

JESUS' FAMILY TREE

BY HANK HANEGRAFF

"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1).

At first blush the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke appear to be contradictory. In reality the genealogies are ingeniously constructed to highlight different aspects of the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Matthew, writing to a primarily Jewish audience, emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham and the legal heir of David, the long-awaited

King of Israel who would ultimately restore his people from exile. As such, Matthew records fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile and fourteen from the exile to the Christ (Matthew 1:17).

Matthew, a former tax collector, skillfully organizes the genealogy of Jesus into three groups of fourteen, the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew letters in King David's name.

Matthew's genealogy simultaneously highlights the most significant names in the lineage of Jesus and artistically emphasizes our Lord's identity as the Messiah who would forever sit upon the throne of David.

Furthermore, Luke, writing to a primarily Gentile audience, extends his genealogy past Abraham to the first Adam, thus highlighting

that Christ, the second Adam, is the Savior of all humanity. Additionally, calling Adam "the son of God" (3:38) and strategically placing the genealogy between Jesus' baptism and the desert temptation, Luke masterfully reveals Jesus as *Theanthropos*—the God-Man. It is also instructive to note that while Luke's genealogy stretches from the first Adam to the second,

only mountain peaks in the lineage are accounted for. Thus, it is impossible to determine how many years elapsed between the creation of Adam and the birth of Jesus.

Finally, just as there are different emphases in the genealogies, so too there are different explanations for the dissimilarities between them. Matthew traces his genealogy through David's son Solomon, while Luke traces his genealogy through David's son Nathan. It may be that Matthew's

purpose is to provide the legal lineage from Solomon through Joseph, while Luke's purpose is to provide the natural lineage from Nathan through Mary. It could also be that Matthew and Luke are both tracing Joseph's genealogy—Matthew, the legal line, and Luke, the natural line.

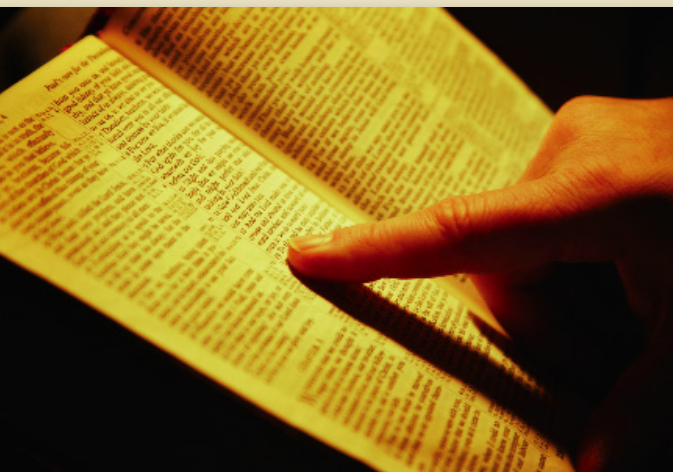
As such, the legal line diverges from the natural in that Levirate Law stipulated if a man died without an heir his genealogy could legally continue through his brother (Deuteronomy 25:5–6).

Obviously, the fact that there are a number of ways to resolve dissimilarities rules out the notion that the genealogies are contradictory. □

Adapted from Hank Hanegraaff, The Bible Answer Book, Vol. 2 (Nashville, J. Countryman, 2006). For further study, see Craig L. Blomberg, Jesus and the Gospels (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997), pp. 199–200, 207–208.

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