

Response to...

"The Fabulous Prophecies of the Messiah"

Part IV: Problems in the Genealogies of Jesus [Revised: May 2008 (added material to Solomon/Nathan and 'non-Joseph genetics' issues)]

There are various alleged genealogical prophecies about the ancestry of the Messiah. It is claimed that Genesis 22:18 and 12:2-3 are prophecies that the Messiah will be a descendent of Abraham, but these verses say nothing about the Messiah. They say simply that the descendants of Abraham will be blessed.

A couple of points here:

- I AGREE with Jim here that these prophecies are quite vague (if referring to a messiah-type), and that they certainly don't carry an explicit reference to a Messiah.
- I DISAGREE with his comment that they are talking about ONLY ABRAHAM's descendants being blessed. If you look at both texts, you can clearly see the reference to 'blessings for the WORLD' (not just blessings for Abraham's descendants), THROUGH Abraham's offspring:

Gen. 22:18 "and through your offspring ALL NATIONS ON EARTH will be blessed, because you have obeyed me". (emphasis mine)

Gen. 12:2-3 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and ALL PEOPLES ON EARTH will be blessed through you." (emphasis mine)

- So, even though a messianic figure is NOT explicitly mentioned, one has to wonder HOW such 'global blessings' are going to be delivered by his natural offspring. (I can see how a 'messiah' might be implicit in the promises, but the NT gospels don't cite these as applying to Jesus.)

Other claimed prophecies about the Messiah's ancestry are that he will be of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10, Micah 5:2), of the family line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1, 10), and of the house of David (Jeremiah 23:5, 2 Samuel 7:12-16, Psalms 132:11). Some of these do appear to be genuine messianic prophecies, but others simply seem to refer to future kings. All of these verses refer to kings--and thus none have been fulfilled by Jesus.

I already presented my evidence and arguments that Jesus WAS a king during his time on earth, in the discussion on [Micah 5.2](#).

But the problems for these prophecies run even deeper. Is Jesus actually of the tribe of Judah, the family line of Jesse, and the house of David? The sole evidence for this is two sets of genealogies for Jesus, in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38.

Strictly speaking, this is untrue. There are TONS of references to Jesus as being in the lineage of David, throughout the NT, and NOT just in the genealogies.

For examples:

- in Zechariah's Song - Luke 1:69
- The blindman at Jericho - Mt 9:27; Mr 10:47
- The Canaanite Woman (a foreigner!) - Mt 15:22
- The questioning crowd in Mt 12:23
- The massive crowd at the Triumphal Entry - Mt 21:15
- Apostle Peter - Acts 2.25ff
- Apostle Paul - Acts 13.22ff; Romans 1.3; 2 Tim 2.8
- Apostle John - Revelation 5:5; 22.16

It is worth pointing out that the issue of his Davidic blood was NEVER raised as an issue by his enemies (for the first several centuries!)--it was his alleged blasphemy and exorbitant claims that 'brought the house down'. And even though the general ignorance of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was an issue (John 7:42), the local genealogical records were easily accessible to would-be-antagonists.

In fact, even after the time of Jesus, the family members of Jesus' family were being called up before the Roman government, in its attempt to eliminate the family of David. Hegesippus (via Eusebius) mentions several relatives of Jesus who were brought before Domitian for investigation (see discussion in HI:JRJ, chapter two: "The Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church").

So, there really was a wide base of acceptance (on the basis of evidence) for Jesus' lineage. (For a discussion of the title "Son of David", see Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp254-258.)

Both of these trace Jesus' lineage through his father, Joseph. If the virgin birth story is taken seriously, then Jesus lacks the proper ancestry.

What Jim is arguing here is simple and worth making explicit:

- The genealogies show that JOSEPH is the descendent of David;
- Jesus, by virtue of the virgin birth, is NOT a gene-carrying descendent of Joseph;
- Therefore, Jesus is NOT a gene-carrying descendent of David.

However, notice the main **assumption** in this argument:

Only gene-carrying descendants are considered as legal descendants.

This assumption can be shown to be false. Let's look at the situation and background closely.

1. Matthew and Luke present different genealogies of Jesus--one through David's son Solomon (the royal line) and the other through David's son Nathan (the non-royal line). The royal line is traced in Matthew; the "natural" line in Luke. Matthew's genealogy goes only back to Abraham (to show the Jewish character of the King); Luke's goes back to Adam (to show the universal aspect of the Savior). Matthew emphasizes Jesus' royalty; Luke, his humanity.
2. It is debated whether the genealogy in Matthew belongs to Joseph's family, and the one in Luke applies to Mary's line, or vice versa. One is a 'physical line' and the other a 'royal line'. (The historical evidence is fairly strong that both Mary and Joseph were of the house of David.) Strictly speaking, however, ANY DESCENDENT of David would be considered of the 'royal' family, because it was defined by the ancestor--NOT the current holder (or non-holder) of the throne. So, for example, in the case in 2 Sam 21, the children of Saul and his concubine Rizpah were of 'Saul and his bloody house', but--as children of a concubine--they would NEVER be in the line of succession.
3. Both genealogies are 'aware' of the virgin birth: Luke adds the phrase "He was the son, SO IT WAS THOUGHT, of Joseph" (3:23) and Matthew switches verbs from "X begat Y" to "Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom (feminine pronoun) was born Jesus".
4. Joseph is already a legal heir of David, but he seems also to 'pick up' Mary's legal heritage, too. How?

Probably through the **laws of inheritance**, dealing with sonless families.

The Jewish folk had **numerous** provisions for cases of inheritance-transfer in extreme cases. One of the more frequent situations that had to be covered (in a land-based, clan-ownership system) was that of childless marriages, or in some cases, of son-less marriages.

One of the more concise statements of how this would apply here, is by J. Stafford Wright in *Dict. of New Test. Theol.*, III. 662:

"Mary's father (Heli?) had two daughters, Mary and the unnamed wife of Zebedee (John 19:25; Matt 27:56). **If there were no sons, Joseph would become son of Heli on his marriage, to preserve the family name and inheritance** (cf. Num 27:1-11; 36:1-12, esp. v. 8, which accounts for Mary marrying a man of the family of David.)"

[The main passages in the OT that refer to these various laws are Num 7:1-11; Num 36:1-12; Lev 25:25; Dt 25:5-10. These practices were widespread in the Ancient Near East, and a good discussion of the details in Israel and differences from the ANE can be found in Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Vol 1--Social Institutions*. Notice that--even though there might be cases of levirate marriages in the pre-Joseph genealogies (as is often argued in the Jeconiah issue)-- this specifically is NOT the case of levirate marriage, which involves brothers. Mary is not a widow.] This is was apparently common in the OT/Tanaach and in other ANE nations, and the first mention in the Bible is the case of Zelophehad's daughters. This case is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Bible, as deal the issue of inheritance in cases of sonless marriages. The daughters inherited the estate:

"In this situation, therefore, the decision is made and laws are enacted giving daughters the right to inherit in the absence of any male heirs, as well as establishing a law of procedure in cases of inheritance. Some precedent seems to exist for this in Mesopotamian legal documents (Sumerian text Gudea statute B [c. 2150 b.c.]; Alalakh [eighteenth century b.c.]; Nuzi; and Emar). Matthews, V. h., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). *The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (Nu 27:11). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

But it doesn't stop here. We have cases where the men who married these daughters became 'heirs' of the father, even taking his name:

Now Sheshan had no sons, only daughters. And Sheshan had an Egyptian servant whose name was Jarha. 35 And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant in marriage, and she bore him Attai. 36 And Attai became the father of Nathan, and Nathan became the father of Zabad, 37 and Zabad became the father of Ephlal, and Ephlal became the father of Obed, 38 and Obed became the father of Jehu, and Jehu became the father of Azariah, 39 and Azariah became the father of Helez, and Helez became the father of Eleasah, 40 and Eleasah became the father of Sismai, and

Sismai became the father of Shallum, 41 and Shallum became the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah became the father of Elishama. New American Standard Bible .(1 Ch 2:34).

And of the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of aBarzillai, who took a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and he was called by their name." New American Standard Bible . (Ezr 2:61).

Comments on these:

"Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his slave as a wife: Because Sheshan lacked male heirs, he might have instituted a procedure like that followed in the case of the five daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27:1–11*; Josh 17:3–6*). These women, who had no brothers, successfully requested permission from Moses to inherit the property of their father, who had died, in order to preserve his name. In a subsequent ruling, it was decided that the daughters of Zelophehad must marry within their tribe lest their inheritance pass to the other tribe into which they had married (Num 36:1–12*) . Judging by the precedent of the daughters of Zelophehad, Sheshan's name and property would have passed to his son-in-law. Klein, R. W., & Krüger, T. (2006). 1 Chronicles : A commentary. Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (101). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

"The sons of Barzillai were the descendants of a priest who had married a daughter, probably an heiress (Num. 36), of Barzillai the Gileadite, so well known in the history of David (2 Sam. 17:27, 19:32–39; 1 Kings 2:7), and had taken her name for the sake of taking possession of her inheritance. That by contracting this marriage he had not renounced for himself and his descendants his priestly privileges, is evident from the fact, that when his posterity returned from captivity, they laid claim to these privileges." [K&D, in loc]

There is also a case in the Levitical line, although the principle is not stated explicitly:

"Mahli had two sons, Eleazar and Kish; the first of whom, however, left behind him at his death only daughters, who were married to the sons of Kish (i.e., their cousins), according to the law as to daughters who were heiresses (Num. 26:6–9). Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (2002). Commentary on the Old Testament. (3:545-546). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

"According to the later law, where there were no sons, daughters inherited, and with the express purpose of preventing a man's name from being lost to his family (Nu. 27:4), but such daughters must marry only into the family of the tribe of their father (Nu. 36:6). In v. 22 it is stated that these conditions were fulfilled in the case of Eleazar and doubtless the verse was added to show **why Eleazar was also counted among the fathers' houses though he was known to have had no sons.**—Curtis, E. L., & Madsen, A. A. (1910). A critical and exegetical commentary on the books of Chronicles. Series title in part also at head of t.-p. (265). New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

So, this inheritance-by-marriage principle is well-established from the Hebrew Bible.

What this 'nets out to' is that Joseph 'married into' Mary's gene-pool...and hence, the virgin birth doesn't stop the lineage "transfer".

In other words, that the physical-gene did NOT come FROM JOSEPH was IRRELEVANT in this case. **Legal and kinship standing was related to EITHER 'genes' OR to 'marriage'** .

So, strictly speaking, Jesus got his genes from Mary and his **legal standing (in the royal heir line) from Joseph** (thru the marriage of M+J).

5. Now, as a practical matter, I consider the gene-issue to be *only somewhat* important, simply because there were other indications that the Messiah WOULD BE from the 'stock of Jesse' etc--images and phrases that DO put more emphasis on the blood-line than does simply 'legal lineage'--but I am persuaded that these requirements were adequately satisfied from Mary's side. The bloodline of David was literally satisfied by the lineage of Mary, and the dynastic line of David-through-Solomon was legally satisfied through Joseph (after, and even BEFORE, his marriage to Mary--he did have to go to Bethlehem to register, remember).

[There are passages that suggest that the Messiah-as-Davidic-king would be **descended from Solomon** (1 Chron 17; 2 Sam 7)--and this is **certainly satisfied by the lineage in Matthew**--but it does not seem to be *absolutely* necessary.

1. The promise to David was **unconditional** and is constantly referred to through the OT/Tanack and through out the Rabbinic literature. It is always the 'throne of David' and never the 'Throne of Solomon'. It is always David who returns and never Shlomo.
2. The promise to Solomon *sounds like* the same unconditional promise to David, but it is **not**--it is a **conditional** promise as can be seen from parallel and other passages:

He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel. 6 "And He said to me, 'Your son Solomon is the one who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be a son to Me, and I will be a father to him.

7 *'And I will establish his kingdom forever, if he resolutely performs My commandments and My ordinances, as is done now.'* (1 Ch 28:5)

And as for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked even to do according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, 18 then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to be ruler in Israel.' (2 Ch 7:17).

"First Chronicles 17:11–14 is a parallel passage to the verses we just read in 2 Samuel 7. Note carefully the language used about Solomon: "I will establish his kingdom... I will establish his throne forever... I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever" (1 Chron. 17:11b, 12b, 14). What glorious promises! This is repeated once more in 1 Chronicles 22:10b, "And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever." There was, however, a divine condition clearly laid out: "I will establish his kingdom forever if he is unswerving in carrying out my commands and laws, as is being done at this time" (1 Chron. 28:7). Was Solomon unswerving in carrying out God's commands and laws? Hardly! The scriptural record is very clear: [Brown, M. L. (2007). Answering Jewish objections to Jesus, Volume 4: New Testament objections. (90). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Baker Books.]

3. In fact, Solomon completely violated this condition--He didn't only 'sin lightly'--and this was documented in the Hebrew Bible and recognized in the Rabbis:

"...the categorical statement found in **1 Kings 9:4–9** where God speaks directly to Solomon, warning him plainly: *As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, "You shall never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel."* But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. And though this temple is now imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, "Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?" People will answer, "Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them." The divine threat here is so emphatic that Hebrew scholar Ziony Zevit claims that **God actually refused Solomon's request in 1 Kings 8:25–26 for an unconditional guarantee.** In that passage Solomon prayed this very promise back to the Lord—namely, that David would never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel. Here the Lord says to him that there are conditions, and the breaking of those conditions could actually result in the exile of the people and the destruction of the Temple. Thankfully, God was determined to keep his long-term promises to David, but nothing was guaranteed to Solomon or his posterity. Such a pledge simply does not exist anywhere in the Bible. [Brown, M. L. (2007). Answering Jewish objections to Jesus, Volume 4: New Testament objections. (92). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Baker Books]

"Solomon did not meet God's conditions, and his throne was not established forever. The Word of God states this clearly. There are even **some Rabbinic traditions** which claim that Solomon was banished from the throne during his lifetime; see y. Sanh 2:6; cf. also b. Meg 11b: "Is there not Solomon?—He did not retain his kingdom [till his death]," explained by Rashi to mean, "He did not complete his kingship, for he was expelled," with reference to his comments at b. Gittin 68b, where he states that Solomon did not return to his throne. How then can the anti-missionaries claim that Solomon's throne was established forever when, in reality, some Rabbinic traditions claim he did not even finish out his rule on that throne? To the contrary, it is the throne of David that remains established forever. [Brown, M. L. (2007). Answering Jewish objections to Jesus, Volume 4: New Testament objections. (91). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Baker Books.]

4. And indeed, when God DID divest Solomon of his kingdom (upon him failing the condition--as the Hebrew Bible explicitly says), his son ruled a part of the kingdom IN SPITE of his relationship to Solomon! So,

For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. 6 And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. 8 Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. 9 Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the Lord had commanded. 11 So the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. 12 "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen." [1 Ki 11:4]

Notice that Solomon **ACTUALLY LOSES the kingdom to someone not in his line** (his servant). And the fractional part of the kingdom that IS retained by his son IS ONLY because of David, NOT because of a promise to Solomon! His son got a scrap of the kingdom because of his relationship to David, and IN SPITE OF his relationship to the now-dethroned Solomon. There is no

'throne of Solomon' after this point--there are only references to that of David. Solomon virtually disappears from the Bible at this point (except for a *negative example* in Neh.13.26ff), to reappear only in the illustrations of Jesus.

5. And, as for some of Solomon's *brothers* being candidates for fathering royal successors (like the Nathan-Jesus biological connection) once Solomon's *progeny* were 'detached from ' Solomon [and only considered due to their 'attachment' to David], this is common in OT/Tanack times (e.g., when a foreign king, for example, would kill the reigning Judean king and place his brother or uncle or whatever on the throne in his place). Of course, God reserves the right to back out of a conditional covenant with His servants, if they are in criminal disobedience. An instructive case can be found in the case of Eli and his evil sons (in 1 Sam 2):

A man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the Lord says: 'Did I not plainly reveal myself to your ancestor's house when they were in Egypt in the house of Pharaoh? 2:28 I chose your ancestor from all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer sacrifice on my altar, to burn incense, and to bear the ephod before me. I gave to your ancestor's house all the fire offerings made by the Israelites. 2:29 Why are you scorning my sacrifice and my offering that I commanded for my dwelling place? You have honored your sons more than you have me by having made yourselves fat from the best parts of all the offerings of my people Israel.' 2:30 Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'I really did say that your house and your ancestor's house would serve me forever.' But now the Lord says, 'May it never be! For I will honor those who honor me, but those who despise me will be cursed! 2:31 In fact, days are coming when I will remove your strength and the strength of your father's house. There will not be an old man in your house! 2:32 You will see trouble in my dwelling place! Israel will experience blessings, but there will not be an old man in your house for all time. 2:33 Any one of you that I do not cut off from my altar, I will cause your eyes to fail and will cause you grief. All of those born to your family will die in the prime of life. 2:34 This will be a confirming sign for you that will be fulfilled through your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: in a single day they both will die! 2:35 Then I will raise up for myself a faithful priest. He will do what is in my heart and soul. I will build for him a secure dynasty and he will serve my chosen one for all time. 2:36 Everyone who remains in your house will come to bow before him for a little money and for a scrap of bread. Each will say, 'Assign me to a priestly task so I can eat a scrap of bread.'"

"It is no wonder that God rejected the priesthood of Eli and his sons. After reviewing the circumstances of the selection of Eli's ancestors to be priests of the Lord over Israel (vv. 27-28), an unnamed man of God announced to Eli that his priesthood would end because it had violated the conditions for its ongoing existence (vv. 29-33). Yet the Lord would not terminate the office of priest altogether for He would raise up . . . a faithful priest (v. 35) whose line of succession (house) would be firmly established and who would minister before His anointed one (i.e., the king) forever. In human terms this was fulfilled when the priesthood was taken from Abiathar, descendant of Aaron's son Ithamar, and given to Zadok, descendant of Aaron's son Eleazar (1 Kings 2:27, 35). But in the ultimate sense the "faithful Priest" and "Anointed One" are One and the same, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is both Priest and King (Ps. 110; Heb. 5:6; Rev. 19:16). [BKC]

"Eli the high priest was a descendant of Ithamar, the younger son of Aaron, as we may see from the fact that his great-grandson Ahimelech was "of the sons of Ithamar" (1 Chron. 24:3). In perfect agreement with this, Josephus (Ant. v. 11, 5) relates, that after the high priest Ozi of the family of Eleazar, Eli of the family of Ithamar received the high-priesthood. The circumstances which led to the transfer of this honour from the line of Eleazar to that of Ithamar are unknown. [Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (2002). Commentary on the Old Testament. (2:388). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.]

"The decimation threatened in vv 30-33 will be fulfilled in Saul's massacre of the priests of Nob (1 Sam 22:11-23), who, at least in the view of the historian, are descended from the house of Eli (cf. 14:3, 18; 22:9, 20). The one man who will escape Yahweh's execution (v 33) is clearly Abiathar, one of David's two priests, whom Solomon expelled to Anathoth because he supported Adonijah in the contest for kingship at David's death (1 Kgs 1:7). This expulsion is explicitly identified in 1 Kgs 2:26-27 as the fulfillment of the word spoken against the house of Eli. Abiathar's coming banishment is expressed metaphorically in v 33 as a life spent in bitter weeping. All the rest of Eli's descendants are also to fall by the sword. Thus, Saul's annihilation of the Nob priesthood, incited by his suspicion of their helping his archrival David, is interpreted in chap. 2 as punishment for the sins of Eli and his sons. The death of Hophni and Phinehas on one day (cf. 4:11) will serve as a sign and guarantee of the surety of the threat. That is, the death of his own two sons will dramatize that the rest of his house will be wiped out, save for one person, Abiathar, who will live out his life in bitterness. Interestingly, nothing is mentioned in chap. 2 of Eli's own death on that day, or of the loss of the ark, which seems to have brought the greatest shock to Eli. V 35 announces the establishment of a faithful priest, who is not to be Samuel, as one might expect, but is clearly Zadok, David's other priest, who came to preeminence under Solomon. [Klein, R. W. (2002). Vol. 10: Word Biblical Commentary : 1 Samuel. Word Biblical Commentary (27). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.]

Thus, the genealogy in Matthew traces Jesus back to Solomon and then to David. **Full legal, dynastic lineage of Jesus is affirmed thereby.**

On the other hand, if the genealogy in Matthew is taken seriously, then Jesus has as an ancestor Jeconiah (Matthew 1:12), of whom the prophet Jeremiah said, "Write this man down as 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." (Jeremiah 22:30) The genealogy in Luke suffers from the same problem, since it includes Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, both of whom were descendants of Jeconiah.

I personally am **not convinced this 'Jeconiah' problem EVEN EXISTS**, and here's why:

- I don't think the prophecy in Jeremiah is referring to Jeconiah's descendants FOR ALL TIME. The context of the passage seems **to limit the scope to just his immediate descendants**:
 1. The phrase 'in his lifetime' (lit. "in his days"- *yom*) focuses the passage on the immediate future;
 2. the "for" word connects the 'no man of his descendants' with the 'in his lifetime'--the strong casual relationship between *not-prospering-now* and his descendants is strong evidence for an *immediate* future context;
 3. the 'again' word (*od*) is not the "big" FOREVER word: *ad-olam* or *le-olam*.
 4. Immediately after this passage, Jeremiah relays a promise by Yahweh to raise up 'a righteous branch to David' --a promise of the continuing line of David! Could Jeremiah have been so blind as to not notice such a contradiction (if the preceding passage referred to the 'end of the Davidic line'?!). It looks much more likely that this is a deposing of Jeconiah, and a promise of a better king from the stock of David (maybe even from non-immediate/non-physical descendants of Jeconiah?).

This his-generation-only-curse view is pointed out by commentators as well:

"The image in v 30 shifts to that of a scribe, whether a census taker (as Holladay suggests) or land register (as Carroll suggests) or a scribe tallying prisoners of war to be taken to Babylon. The official in charge says of Jehoiachin, "Write (register) this man, 'Stripped' (perhaps dishonored, disgraced) or 'Childless.'" A register of those taken captive would logically include the head of the family followed by a listing of dependents. It might also include comments such as disgraced, banished (as LXX implies), or stripped (of power). Such is to remain the condition of Jehoiachin. The fact that children are apparently included in v 28, and sons are listed in 1 Chr 3:17-18, should not diminish the thrust of the oracle. The sense of "childless" or "stripped" is that Jehoiachin will have no descendant ruling upon the throne of David. The word *tslach* occurs twice in this verse. Often the word is translated with the sense of "prosper." **However, here a better sense seems to be that of "succeed." No man will succeed during Jehoiachin's days**; indeed none will succeed. The implication might be that of prosperity: that no man would prosper during his days. But the full intent of that phrase is shown in the two parallel lines, "none sitting on the throne of David, nor ruling again in Judah." Jehoiachin will have no descendant to advance or succeed to the throne." [Craigie, P. C. (2002). Vol. 26: *Word Biblical Commentary* : Jeremiah 1-25.]

So, **if the prophecy of Jeconiah is NOT to be extended past his immediate descendants**, as I have just argued, then Jim's problem evaporates.

- EVEN IF the passage IS a longer-range prediction, the line THROUGH Jeconiah only comes to Joseph and not to Mary. The gene-stream stops physically at Joseph through the virgin birth. Therefore, Jeconiah, who is only mentioned in Matthew (the legal line to Joseph) doesn't 'pass on the blood' (assuming 'descendants' referred to bloodline, of course).
- But **many commentators understand the curse to have been rescinded by God in Haggai anyway**:

"Jehoiachin's name appears in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus Christ (1:11, 12), and some contend this contradicts Jeremiah's oracle of judgment against the king's descendants (Jer 22:30). Yet it is possible to understand Haggai's blessing of Zerubbabel (2:20-24) as **the rescission of Jeremiah's curse and the reinstatement of Jehoiachin's line on the Davidic** (and ultimately Messianic) throne (cf. Is 56:3-5)." [Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible.]

Rabbinic tradition generally agrees with this as well:

"for no man of his seed shall prosper -In this, too, no man of his seed shall prosper, namely **that no one will occupy the throne of David nor rule in Judah**. Although we find that Zerubbabel, his great grandson, did rule over Judah upon the return of the exiles, the Rabbis (*Pesikta /Rav Kahana* p. 163a) state that this : 'was because Jehoiachin repented in prison. They state further: Repentance is great, for it nullifies a person's sentence, as it is stated: inscribe this man childless.' But since he repented, his sentence was revoked and turned to the good, and he said to him, "I will take you, Zerubbabel, and I will make you a signet" (Haggai 2:23). They state further: Said Rabbi Johanan: Exile expiates all sins, as it is said: Inscribe this man childless," and after he was exiled, it IS written: '(I Chron. 3:17) And the sons of Jeconiah, Assir, Shealtiel his son--Redak" [*Judaica Books of the Prophets*, in loc]

[Notice how this parallels the known case of Manasseh, the evil Davidic king who was exiled by Assyria to its southern province in Babylon, and who then repented and was restored to rulership in Judah--2 Chron 33.10-13.]

This highly-probable understanding **completely removes any problem with Jeconiah** in anyone's genealogy. And thus **we do not really even NEED any 'additional' lineage 'around him'**, to establish legitimate Davidic-dynastic heritage. [We will discuss the 'why then did Luke use Nathan?' issue below, at the END of the article.]

- Now the issue about Shealtiel and Zerubbabel I find intriguing. The argument Jim makes here is that THEY are descendants of the 'bad Jeconiah' and THEY show up in BOTH the legal AND the physical lineages of Jesus. And, if the prophecy in Jeremiah is taken to mean a long-range restriction (which I/many others do NOT believe is the case, see above), then we clearly have a problem in the Lukan, physical/gene-stream lineage of Jesus.

But let me ask an impertinent question here. Why do we believe the S+Z (Shealtiel and Zerubbabel) of the two lineage's are THE SAME PEOPLE? Think about it:

- They have different parents
- They have different children.
- They are descended from different sons of David.
- Their chronological placements on a time line could differ by as much as a CENTURY! (depending on how the omissions in Matthew are accounted for, and on what the average age of child-bearing was.)

THE ONLY THING THEY HAVE IN COMMON ARE THEIR NAMES!

This single commonality can hardly be a strong argument for their identity:

1. Zerubbabel was a common name from the early Persian period (539-331bc.), as shown by cuneiform inscriptions from Babylonia (see *ZPEB*, V. 1057)
2. The genealogies themselves have numerous names that repeat WITHIN the genealogy (e.g. Joseph, Mattathias, Judah) without being the same individuals; These names could also be common names.
3. The names in the genealogies are standard, common, everyday names. We have NUMEROUS people named Levi, Amos, Nahum, etc. in the OT accounts. There is just NO REASON to associate the S+Z of Luke with the S+Z of Matthew. (And even the pattern of S-followed-by-Z doesn't carry much weight--families often honored prominent people this way.)

What this means is that the S+Z of Matthew are the S+Z of Jeremiah, and that the S+Z of Luke (whose genes DO reach to Jesus) could easily be a different set, descended from Nathan and not through Solomon-thru-Jeconiah.

[A very careful, detailed argument that these are **different** pairs, is given by R. Larry Overstreet, "Difficulties of New Testament Genealogies", *Grace Theological Journal*, Fall 1981, vol 2:2, 304ff. His concluding comment on this has an interesting personal note to it: "The position then, that the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Matthew are the same men mentioned by Luke **fails in all three of its possible explanations**. This constitutes a **strong argument that the two men of Matthew are indeed distinct from the two men of Luke**. However, **it may be argued that it seems unusual, at the least, for blood relatives in the same generation to have the same names**. This is **not a significant objection**. **This present writer has a first cousin, about the same age, with the same first and last name as his own**. Therefore, the identical names need not be an obstacle to recognizing what the Scriptures indicate—that the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Matthew are not the same as those of Luke."]

So, as I said at the beginning, I do not think there is even a problem here at all.

But there is also a possibility that they ARE the same, so let's note that *even if they ARE the same individuals, there are still reasonable approaches/reconstructions for this*. Consider:

"According to 1 Chronicles 3:16–17, **Jehoiachin had seven descendants**. These, however, were hauled off into Babylon and there, **according to an archaeological finding on a Babylonian tablet in the famous Ishtar Gate, all seven were made eunuchs. In this manner, Jehoiachin became "as if childless," as no man of his seed prospered, nor did any sit on David's throne**. David's line through his son Solomon abruptly ended. However, the line of David did continue through one of Solomon's brothers, Nathan (not to be confused with Nathan the prophet). **By the best reconstructions possible from the evidence on hand, Jehoiachin adopted the seven sons of Neri, a descendant of David through Nathan. Neri's son Shealtiel died childless and so his brother Pedaiah performed the duty of levirate marriage (Deut 25:5–10), and as a result Zerubbabel was born**. Accordingly, **Zerubbabel, the postexilic governor of Judah during the days of Haggai and Zechariah, was the legal son of Shealtiel, the actual son of Pedaiah, and thus the descendant of David on two counts**. First Chronicles 3:19 informs us that Zerubbabel was the son of Pedaiah, brother of Shealtiel. Luke's genealogy states that Shealtiel was a descendant of Neri (Lk 3:27). We conclude, therefore, that Jehoiachin's line did come to an end and that God in his wisdom provided for another branch of David's line to continue the promise made to David which led to the coming of Christ the Messiah." [*Hard sayings of the Bible*]

"Acc. to 1 Chron. 3:16f., Jechoniah had two sons, Zedekiah and Assir, of whom the former died childless, the second had but one daughter; and from her and her husband, of the line of Nathan, was born Shealtiel, who also died childless; see the expos. of 1 Chron. 3:16f. ... But besides this, according to the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:27, Shealtiel is a son of Neri, a descendant of David, of the lineage of Nathan, not of Solomon; and **according to Hagg. 1:1, 12, Ezra 3:2; 5:2, and Matt. 1:12, Zerubbabel is son of Shealtiel; while, according to vv. 18 and 19 of our chapter [1 Chron 3], he is a son of Pedaiah, a brother of Shealtiel**. These divergent statements may be reconciled by the following combination. The discrepancy in regard to the enumeration of Shealtiel among the sons of Jeconiah, a descendant of Solomon, and the statement that he was descended from Neri, a descendant of Nathan, Solomon's brother, **is removed by the supposition that Jeconiah, besides the Zedekiah mentioned in v. 16, who died childless, had another son, viz.,**

Assir, who left only a daughter, who then, according to the law as to heiresses (Num. 27:8; 36:8f.), married a man belonging to a family of her paternal tribe, viz., Neri, of the family of David, in the line of Nathan, and that from this marriage sprang Shealtiel, Malchiram, and the other sons (properly grandsons) of Jeconiah mentioned in v. 18. If we suppose the eldest of these, Shealtiel, to come into the inheritance of his maternal grandfather, he would be legally regarded as his legitimate son. In our genealogy, therefore, along with the childless Assir, Shealtiel is introduced as a descendant of Jeconiah, while in Luke he is called, according to his actual descent, a son of Neri. The other discrepancy in respect to the descendants of Zerubbabel is to be explained, as has been already shown on Hagg. 1:1, by the law of Levirate marriage, and by the supposition that Shealtiel died without any male descendants, leaving his wife a widow. In such a case, according to the law (Deut. 25:5–10, cf. Matt. 22:24–28), it became the duty of one of the brothers of the deceased to marry his brother's widow, that he might raise up seed, i.e., posterity, to the deceased brother; and the first son born of this marriage would be legally incorporated with the family of the deceased, and registered as his son. After Shealtiel's death, his second brother Pedaiah fulfilled this Levirate duty, and begat, in his marriage with his sister-in-law, Zerubbabel, who was now regarded, in all that related to laws of heritage, as Shealtiel's son, and propagated his race as his heir. According to this right of heritage, Zerubbabel is called in the passages quoted from Haggai and Ezra, as also in the genealogy in Matthew, the son of Shealtiel. The זבנִי seems to hint at this peculiar position of Shealtiel with reference to the proper descendants of Jeconiah, helping to remind us that he was son of Jeconiah not by natural birth, but only because of his right of heritage only, on his mother's side. [Keil, C. F., & Delitzsch, F. (2002). *Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Vol. 3, Page 422-423). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.]

"Zerubbabel (= "Dispersed in Babylon," or "Begotten in Babylon") was head of the tribe of Judah at the time of the return from the Babylonish Captivity in the first year of Cyrus; and he was therefore an obvious person to include in the pedigree of the Messiah. Hence he was called the Rhesa or Prince of the Captivity. In 1 Chron. 3:19 he is given as the son of Pedaiah and nephew of Shealtiel: and this is probably correct. **But he became the heir of Shealtiel because the latter had no sons.** In Mt. 1:12 and 1 Chron. 3:17, Shealtiel is the son of Jeconiah, king of Judah; whereas Lk. makes him the son of Neri. Jeconiah. is called Coniah, Jer. 22:24, and Jehoiachin, 52:31; 2 Kings 24:6; 2 Chron. 36:8, 9; and all three names mean "The Lord will establish." From Jer. 22:30 we learn that he had no children; and **therefore the line of David through Solomon became extinct in him.** The three pedigrees **indicate that an heir for the childless Jeconiah was found in Shealtiel the son of Neri**, who was of the house of David through Nathan. Thus the junction of the two lines of descent in Shealtiel and Zerubbabel is fully explained. Shealtiel was the son of Neri of Nathan's line, and also the heir of Jeconiah of Solomon's line; and having no sons himself, he had his nephew Zerubbabel as adopted son and heir. " [Plummer, A. (1896). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel According to S. Luke* (Page 103). London: T&T Clark International.]

[The **different** Shealtiel and Pedaiah **connection possibilities** are discussed in the **Rabbinics**, as well:] "Zerubbabel - mentioned in Haggai 1:1 as Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah. In fact, Zerubbabel was the grandson of Shealtiel and the son of Pedaiah, as mentioned in I Chronicles 3.17ff. *Redak* to Haggai explains that grandchildren are sometimes referred to as children, and perhaps Shealtiel was regraded with higher esteem than was Pedaiah. Zechariah, son of Iddo, mentioned in Ezra, was also actually the son of berechiah, son of Iddo. *Ibn Ezra* (3:2, Haggai ad loc) conjectures that Zerubbabel was raised by Shealtiel, whom he considers to be Zerubbabel's uncle (Zerubbabel being the son of Pedaiah, the brother of Shealtiel). As an example, *Ibn Ezra* cites II Samuel 21:8, **where sons of Michal are mentioned even though Michal had no children. They, too, are referred to as her sons because she raised them.**" [*Judaica Books of the Hagiographa*, at Ezra 2.2]

But we should note that Shealtiel could very well be the son of Assir, and NOT the son of Jeconiah--a strict, literal reading of the verse supports this understanding (as also supported by **rabbinic commentators** Ralbag and Mezudath David). But other rabbinic authorities maintain that Sealtiel was the direct son of Jeconiah (so the Sages).

A final oft-noted problem is that the genealogies in Matthew and Luke contradict each other and the Hebrew scriptures.

The difficulties in the genealogies are numerous, but the only thing that 'outnumbers' them are the possible 'solutions'! Before we get into the detail issues that Jim will raise below, let me simply state that EVERY POTENTIAL PROBLEM has MANY, MANY proposed solutions--some smooth, some weird, some tortured. But we really do NOT have enough data to really 'catch these guys' at historical error...But let's look at some candidates, shall we?

Was Jesus' grandfather on Joseph's side Jacob (Matthew 1:16) or Eli (Luke 3:23)?

The answer is "YES"! In the levirate situation described above he would have TWO 'grandfathers'.

Was Shealtiel's father Jeconiah (1 Chronicles 3:17, Matthew 1:12) or Neri (Luke 3:27)?

The answer is "YES"! There were TWO Shealtiels (above)...one with Jeconiah as father; one with Neri. Or--given the marriage transfer thing--it could be BOTH.

Matthew 1:11 omits Jehoiakim (who in Jeremiah 36:29-30 suffers a curse similar to that of his son, Jeconiah) between Josiah and Jeconiah (1 Chronicles 3:15) and Matthew 1:4 omits Admin between Ram and Amminadab (Luke 3:33).

Two issues here: the one of omissions in Matthew and the one on the 'curse' of Jehoiakim.

First the curse of Jehoiakim. Let's look at the passage.

"Also tell Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'This is what the LORD says: You burned that scroll and said, "Why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and cut off both men and animals from it?" Therefore, this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night. I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness; I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them, because they have not listened.' "

Notice: the curse is specifically related to his 'children'. In fulfillment, his kid Jehoichin had a 'reign' of only three months! (2 kgs 24:8). I might consider this a 'bouncing' on the throne, but certainly not 'sitting on it'!

But the bigger issue that is raised in this objection is that of the omissions in the genealogies.

Let's look at the differences between the two genealogies:

1. Matt uses 41 names; Luke uses 71!
2. Matt has a VERY specific structure (3 sets of 14 names); Luke's is a simple list
3. Matt has four women (most foreigners); Luke has none
4. Matt's order descends; Luke ascends.
5. Matt starts with Abraham; Luke ends at Adam.

The main difference between the two is that Matt's has a rhetorical/pedagogical structure to it. In other words, it was designed for memory-retention (common practice in his day -- cf. Keener, *Bible Background Commentary--NT* loc. cit.). The omissions are simply to make the list easier to learn and/or memorize.

Matthew has a fondness for 'threes'. He has three temptations, illustrations of righteousness, miracles of healing, "fear not"s, questions, prayers in Gethsemane, among others. And the "14" in the "3x14" structure of the genealogy is typically attributed to the rabbinic usage of *gematria*--usage of letters for numbers. In this case, the name "David" in Hebrew has a number-count of 14 (fitting for a section on the Son of David).

His word choice for 'begat' simply means 'progenitor' and allows considerable gaps to exist WITHOUT it being an inaccuracy. (E.g. my great-great-great-grandfather 'begat' me, in Matt's word-choice.)

What this means is that 'omissions' in Matthew are NOT 'problems' at all.

Finally, Matthew 1:13 says that Abiud is the son of Zerubbabel, Luke 3:27 says that Rhesa is the son of Zerubbabel, but 1 Chronicles 3:19-20 lists neither as sons of Zerubbabel.

I have already made my arguments above that these are NOT the same Z's.

However, it is important to note one thing here. In this section, Matthew moves into the use of extra-biblical sources of information for the rest of his genealogies. D.A. Carson ("Matthew" in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p.63) summarizes this data succinctly and bears quotation at length:

"After Zerubbabel, Matthew relies on extrabiblical sources of which we know nothing. But there is good evidence that records were kept at least till the end of the first century. Josephus (Life 6[1]) refers to the "public registers" from which he extracts his genealogical information (cf. also Jos. *Contra Apion* I, 28-56 [6-10]). According to Genesis R 98:8, Rabbi Hillel was proved to be a descendant of David because a genealogical scroll was found in Jerusalem. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.19-20) cites Hegesippus to the effect that Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) ordered all descendants of David slain. Nevertheless two of them when summoned, though admitting their Davidic descent, showed their calloused hands to prove they were but poor farmers. So they were let go. But the account shows that genealogical information was still available.

"While no twentieth-century Jew could prove he was from the tribe of Judah, let alone from the house of David, that does not appear to have been a problem in the first century, when lineage was important in gaining access to temple worship."

The point of this extended quotation is simply this: we do not have adequate grounds to dispute (from a historical method perspective) the post-Z genealogies. (There is no reason to suppose that the biblical OT genealogies in the post-Z case are exhaustive, either.)

Just for completeness, here is the FootNote 5, referenced above.

[5] There are two common attempts made to resolve these contradictions. The most common among evangelical Christians is to claim that Luke's genealogy is that of Mary, not Joseph. This fails to explain the repeated convergence followed by divergence as you trace the ancestry backward.

The points of convergence in the geneos were two: once at S+Z and once at Joseph. I have already argued above that the S+Z is NOT A CONVERGENCE, and that the 'convergence' at Joseph is NOT 'genetic' but BY MARRIAGE.

It also fails to explain why the Luke genealogy contains almost twice as many ancestors as Matthew's in the same time period.

The phenomena of the different size/structure of the lists were explained above as due to a simple pedagogical/rhetorical technique of Matthew (common in his day). Not a problem.

Yet another problem is that this explanation conflicts with the Catholic tradition which says that Mary's parents were Joachim and Anna.

This I can't really defend--I simply don't know enough about what this Catholic 'tradition' might involve. I DO know that 'traditions' come in all 'flavors' of 'negotiability' though! In any event, my focus is restricted to general biblical issues.

A second explanation, favored by Catholics, is that each case of divergence is the result of Levirate marriage. That is, the discrepant fathers are brothers of each other, and when one died the other married his brother's wife (see Deuteronomy 25:5). This explanation also fails to explain the difference in number of ancestors.

The levirate marriage approach is entirely possible, of course, but I personally don't see the need, with the exception of the last one perhaps. Levirate marriage was common enough to allow this. But, more to the point, this is not really related AT ALL to the issue of name-counts in the two lineage's--due to the issues discussed above. So, this objection is simply irrelevant.

Question: If the messianic line was supposed to come through Solomon, then why did Luke tie Jesus' Messianic status to David through Nathan, another son?

The more I look at this, **the less I think Luke actually did that.**

It doesn't look like this genealogy has ANY purpose in establishing dynastic or Davidic 'rights'. It just looks like an all-humanity genealogy, which establishes Jesus' continuity with humanity.

So, Bock [*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Luke*] draws from analyses by Glickman and Marshall:

"Jesus' genealogy performs an important role in Luke's Gospel. The account concludes with the name Adam and then mentions that Jesus is the Son of God. This connection indicates **Jesus' relationship to all humankind as their representative**. The **universal** perspective fits very nicely with the Lucan emphasis on salvation for all (Acts 10:34-43; 17:22-31). **In tracing the genealogy all the way back to Adam, Luke distinguishes his genealogy from that of Matthew, who goes back only as far as Abraham** (Matt. 1:1-17), **a choice that focuses on the national promise of a king to Israel**. Danker notes that tracing the genealogy back to God would impress **Hellenistic** readers with the importance of Jesus... The key feature of the genealogy is that it goes past Abraham to Adam. The addition of that perspective alone is significant and is not to be ignored. As Marshall argues, 'To regard all the names from Joseph to Adam as one gigantic parenthesis... misses the point of the genealogy, and to regard divine sonship as mediated to Jesus through his ancestors conflicts with the birth story. Hence the **point of the genealogy is rather to show that Jesus has his place in the human race created by God**.' Outside of Jesus, Adam is the only one related to the title *son of God* in Luke..."

And Geldenhuys specially makes this a point of contrast:

"**Matthew writes for Christians of Jewish descent** and they (especially those who could not yet understand the fact of the virgin birth) would have liked to know whether the man who was known as the father of Jesus was really of Davidic descent. With a view to the ministering to unbelieving Jews who before their conversion would naturally not attach any credence to Jesus' conception by the Holy Ghost, **it was particularly necessary that Matthew should draw attention to the fact that Joseph, Jesus' legal father, was himself of Davidic descent.... But since Luke writes for Romans and Greeks with whom the Davidic origin of Jesus was no matter of topical interest**, it was unnecessary for him to reproduce the genealogical table of Joseph." [NICNT]

Nolland (WBC) would see that Luke is interested in affirming Davidic sonship, but this is minor compared to divine sonship:

"Luke's intention is not merely to take the genealogy back to Adam, the first man (against Rahlfs, BVC 60 [1964] 66). **Certainly it is important to Luke that Jesus be fully part of the human family** (Acts 17:31) into which he is reckoned as child of Mary and Joseph. **Also important to Luke is Jesus' Davidic descent** (Luke 1:27, 32, etc). **But ultimately the striking thing about the genealogy is its termination in God, and this is where we should look for Luke's chief concern, especially in light of the Son of God emphasis of the surrounding pericopes** (3:22; 4:3, 9)...Luke would have us see that Jesus takes his place in the human family and thus in its (since Adam's disobedience) flawed sonship; however, in his own person, in virtue of his unique origin (Luke 1:35) but also as worked out in his active obedience (4:1-13), **he marks a new beginning to sonship** and sets it on an entirely new footing. In this human situation Jesus is the one who is *really* the Son of God."

So, Luke doesn't even seem to be 'messianically centered' in this passage, so **his omission of Solomon is just simply irrelevant**. It doesn't even look like his mention of Nathan is 'anti-Solomonic' or an attempt to 'solve' the Jeconiah problem, or anything like that--it looks just like a 'vanilla' genealogy.

But we can still ask the "Why Nathan?" question (without it meaning "Why did he AVOID Solomon?"), but the answer is probably less 'juicy' than some have supposed.

Since there are many, many names in Luke that have no mention anywhere else in the historical documents (and there are no known 'symbolic codes' which could be used to 'generate' such a list), the most logical explanation is that the names came from a family record. Families kept records (like early Americans kept family trees in the 'family bible') and public institutions did likewise (i.e., the Temple). Mary's family could probably produce such a list easily (especially since it was obviously tied to land ownership--as was clear in the trip to register in Bethlehem on the "first Christmas"). Genealogies were commonplace:

"There is nothing strange in it that the genealogical table of Jesus existed at that time. Under the guiding hand of God the **Jews preserved their genealogical tables with remarkable accuracy through all the centuries before the birth of Jesus and also during the first century after His birth** (cf. the numerous genealogical tables in the Old Testament). Ever since the earliest times the lineage lists were compiled and preserved as accurately as possible. **After their return from the Babylonian exile the Jews again thoroughly fixed their genealogical tables** by committing them to writing and bringing them up to date, and this was continued until the time of Josephus. In his *Autobiography* (para. I) Josephus states that he reproduces his genealogical table as he found it " in the public records ". And in his work *Against Apion* (i) he relates how Jews—even those who lived outside Palestine—sent the names of their children to Jerusalem to be officially recorded.

"It is also well known that the famous Rabbi Hillel at about the time of the appearance of the Saviour was able to prove his Davidic descent from the public registers.

"Especially would persons like Joseph and the family of Mary, who were of Davidic descent, preserve their genealogical tables with special care because the Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would be born of the house of David. **Apart from the public registers, numbers of Jewish families kept private family trees in their homes and handed them down from generation to generation.**

"Thus Luke, probably through the instrumentality of Mary herself, or of persons intimately connected with her, obtained possession of the genealogical table of Mary's father Heli and committed it to writing in his Gospel." [Geldenhuis, *Luke*, NICNT]

In other words, Nathan is in the genealogy because his name was in Mary's household/family genealogy--it's that simple. "Nathan" is no more important in Luke's genealogy (under this scenario) than the names of "Naggai" or "Peleg". They were simply entries in their family ancestry. Only Matthew is concerned with showing the official, legal, royal lineage of Jesus, and this he traces through Solomon. [Also refer to the discussion above about the non-need for a only-Solomonic lineage.]

[One odd/intriguing note, though: At the 'piercing of Me/God' passage in Zechariah 12:12, the house of Nathan is mentioned. Most rabbinical writers understand this to be referring to Nathan the prophet, but **Rashi** understood it to be Nathan the son of David (as do K&D). This eschatological passage would then preserve some (future?) importance for the Nathan line. Since the text has David, Levi, Nathan, and Shimei weeping in grief over the pierced Messiah/Shepherd, it is tempting to see the Pierced One as being in the lineage of these 5 individuals, but this is way beyond our data at this point. But, raising further 'intrigue,' we might point out the high probability that Jesus also had a little Levitical blood in His veins: Mary and Elizabeth are said to be 'relatives' and Elizabeth was married to an Aaronic priest. If Elizabeth's husband Zack had 'followed the law' he would have married in his tribe (of Levi), and, if Mary and Elizabeth are related by blood, then that makes the Judahite Mary/Miriam also contain a little Levitical blood somewhere in her veins...(smile)

"David and Levi are recognizable as the royal and priestly lines. Nathan and Shimei are more difficult in that there are numerous individuals in the Bible with those names. Since Nathan was one of the sons of David (2 Sam 5:14), and Shimei was one of the grandsons of Levi (Num 3:21), many see in these verses a reference to clans and subclans. [*The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (Zec 12:13).]


This is an intriguing connection, but it would in no way be alluded to in Luke's text. In fact, it is not mentioned elsewhere in the bible. But it was odd enough to note--smile.]

So, Luke's mention of Nathan had nothing to do with messianic authentication, or Davidic inheritance, or Jeconiah's curse--it was simply an entry in Heli's genealogy.

Glenn's Concluding Postscript:

I do not want to give ANYONE the impression that there are NO difficulties in these genealogies. They are full of issues, 'surprises', perplexing items.

But, at the same time, we have so many proposed explanations for each of these, that we are simply not in a position to criticize (much less DECIDE AGAINST!) the historicity of these accounts. Indeed, we have solid answers for the more difficult and perplexing ones, which gives us a qualified optimism about those that are still somewhat obscure.

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