



## The Only Possible Legitimate Messiah

Matthew, who is the most Jewish of the Gospels, begins with the words, "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

Is Jesus Christ the legitimate heir to the throne of King David? How can we be sure that He is the only possible legal, and the royal Messiah of Israel?

The Scriptures declare that Jesus Christ was a descendent of David. Therefore His Jewish ancestry is very important to establish His legitimacy as the Jewish messiah.

### Two Lineages of the Son of David

God promised beforehand through the prophets in the holy scriptures things concerning the coming of the son of David. Those things related to the place, nature of His birth, life, death and resurrection. His Jewish background would demand that He be born of the line of David if He would be eligible to sit on the great king's throne and reign forever as the true king of Israel.

The prophet Jeremiah was specific when he wrote in 23:5-6 of the coming of the royal son of David:

Behold, *the* days are coming, declares the LORD,  
When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;  
And He will reign as king and act wisely  
And do justice and righteousness in the land.  
If His days Judah will be saved,  
And Israel will dwell securely;  
And this is His name by which He will be called,  
The LORD our righteousness. "

The Jewish writer Matthew uses the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth to prove that Jesus had descended from King David and therefore qualified to be Israel's Messiah (2 Samuel 7:13-16). The promise had been given to King David, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me" (2 Samuel 7:16).

Matthew uses at least forty formal quotations from the Old Testament, and at least sixteen times he uses the formula, "all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying . . ." Matthew traces the origins of Jesus to King David and to the Jewish patriarch Abraham.

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Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham and moves forward through fourteen generations in history to David, and then his descendents through fourteen generations to the Babylonian exile, and another fourteen generations to Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ (Matt. 1:16).

Another genealogy is given by Luke, which moves in the opposite direction. He begins with Joseph and goes back to David, Abraham and Adam (Luke 3:31, 34, 38). He is giving evidence to show that Jesus will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end (1:32-33).

Both of the genealogies are dealing with the same person, Jesus the Messiah. Both trace the lineage of Jesus through His adopted father Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born.

## Legal and Royal Rights to the Throne of David

The difficulty we encounter when we look at the two genealogies is quite interesting. They are the lines of two brothers and the children are cousins. Matthew says that Joseph was the son of Jacob who descended from David through David's son and successor King Solomon (1:6). However, Luke says that Joseph was the son of Heli who had descended from David through Nathan (Luke 3:31), who was also David's son and a brother of Solomon (v. 32).

Bernhard Weiss and James Orr carefully note that we are looking at two lineages of Joseph and Mary respectively, each who are descendents of King David. Nathan's line ran on through the years and ultimately produced the Virgin Mary. Solomon's line ran on through the years and ultimately produced Joseph. But Joseph was not the father of Jesus. He was the *husband* of Mary, the adoptive father of Jesus (Matt. 1:16). The distinction between these two lines of descent from David is between the *royal* line of those who actually sat on the throne and the *legal* line of descent from one oldest son to the next, even though these descendents never actually reigned as kings of Israel.

It is important to keep in mind these two lines of descendents from King David. Nathan was the older brother of Solomon, but the younger brother took the throne. Solomon was the king God chose to reign after David's death. Normally, however, that would have fallen to the elder son, Nathan, who would have been king if God had not given it to Solomon. Of course, none of Nathan's descendents ever claimed the throne. There were no reigning kings in his line of descendents, even though they had the *legal* right to the throne. When Joseph adopted Jesus as his legal son, Jesus became both David's direct descendent through David's son Nathan (Mary's side), and David's legal royal heir through Solomon (Joseph's side).

The line of Solomon continued down through the centuries until it eventually produced Joseph, who was betrothed to the virgin Mary who would eventually become her husband after she had given birth to Jesus. However, note very carefully that Jesus was not a descendent of Joseph. However, when Joseph took Mary under his protection and thus became the adoptive father of her divine child, he passed the right of royalty to Jesus.

## A Divine Curse

Moreover, Jeremiah 22:30 tells us that if Jesus had been the physical descended from Joseph a divine curse would have been on Him if He succeeded to the Davidic throne. Jeremiah tells us a terrible curse was pronounced on king Jehoiachin (Jechonias, whom Jeremiah abbreviates to Coniah), the last of the actual reigning kings who descended from King Solomon.

Thus says the LORD,  
Write this man down childless,  
A man who will not prosper in his days;  
For no man of his descendants will prosper  
Sitting on the throne of David  
Or ruling again in Judah. ' ”

Because of God s `curse on Jehoiachin, no king who ever descended in that line could be a legitimate king. "Thus says the Lord, Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David Or ruling again in Judah ` (NET). Though Jehoiachin did have children, he was considered childless because none of his descendents were allowed by God to sit on the throne of David and rule Judah (1 Chron. 3:17). Judah's lat king was his uncle, Zedekiah. the line of rulership passed through Jeconiah's sons though none of them ever occupied the throne.

If Joseph had been the physical father of Jesus, Jesus could not have been the Messiah. Jesus is the son of Mary, not the son of Joseph and Mary. If Jesus had been a physical descendent of Joseph and not virgin-born, He would have been disqualified because of this divine curse.

But wait. What about Joseph and his descendents? Remember, Jesus was not a physical descendent of Joseph. Joseph was Jesus `step-father. Joseph, a descendent of Solomon, with Jesus' legal father, therefore, His right to the throne came through His legal father. Each of his half brothers, who were the only other possible candidates for the Messiah had the curse of Jehoiachin on them and would have passed it on to their children if they had become king.

## A Royal Heir

Because Jesus was a divine child his adoptive father handed the reign over to Him. Therefore, Jesus was a legitimate *royal* heir to the throne.

Many bible scholars follow this same line of thought. Donald Grey Barnhouse gives an excellent summary. The line that had no curse upon it produced Heli and his daughter the Virgin Mary and her Son Jesus Christ. He is therefore eligible by the line of Nathan and exhausts that line. The line that had a curse on it produced Joseph and exhausts the line of Solomon, for Joseph s `other children now have an elder brother who, legally, by adoption, is the royal heir. How can the title be free in any case? A curse on one line and the lack of reigning royalty in the other.

But when God the Holy Spirit begat the Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the virgin without any use of a human father, the child that was born was the seed of David according to the flesh. And when Joseph married Mary and took the unborn child under his protecting care, giving him the title that had come down to him through his ancestor Solomon, the Lord Jesus became the legal Messiah, the royal messiah, the uncursed messiah, the true Messiah, the only possible messiah. The lines are exhausted. Any man that ever comes into this world professing to fulfill the conditions will be a liar and the child

## Jesus Christ: The Only Possible Legitimate Messiah

Any man that ever comes into this world professing to fulfill the conditions will be a liar and the child of the devil (*Man's Ruin: Exposition of Bible Doctrines, Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 1, *Romans 1:1-32*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952, p. 45-47).

### A Legal Heir

Moreover, because Jesus descended from Mary, who also was a descendent of King David through the lineage of Nathan, He had a *legal* claim to the throne. The two lines of David focused on the Messiah. No one else could ever bring a legitimate claim to the throne of David.

Luke presented the physical line of Jesus through His mother who descended from David through the line of Nathan (Luke 3:31). in this way Jesus escaped the curse of Jehoiachin.

Donald Barnhouse concludes, "If Jesus is not the Messiah who has descended from David according to the Old Testament prophecies, there will never be a Messiah. For Jesus had no human children, and each of his brothers (who are the only other possibilities through whom another messiah might descend) had the curse on him and would have passed it on to his children and Jeremiah's prophecy would thus be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ is the legitimate descendent from two lines of King David. He is the King announced in the Jewish prophecies. He is the King Messiah who was also the Son of God. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. No one else can make that claim. He is the only possible legitimate Messiah. There can absolutely be no other.

How significant that the great prophecy that the Messiah King would come through the line of David was given just a few verses after the great words of judgment on the descendents of Jehoiachin. C. C. Ryrie notes, "If Jesus had been born only in the line of Joseph (and thus of Jechoniah, Heb. Coniah), He would not have been qualified to reign on the throne of David in the Millennium. He also writes, "Had our Lord been the natural son of Joseph, He could not have been successful on the throne of David because of this curse. But since He came through Mary's lineage, He was not affected by this curse. There was no curse on Nathan's line.

Though Jechoniah's sons never occupied the throne, the line of rulership passed through them. If Jesus had been a physical descendent of Jechoniah, He would not have been able to occupy David's throne. Luke's genealogy makes it clear that Jesus was a *legal* descendant of David through his son Nathan (Lk. 3:31). Joseph, a descendent of Solomon, was Jesus' legal adoptive father, so Jesus traced His *royal* rights to the throne through Joseph.

Jesus Christ is the only legitimate legal Jewish Messiah. Let us bow and worship Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

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