-law being called son by the Jews. Thus, while Matthew gives the royal or legal descent of Joseph it is likely that Luke gives the natural or private descent of Mary. The Jews, in their genealogical tables, reckoned descent wholly by males. The bitterest early enemies of Christ did not deny His descent from David. Mary is always called by the Jews 'the daughter of Heli. Matthew, writing for Jews, gives the legal pedigree of Jesus (which was always reckoned in the male line) through Joseph his legal father, in the line of Solomon; while Luke, writing for Gentiles, and proving that Christ was the seed of the woman, traces His natural or real pedigree through His mother Mary, in the line of Nathan. His birth was known only to a few; but the acknowledged descent of His legal father from David secured that the descent of Jesus Himself from David should never be questioned." The view thus given is substantially that of the great majority of the critical scholars of modern times, such as Luther, Grotius, Bengel, Olshausen, Ebrard, Wieseler, Robinson, Gardiner, Lange, Kitto, Plumptre, Weiss, Godet, Brown, and Schaff. ``It is supported by the fact that in Matthew's history of the infancy Joseph is most

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prominent; in Luke's account, Mary. If we take this explanation, Jesus was in a double sense the son of David-in law and in fact, from His reputed father, and from His natural mother."

At the close of the foot-note in the History, I have added: "Many able scholars believe that both Matthew and Luke give the genealogy of Joseph-Mary's descent from David being implied. They think that Matthan in Mt 1:15, was the same as Matthat in Lu 3:24; that he had two sons, Jacob and Heli; that Jacob, the elder brother, had no son, and therefore that Joseph the son of his younger brother Heli, became heir to his uncle Jacob and to the throne of David; and that he married his cousin Mary, the only child of Jacob, according to the law; {Nu 10:8} "so that in point of fact, though not of form, both the genealogies are as much Mary's as Joseph's." This is the view of Mill, Hervey, Mansel, Fausset, and Smith.

"From Abraham to David, Matthew and Luke agree; thenceforward the names differ. Luke has 42 from David, Matthew only 27. The less number in Matthew is intelligible, if he be only tracing the heirs to the throne; for 'the heir of my heir is my heir.' His division of the generations from Abraham to Christ. into three periods of fourteen each is significant (i, 17.) Fourteen is the double of seven, the number for completeness; and three is the sacred number. The period from Abraham to David is that of patriarchs; from David to the Babylonian captivity, that of kings; from the captivity to Christ., that of private individuals." By comparing the books of Kings and Chronicles with Matthew's list, it will be seen that he omits the not very important kings, Abaziah, Joash, Amaziab, Jehoahaz, Jeboiakim, and Zedekiah; "but such artificial aids to memory were familiar to the Jews, and much larger gaps are found in some of the Old Testament genealogies." Jechonias, {Mt 1:12} also called Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah died childless, {Jer 22:30} and the royal succession passed to the nearest heir, Solathiel, of the house of Nathan; {Zec 12:12} as, in the 9th verse, it is probable, from the Old Testament, that Ahaz was only eleven years older than Hezekiah, and died childless, and was succeeded by Hezekiah as the nearest heir to the throne, according to the principle of the Jewish law laid down in Nu 27:8-11. Luke (Lu 3:36) mentions Cainan as the son of Arpharod; this name occurs in the Septuagint version of Ge 10:24; 11:12; and 1Ch 1:18; but it is not found in the original Hebrew, or in other ancient versions; nor is it found in all the Greek manuscripts of Luke; "a transcriber may have inserted it from the margin, where it had been noted down from the Septuagint. Joseph being of the house and lineage of David, was compelled to go to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be taxed, and there and then, according to prophecy, Jesus, the infant Messiah, was born of Mary, a virgin, who was also a descendant of David, {Lu 2:1-21; Mic 5:2; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-6; Ro 1:3; 2Ti 2:8; Joh 7:12; Ac 13:23}