

The Importance of Jesus' Genealogy

Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38

When Jesus was born, he was in the *only* region of the world, where accurate genealogical records still existed, which allowed people to trace their ancestry all the way back to Adam. These were historically accurate, totally reliable legal documents (not conjecture). Tens or hundreds of thousands of people were able to trace their ancestry in this manner.

Because of these genealogical records, Jesus was able to demonstrate exactly who he was. Jesus was not unique in being able to do this. But what *was* unique was that the legal documents regarding *his* ancestry proved his right to inherit the throne of David. Without them, he would have had no more proof than any anonymous person who wanted to make an empty claim.

Of course, the genealogical records were just part of the whole plethora of evidence - evidence that proved for all time that everything the prophets had said about the coming Messiah was fulfilled in him. They were just one of the many reasons that the apostles were able to *prove* that Jesus was the Messiah, or the Christ (see Acts 18:28; also John 5:39). Without these genealogical records, many prophecies could not have been *proved* as having been fulfilled.

Scripture gives us two accounts of Jesus' genealogy - and a quick review of them will reveal some striking differences between them. These differences are important. Both records are necessary, and each serves a different purpose. Because of the nature of Jesus' birth - not having a biological father - the *legal* rights of kingship and the *biological* rights of kingship had to come in two different ways. The record in Luke proves that Jesus had the *biological* right to be king over Israel, through his mother, by way of King David's son Nathan. The record in Matthew proves that Jesus had the *legal* right to be king over Israel, through his legally "adopted" father, by way of King David's son Solomon. (Joseph and Mary were married prior to Jesus' birth.) These two lines converged at one point in history, making possible *all* that the Old Testament Scriptures had said would take place.

Someone might ask, why couldn't one of Jesus' brothers be equally qualified for inheriting the throne? First, Jesus was the *firstborn* of Mary. Under normal conditions, the firstborn would inherit the rights.

But there is another very interesting genealogy-related fact that also explains why it wasn't possible. Centuries prior to that, when the kings of Judea had abandoned the true God and gone after idols, God told King Jehoiachin that he would *never* have another descendent who would be king over the nation (Jeremiah 22:30). Though he had several children, he would be *as if* he were childless. But this created an interesting problem: The legal right of kingship went through that king, down through his descendants, all the way to Joseph! If his descendants could *not* be kings, even though the legal right to kingship belonged to them, how could other prophecies - promises to King David about having a descendant on the throne *forever*, be fulfilled? These two promises seemed to contradict!

God knows what he is doing, and his promises *cannot* be broken. He has the wisdom and power to accomplish what he promises, so these seemingly contradictory promises posed no problem for him.

The way Jesus came into the world - by means of a virgin birth, with biological rights coming through his mother and legal rights through his "adopted" father, fulfilled *all* of the supposedly-conflicting prophecies.

Someone might ask, why the genealogical records were recorded in Scripture, rather than leaving us to rely on the original records themselves. The reason is this: Records written by humans can be destroyed; records written by God (in his Word) cannot. Being in Scripture, this record is preserved for all time.

This fact became very important as history unfolded. Since most of the Jewish nation rejected Jesus as their rightful king and had him put to death, God was going to give the nation over to other kings and rulers. A terrifying judgment was about to fall upon them - one in which even their legal identity - their genealogical records - would be destroyed. Ultimately, these records, which had been collected and stored for century after century, were all destroyed, most likely at the time the city of Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple was burned (A.D. 70).

This loss of the genealogical records posed no problem for Jesus, since his genealogical records (along with other important details about his life) had been recorded in Scripture. The records that were stored in the temple had accomplished their purpose, as far as identifying who Jesus was, and were no longer needed.

Today, few people can trace their genealogies back even two or three hundred years. Nobody can accurately trace his entire lineage back to Adam, or even back to King David. This unique, but necessary, set of circumstances will never again exist. If the Messiah, the rightful king of Israel, had not been born before A.D. 70, it would no longer be possible for him to come and to be able to prove who he was. It is now *impossible* for anyone born today to prove both biological and legal rights to the throne as king over Israel.

The story doesn't end here. Jesus is not merely the "last" of the kings, now a part of ancient history. If he had died and stayed dead, there would be no future king over Israel - and many of the Old Testament prophecies related to the future could *never* be fulfilled. However, Jesus conquered death and is alive today. And since he is alive, it is impossible for those prophecies to *not* be fulfilled!

The day is coming, in which *all* nations will fight against Israel, in an attempt to utterly destroy the nation. On that day, the people of Israel will repent of their sins and turn back to the God of the Bible. They will accept the Bible's testimony, and call upon Jesus as their king and Messiah. He will return, deliver them, and conquer their enemies. As the victor, he will rule over *all* the nations, not just over Israel. (This is anticipated in Psalm 2.)

Right now, Israel (as a nation) does *not* acknowledge its king. Jesus is like a "king in exile" - except that he is actually in control, working all things toward the appropriate end. But the day is coming, in which all nations (not just Israel) will acknowledge him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords - forever without end. At that time, all that has been prophesied about him will reach its final and complete fulfillment.