

# The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

## Introduction

This document contains the genealogy of Jesus Christ according to the Gospel of St. Matthew beginning with Abraham and working forward to Joseph, “husband of Mary.” Compare it with the genealogy in St. Luke's Gospel which goes in reverse, if you will, from Joseph through Abraham (i.e., where Matthew begins) until the first man (Adam), “the son of God.” We have two further differences: the genealogy of Matthew is situated right at the beginning of his Gospel whereas Luke's is inserted after Jesus' baptism and just before the beginning of his ministry. As for the latter genealogy, note that before it the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism and immediately after it we have “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan” [4.1] followed by his temptation in the wilderness.

While both orientations to the human origins of Jesus, this document dealing with Matthew's genealogy is followed by notations on the individual person or persons associated with that verse. It ties each person in with the others in order to flesh out the human lineage of Jesus Christ with the lamp of David shining throughout them all (cf. vs. 8 concerning the entry of King Joram). Obviously some characters are more familiar than others. Those closest in time to Jesus' birth are the least known. That is, we have only their names. Not all aspects of the person and context are fleshed out; rather, focus is upon one or two key elements, especially among the more well known. The purpose, of course, is to consider this parade of royal individuals in the spirit of *lectio divina* and not for providing information which can be gained elsewhere.

The genealogy is comprised of three lengthy sentences: from Abraham to King David, from King David to the deportation to Babylon and finally from the deportation to the birth of Joseph. Reading through each one without a pause is an impossible task as the text rushes down the centuries in anticipation of Jesus Christ. Each verse is connected with and begins with the conjunctive *kai* or “and” to show the connection between the descendants involved within these three basic sections. The Hebrew equivalent to *kai* is *v-* prefaced, for example, to the beginning of a sentence which serves to move it along as well as connect the previous verse, etc. We could say that in the dim expectation of the Messiah *kai* rushes along from Abraham (It's as though Matthew hadn't the patience to go back further to Adam) through the first and second parts (David and the deportation to Babylon). Finally and with a great sigh of relief does Matthew say with a certain pride, “*and* Jacob the father of Joseph!” This is reminiscent of an observation somewhere among the writing of Bernard of Clairvaux, that is, the generations approaching Jesus' birth resemble the voice of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs. “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills” [2.8]. In other words, the mountains and hills are these royal generations.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has a kinship with Matthew's genealogy in that the author gives examples of faith beginning with Abraham and a few other notables. The presentation in both shouldn't be mistaken for one of progress...easy to do...but of succession where the future fulness of divine revelation becomes more evident. That is to say, it does not develop as we commonly understand this term. What had gone before isn't considered as inferior but as something to be incorporate into an ever expanding whole. Granted, some of the figures (if not all) are less than desirable. However, when you get to one person in the sequence somehow you know another step in the genealogy will be forthcoming. “When” isn't of concern, for that belongs to expectation which is informed by the idea of progress. Rather, it's something Heb 11.13 says enigmatically in two places,

“These all died in faith, not having received what was promised but having seen it and greeted it from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” [vs. 13]. Also, “They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one” [vs. 16].

The Greek noun *parepidemos* for “exiles” is worth considering. It consists of the root *demos* or country, the people of a country, prefaced with two prepositions, *para* and *epi*, “beside” and “upon.” The idea—and it's difficult to visualize—is that one dwells for a time both beside and upon a given location. We could say recognition of what's going on through this genealogy is like this *parepidemos*. At one verse we're with that person (*demos*) while unbeknown to him, are both beside and upon...*para* and *epi*...his historical situation and more importantly, his awareness of what's going on. Also, an account resting upon the idea of progress or progression would conclude with words like “All these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” [vs. 39-40].

While those in the genealogy wouldn't consider themselves such (for they were living in their native land), chances are they had an inkling, however, remote, that they were part of a larger whole and moving toward some person or event as yet unknown which would change everything.

### The Genealogy (Matthew 1.1-18)

**Vs. 1: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

Here begins the first part of the genealogy<sup>1</sup>, namely, from Abraham up to the deportation to Babylon (cf. vs. 11), the second part being from that event to the birth of Joseph. This is a free-standing sentence unlike most below which continue non-stop except for two pauses, King David and the deportation to Babylon.

*Biblos* or “book” implies (it is different from another method of keeping records, a clay tablet) is a scroll or something like parchment that is rolled out to read and then rolled back when finished. It's lighter to carry, not necessarily more compact, and hence more desirable than a tablet. On the other hand, the advantage of a tablet is its durability.

While Matthew's Gospel in all its twenty-eight chapters may be considered a *biblos*, here the word applies to Jesus' “genealogy” or *genesis* (as in the Book of Genesis). Thus the *biblos* at hand unrolls itself as containing over half of chapter one which proceeds to give an account of the birth of Jesus.

Jesus Christ is identified both as “son of David” and “son of Abraham,” thereby being designated as son of two of the most notable figures in Jewish history. Obviously there can be one son of one father though here use of this term is quite different: Jesus is son of David as belonging to a royal lineage and son of Abraham as belonging to Israel's first patriarch. “And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” [Gen 12.3].

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Gregory of Nyssa distinguishes between two terms used throughout his works, *taxis* and *akolouthia* (order and sequence). A document related to this may be found on the home page devoted to his works, that is, linked with this home page. While not immediately appropriate to the genealogy text at hand, it may be helpful to flesh out how one Christian thinker considers two ways of handling the flow of events and thoughts so as to perceive order within them.

2

As we go backward in time, first comes King David, the second king of Israel, Saul having lost favor with the Lord and who'd rather be forgotten. Next we have a larger leap backward in time, from David to Abraham. Thus the *biblos* or scroll unfolds, if you will, with these two key persons in mind and contains the only use of the word "son" (*huios*) within this genealogy. Now our attention is aroused to the special character of Jesus as set apart while united to all the others listed below.

**Vs. 2: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,**

"Now Sarai, Abram's<sup>1</sup> wife, bore him no children" [Gn 16.1]. This brief but poignant sentence recounts the situation in which Abram and his wife found themselves. They had been wandering about in a land to which God sent Abram which must have increased their sense of isolation and near abandonment of hope. Later the Lord says to Sarah<sup>2</sup> that at an advanced age she will become "a mother of nations" [17.16] which is confirmed with the mysterious three visitors. However, there's the interlude, if you will, of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as well as the sojourn of Abraham and Sarah in Gerar where King Abimelech tried to take Sarah as his wife. In other words, these are no small intervening events. Finally "the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised" [21.1]. The verb *paqad* for "visited" is important insofar as it gets the process of births rolling, if you will. It's a term with strong military connotations generally meaning to muster, enjoin as well as to provide. *Paqad* may be said to extend not just to the impending birth of Isaac but to everyone else who will follow. Thus *paqad* lines up Jesus' descendants in a neat battle array for us to admire.

As for the name of Isaac, its verbal root (*tsachaq*) means laughter, the root of which goes back to when Sarah "laughed to herself" [18.12] upon listening in to the discussion her husband was having with the three visitors concerning a son to be born to him and Sarah. Isaac was a rival with Ishmael, a son borne to Hagar by Abraham.

Despite the display of divine power by the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac's miraculous birth, Abraham still lacked that sense of belonging in a land not his own, that is, Canaan. This comes across clearly when it was time for Abraham to procure a wife for Isaac. He sent a trusted servant to "to my country and to my kindred" [24.4] which was Haran. Note the close association between the two, *'erets* and *moledeth*. The former is more associated with a people whereas their history is represented by the latter term. Thus the two are one and the same with only slightly different nuances, all the more dramatic in the setting in which Abraham is speaking, the alien land of Canaan.

The long, drawn-out exile, if you will, of Abraham in Canaan comes to a close with the birth of Isaac. Because we're dealing with an extended period of time, the sense of exile experienced by Abraham needs to be lessened more. That happens not just with the birth of Isaac but more precisely with the birth of his son who had no direct knowledge of his grandfather Abraham and thus stories about how great it was in Haran, etc. Isaac had to put up with all that as he, his mother and father as well as others in their company continued their journeys in Canaan. Isaac made it a point not to speak about all this nor to have others in his company from Haran influence any future child of his. So despite the birth of Isaac, the promise originally made to Abraham to dwell in Canaan and make it his home

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. 17.1 for the transition of the name Abram to Abraham ('father of a multitude').

2  
<sup>3</sup>Sarah means "princess, a variant reading of Sarai.

remained tenuous. That notion of “my country and my kindred” in the last paragraph needed not just to be transferred to Canaan, as it were, but to take root there.

This still fresh conflict of having left one's native land (in the person of Abraham) and living elsewhere can be mirrored in the birth of Isaac's two sons or twins, Jacob and Esau. The conjunctive *kai* ('and') mentioned in the Introduction helps alleviate this and gets the rootedness of this family in Canaan underway, at least symbolically. This is so because it is the first example, the first *kai* which continues onward to the birth of Jesus Christ and serves to link all the characters from Abraham to him as one “country and kindred” which becomes the *ekklesia* or church.

Note that the conjunction *kai* ('and') will be inserted in bold italics when there is a passage or birth from one person to another. This is intended to emphasize the interconnectedness of all generations until the birth of Jesus Christ.

### ***Kai***

As for the birth of Jacob, his life is summed up in the Lord's words to Sarah: “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided” [25.23]. The verb for “divided” is *parad* which implies more than a simple going apart but a real scattering after which nothing can be brought back. This culminated in Jacob's deception of his father, at his mother's request, in order to secure the birthright of Esau who technically was the first born. All the while from the Lord's words to Sarah she felt...beginning in her womb...a preference for Jacob and dislike for Esau. Never did she come right out and say this, but it was instinctual and passed on to her favorite, Jacob.

Later Jacob has his famous dream of a ladder reaching to heaven on which angels were ascending and descending (cf. 28.12). Note that the ladder is set up “upon the earth” or *'erets* with the other end its “top reached to heaven.” The verb here is *nagah* which suggests touching and is more intimate and personal than a mere reaching. Furthermore, the ladder is populated with angels going up and down meaning it was wide enough for two-way traffic going on at once. Since “angels of God” were the ones on this ladder, they—and their proper name of *mal'ak* means messenger—unceasingly were bringing communications between the two realms, heaven and earth. This image is important insofar as it shows a reality Jacob hadn't been aware of beforehand but was always present. The ladder represents that connection between “country and kindred” which had begun with Abraham and now is coming together with Jacob.

### ***Kai***

Jacob worked an extended period of time for Laban in order to procure Rachel as his wife instead of Leah. However, Rachel turned out to be barren whereas Leah was fruitful and begot twelve sons for Jacob. Matthew's verse singles out Judah followed by his brothers whereas the text has Reuben being born first followed by Simeon and then Judah. As for the rest, Rachel gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob in order to bear the remaining nine sons and thus complete the future number of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Judah is noteworthy in the larger scheme of things for having argued against slaying Joseph. “What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites...for he is our brother, our own flesh” [37.27]. Later when the eleven brothers migrated to Egypt during the famine, they met up with their long-lost brother Joseph who had achieved second in rank after

Pharaoh. In 43.3 we have the brothers coming to Joseph with Judah singled out and reading as “When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house” [44.14]. It's not entirely unlike the primacy of Peter among the disciples only Joseph is the elect of the twelve brothers.

Once Joseph, his brothers achieved final reconciliation, their father Jacob gave a blessing on them all (Chapter 49). The characteristic of each brother may be summed up as follows: Reuben = first-born and unstable as water, Simeon and Levi = weapons of violence, Judah = praised by his brothers and a lion's whelp (Judah receives the longest blessing as apparently leader of his kin), Zebulun = haven for ships, Issachar = strong ass, Dan = judge his people, Gad = a raider, Asher = shall be rich, Naphtali = a hind let loose, Joseph = fruitful bough and Benjamin = ravenous wolf.

After the blessing of Jacob, he bids his sons to be buried “in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah” in Canaan [49.30], not in Egypt, despite the preeminence of his son Joseph and sanctuary the brothers had found there. The same applies to Joseph who had even more reason to be grateful to the Egyptians and the Pharaoh whom he had served: “God will visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here” [50.25]. As for the death of Judah, no information is given.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 3: and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,**

The story of the birth of the twins Perez and Zerah is found in Gen 38.27-30, and their mother is Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law. Their birth is reminiscent of the birth of Rebekah's twin sons, Jacob and Esau (cf. 25.24-26) where the firstborn's right is usurped. The midwife marks Zerah's hand with a scarlet cord when it emerges from the womb first despite the fact that Perez is born first and withdrew his hand. We have no personal information about Perez except in the Book of Ruth when the people gave public testimony to the marriage between Ruth and Boaz. “May your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah because of the children that the Lord will give you by this young woman” [Rt 4.12]. By way of conclusion to this book the descendants of Perez are given culminating in Obed of Jesse and Jesse of (king) David” [vs. 22]. As for the twin brother of Perez, he fades out of the picture except for being noted as a clan of Judah noted in the Book of Numbers (26.19-22).

### ***Kai***

The identities of Hezron and Ram are even less known. Hezron is among “the names of the descendants of Israel who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn and the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi” [Gn 46.8-9].

### ***Kai***

As for Ram, he is found in Rt 4.19 which is in the line culminated in “Jesse of David” [vs.22] noted above.

Thus the key to the obscure descendants Hezron and Ram is found in the Book of Ruth where the protagonist is of Moabite origin. Ruth's firstborn is, as noted above, Obed, David's grandfather which means at this juncture the lineage begun with Abraham has moved much closer to the impending

birth of Jesus. Nevertheless, that is some centuries later. As for Boaz, he recognized all that Ruth had done for her mother-in-law and exclaimed, "The Lord recompense you for what you have done and a full reward be given you by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge" [Rt 2.12]!

***Kai***

**Vs. 4: and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,**

Although Amminadab is mentioned in the mini-genealogy towards the end of the Book of Ruth, he is first noted in Ex 6.23 as father-in-law of Aaron. As for those numbered in this genealogy from 6.14-25, the next verse says "These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, 'Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts.'" In other words, Amminadab is one of the "hosts" or *tsava'* which forms part of the larger armed group Moses and Aaron were arranging prior to leaving Egypt under divine guidance. This man, along with all those with whom he is counted, therefore is an eyewitness to the first Passover and parting of the Red Sea.

***Kai***

In the same genealogy which includes Amminadab, Nahshon isn't mentioned directly but as related to the wife of Aaron: "Aaron took to wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon" [Ex 6.23]. Nahshon too was an eyewitness to the momentous events of the time just like Amminadab. Later at Mount Sinai the Lord bids Moses to take a census of the Israelites which meant dividing up the Israelites according to tribes. Thus Moses appointed Nahshon as leader of the tribe of Judah (cf. Num 1.7). Later these heads of tribes are to make offerings to the Lord which includes Nahshon as well as his father, Amminadab. Each of the twelve tribes are bidden to bring its own offering on its own day, Judah being the first (cf. 7.12).

***Kai***

Salmon isn't even mentioned in the Books of Exodus or Numbers, just included in the last verse of the Book of Ruth. He is the least known in the genealogy of Jesus Christ yet even a chain can't exist without all the links.

***Kai***

**Vs. 5: and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,**

It should be noted that a rather long time had passed between Rahab and Jesse, father of King David. Nevertheless, she is important as welcoming the Israelites spies sent by Joshua shortly after having entered the land of Canaan. The little known Salmon is a connection, if you will, between this early critical period after the forty years of wandering in the Sinai desert and the very beginning of Israel's eventual takeover of Canaan. Rahab is the harlot who received the two Israelites into her home, sheltered them from the town's inhabitants, and made these men swear an oath to save her and her household when the Israelites assaulted Jericho. Note her removal, if you will, from the town's society: she had an apartment in the wall or at Jericho's periphery and was a harlot. That means Rahab could

have been an alien and associated more with non-inhabitants of the town. So if Salmon had married her, this would have been after Jericho's fall and Rahab being absorbed into the Israelite community. We don't know what happened to her, let alone her family, but must have been treated as a heroine and given favored status. Most likely this would have been on the condition that she relinquish her profession of being a prostitute.

The Book of Hebrews mentions Rahab as among the examples of faith: "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given friendly welcome to the spies" [11.31]. The adverb "friendly" sums up her role in this chain of Jesus' descendants which in Greek is rendered by the phrase *met' eirenes* or literally, "with peace." This contrasts with the Jericho inhabitants characterized as "disobedient" or *apeitheo*. Historically this doesn't apply but serves to single out the marginal Rahab from the inhabitants of Jericho, one person (and her family) from a multitude.

As for Salmon, it must have taken some courage for this virtually unknown man to marry an alien woman with an equally alien association by reason of her life style. Nevertheless, Salmon and Rahab gave birth to Boaz, an outstanding example of a man. From this point the sequence of history jumps forward to the time when Boaz (he's associated with Bethlehem, cf. Rt 2.4) and eventually married Ruth.

### ***Kai***

Obed is the son of Boaz and Ruth mentioned towards the end of the Book of Ruth as well as several places in First Chronicles though that is only by reason of his genealogy. Apart from being born of such outstanding parents, we have no information about him. His claim to fame is being the grandfather of David who may have lived to see him crowned king of Israel after the tragic reign of Saul. Chances are that in his old age Obed spoke with great fondness of his parents, and that may have contributed to how David ruled Israel.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 6: and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,**

This is one of the momentous examples of *kai* thus far, having reached a critical point in Israel's history with the advent of Jesse, father of David. That's why the sentence begun in vs. 2 is unbroken...continuous...so as to rush from Abraham to David. And so the *kai* opening vs. 6 allows a short pause, if you will, before moving on to completion of the second sentence with vs. 11.

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Although mentioned at the end of the Book of Ruth, Jesse comes on the scene in 1Sam 16.1: "The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul seeing, I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.'" Jesse enters the genealogy with the death of King Saul. Although not

part of Jesus' heritage, still he is the first king of Israel, for after all, the people had demanded a king from Samuel. "Give us a king to govern us" [8.6]. But what set in motion the demand for a king was the misbehavior of Samuel's sons. It had sorely grieved the Lord because they didn't "walk in your (Samuel) ways" [vs. 5]. From this point onward the genealogy of Jesus Christ has to take into account the royal factor, if you will for better or for worse. Certainly the words of 8.7 will haunt the rest of the genealogy, "for they have not rejected you (Samuel), but they have rejected me from being king over them."

### ***Kai***

Note how David's son Solomon is presented as "by the wife of Uriah." This man was a Hittite, one of David's best commanders, whom he had slain in battle that he may take his wife Bathseba. Her name is lack from the genealogy perhaps from embarrassment although everyone knew about her. Shortly afterwards the prophet Nathan excoriates David for this saying that "the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me" [2Sam 12.10].

At the very end of King David's life Adonijah, his fourth son decided to put himself forward as successor minus consent of his father. In the meanwhile, Nathan had formed an alliance with Bathsheba to favor Solomon. This unlikely alliance rehearsed what they would say to David: "Did you not swear 'Solomon your son shall reign after me'" [1.13]? So first Bathsheba approached David followed by Nathan, the two having said pretty much the same thing about how Adonijah had usurped the kingship. While Nathan was speaking with David, Bathsheba must have been by the door listening in to the conversation. Then David summoned her and said "Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I do this day" [1.30]. Apparently David had dismissed Nathan but called in back in and repeated the same thing which delighted the two conspirators.

Thus at the crucial transition of power the prophet Nathan played a key role. Earlier he had condemned David about having caused Uriah's death and taking his wife. Nevertheless, Nathan saw that something larger was at work here which is why he supported Solomon. He was keenly aware of what happened to his predecessor Samuel who was a prophet and judge before King Saul and was determined not to repeat a tragedy that would mar the future reign of Solomon. From this point both Nathan and Bathsheba fade off the scene, their work of securing Solomon as king having been accomplished. Looking back upon the genealogy, David and Solomon stand out as archetypal kings, for their successors were a mixed bag of good and bad rulers, all of who never approached their wisdom and closeness to the Lord.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 7: and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa,**

The context of this verse has what will be the familiar words pertaining to Israel's rulers upon their deaths, "And Solomon slept with his fathers" [1Kg 11.43]. As time progressed, "fathers" often refers to previous kings which isn't the case at hand. To appreciate this, we can retrace the genealogy to this point all the way back to its origin with Abraham.

Rehoboam was forty-one when he became king, legitimately appointed, but quickly turned evil by



relying not upon his father's advisors but those younger men with whom he grew up. The words most associated with him are "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" [12.11]. One can't help but recall Samuel's words when the people wished a king, echoing down the centuries as a reminder: "And in that day you will cry out because of your king whom you have chosen for yourself; but the Lord will answer you in that day" [1Sam 8.18].

Interestingly, Rehoboam and his cohorts failed to absorb the wisdom of Solomon as well as the greatness of David. However, Solomon's rule degenerated quickly which is one possible source for this tragedy about to unfold. Rehoboam's unwillingness to follow sound advice led to the breakup of Israel as one nation with Jeroboam becoming first king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Despite the conflict ('And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually,' 1Kg 14.30) and harsh approach to rule, Rehoboam died a natural death and "slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David" [vs. 31].

### ***Kai***

Abijah continued the conflict with Jeroboam as recorded in 2Chron 13.2: "Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam." Before the battle Abijah taunts Jeroboam with these words, "But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him." He then proceeds to say how he has priests to offer sacrifices, a practice Jeroboam had done away with. Then a bit later Jeroboam sets an ambush but "God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel" [vs. 15]. So after this great victory Abijah, in what is now standard expression, "slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David" [14.1].

### ***Kai***

Asa "did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God" [2Chron 14.2] which takes the form first of eliminating "foreign altars" [vs. 3] and his defeat of a million man Ethiopian army (cf. vs. 9-25). Later Asa meets Azariah upon "the Spirit (*Ruach*) of God came" [15.1] who acknowledged that the Lord was with Asa. Although Asa had done away with worship of alien gods, still the practice remained and needed to be eliminated which Asa had accomplished through the inspiration of Azariah. Another man of God named Hanani, a "seer" or *ro'eh* which derives from the common verb to see; i.e., one who sees, approaches Asa. This time it was towards the end of the king's life when he "did not rely on the Lord your God" [16.7], thereby allowing the army of Syria to escape him. Hanani said that the "eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show his might in behalf of those whose heart is blameless toward him" [vs. 9]. That is to say, these divine eyes serve to condemn Asa which made him through the seer into prison where he was maltreated. Soon afterward Asa died and was placed "on a bier which had been filled with various kinds of spices...and they made a very great fire in his honor" [vs. 14]. So among the lesser kings, if you will, Asa stands out by reason of these events.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 8: and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah,**

As king of Judah, Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Ahab, king of Israel to wage war against Syria to take possession of a town. To seek divine guidance, Ahab summoned some four hundred prophets who straightaway encouraged him: "Go up; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king" [1Kg

22.7]. It sounded impressive and too good to be true. Jehoshaphat felt uneasy at this unanimous response which is why he asked Ahab if there was anyone else around to counter this advice. The word Ahab uses in vs. 8 is *darash*, fundamentally to tread or beat out as well as to inquire with the intent of demanding. It seems the four hundred prophets hadn't done much beating out among each other, if you will, more interested in pleasing their king.

It turns out that one other prophet by the name of Micaiah "never prophesies good" [vs. 8] concerning Ahab. This is revealing of Micaiah's relationship with the four hundred, essentially an outcast. In sum, his words are not as "one mouth" as these others which is how the words of vs. 13 read literally. Nevertheless, at the insistence of Jehoshaphat, Ahab summons this outcast of sorts who mimics his fellow prophets by encouraging Ahab to do battle. He foresees the people scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Ahab then gives a familiar retort to Jehoshaphat, but Micaiah doesn't back down in the slightest. He uses this as an occasion to a vision of the Lord surrounded by a host of heaven, *tsava'* often being associated with an army drawn up for battle. This incident is reminiscent of the opening words of the Book of Job when "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord." *Yastav* is the verb which means taking up a position or taking a stand. Among these sons is Satan who puts forth the challenge, "Put forth your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face" [1.11]. This corresponds to Micaiah's words: "Who will entice Ahab? [vs. 20]. The verb here is *patah* which means to be spacious or wide, the idea being that to deceive someone, you have to open up all possible avenues of temptation. Just like Satan among the sons of God here an unidentified "spirit" or *ruach* steps forward offering to do the job. After this Micaiah's final words to the two kings and possibly the assembly of four hundred prophets are "the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has spoken evil of you" [vs. 23].

### ***Kai***

Joram is presented as son of Jehoshaphat though 2Kg 8.16 reads "In the fifth year of Joram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah began to reign." What stands out concerning Joram are the words of vs. 19, "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for the sake of David his servant since he promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever." In other words, the author is making it clear that despite Joram's demise, the light which had been lit with David's kingship will continue.

### ***Kai***

Uzziah is alternately known as Azariah (cf. 2Kg 15.1) who "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" [vs. 3]. Despite this, "the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places" [vs. 4]. As a result of this, the Lord make Uzziah a leper, making him dwell in a house isolated from other people. Thus we have a king who, despite his good intentions, could not get rid of the deeply rooted preference the people had for local deities.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 9: and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,**

Because Uzziah had been struck with leprosy, his son Jotham acted as a regent in his place, the two governing at the same time, if you will. "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" [2Chron 27.2]

although the people continued to follow “corrupt practices” or worship local deities. Also due to his victory over the Ammonites Jotham “became mighty because he ordered his ways before the Lord his God” [vs. 6]. *Kun* is the verb which means to arrange or make stable which stands in sharp contrast to the people whose ways, if you will, were corrupt. Jotham must have surrounded himself with able counselors to do this yet like so many of his predecessors, was unable to wean away his subjects from alien gods. Not even his fine example could effect this.

### ***Kai***

Ahaz starts his reign on a very bad note: “he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord as his father David had done” [2Kg 16.2]. Note that while David is not his physical father, he is father in a more real way. Surely Ahaz was aware of this which bothered him, even as the next verse describes how he had burned his son as an offering. Just as bad was taking down sections of Lord’s house possibly out of respect or fear for the king of Assyria.

### ***Kai***

Hezekiah stands favorably in contrast to his father. “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that David his father had done.” Here we have yet another reference to the standard David had set though Hezekiah and those who came before him surely were aware of the darker sides of his reign.

Hezekiah is noted most by his relationship with the prophet Isaiah, the book named after him beginning with “the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.” Note that Isaiah spans the reigns of the three kings just mentioned, but nothing is said of his interaction with them. Hezekiah doesn’t make his appearance until Chapter Thirty-Six when King Sennacherib of Assyria lays siege to Jerusalem. That, of course, was cause for Isaiah’s prophecy of divine victory. Shortly afterwards Hezekiah became ill to the point of death. Isaiah intervened by having him ask for a sign which is the sun turning back on its course ten steps [cf. Is 38.8.], the result being a hymn of sorts in vss. 9-20.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 10: and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah,**

Manasseh “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel” [2Kg 21.2]. Apparently he had reigned longer than any other king, fifty-five years, having “rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed” [vs. 3]. In other words, this was one long reign of horror and abomination so bad that the Lord himself said it was the worst “since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day” [vs. 15]. We have no details as to the abominations, but they prompted the Lord to make Jerusalem as “a prey and a spoil to all their enemies” [vs. 14]. Note that vs. 10 says the Lord communicates this “by his servants the prophets” who go unidentified.

### ***Kai***

Amos or Amon comes next and “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord as Manasseh his father had

done” [2Kg 21.20]. This came as no surprise after fifty-five long years but followed by a short two year reign. Amos “walked in all the ways his father walked and served the idols that his father served and worshiped them” [vs. 21]. Amon’s servants conspired to kill him, but the people rose up and slew those who initiated the conspiracy most likely because they became so inured to worship of alien gods that by now after almost two generations many had forgotten the Lord.

### ***Kai***

At last after the long years of Manasseh’s reign followed by the short one of his son, Amos, Josiah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father” 22.2]. The same verse continues with words that come as a relief, “and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” We have no information about how this king acted in such a godly way; possibly he was surrounded by good counselors and so forth or by a remnant of people faithful to the Lord who saw a chance in the eight year old boy, the age in which he began to reign. If they could latch on to him at that impressionable time, chances are he would become a good king. At the same time the vast majority of people who had remained with abominable practices and worship had to be held at bay. It was a delicate matter that continued to persist and would not go away anytime soon.

As for the phrase “eyes of the Lord,” it has been mentioned rather frequently to date and indicates that the Lord has a constant, active involvement in the activities of his people. He does this by watching in a non-judgmental way, hoping that the kings and people become aware of this.

King Josiah also took it upon himself to repair the “house of the Lord” or temple which had been either in ruin or turned into a place of abomination for so long a time. In addition to this, the high priest Hilkiah had discovered the book of the law or Torah in the temple which lay miraculously unscathed. In other words, this book was in the form of scrolls which someone at the beginning of Manasseh’s reign must have hidden, knowing full well that this king was intent on destroying it. Josiah ordered Hilkiah to “inquire of the Lord for me” [vs. 13], *darash* being the verb and used with the same sense as in vs. 8. And so the high priest consulted Huldah who was a prophetess who said that despite the king of Israel’s evil behavior, the Lord will relent in favor the king of Judah or Josiah who had a “heart that was penitent, and you humbled yourself before me” [vs. 19]. However, this applies to Josiah only; “and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place” [vs. 20].

Chapter Twenty-Three of Second Kings deals with the reforms King Josiah brings about most notably the command to “keep the Passover to the Lord your God...since “no Passover had been kept since the days of the judges” [vss. 21-22].

### ***Kai***

#### **Vs. 11: and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.**

The only information about Jechoniah is in Matthew’s genealogy itself which mentions his brothers. What’s important here is not so much the people involved but the event, that is, the deportation to Babylon brought about by the invasion of King Nebuchadnezzar (2Kg 24+). Inferred here is the exile of Daniel to Babylon and the subsequent events detailed in the book by his name. Actually King Nebuchadnezzar invaded a second time during which “the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vine dressers and plowmen” [25.12]. They were left to fend for themselves as the people of Jerusalem and the temple implements were shipped off to Babylon. And so while the

two deportations were national calamities, the obscure remnant left alone without any means of formal worship cultivated not just vines and the land but their collective memories to keep alive their traditions. In fact, they would have greater insight than those who eventually returned from exile. Such persons who had been overlooked by the Babylonian invaders and despised by their fellow Israelites serve to bridge this time and “after the deportation” of the next verse.

***Kai***

**Vs. 12: And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,**

For a better appreciation of the time between the previous verse and the one at hand (before and after the deportation), consider Chapters Ten, Eleven and Twelve of the Book of Daniel in conjunction with the rise of King Cyrus who enabled the Jews to return home. These two chapters contain Daniel’s vision “for days yet to come” [10.14] as well as future conflicts. Towards the end of the book a mysterious man clothed in linen says to Daniel “Go your way until the end; and you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of days.” So while the verse at hand deals with the continued line of kingly succession, the chapters of Daniel have a larger scope of history which could be taken into consideration from this point until vs. 16 with the birth of Jesus Christ. Thanks to Daniel, from the deportation to his birth we can pick up a heightened sense of expectation although that event was still far off.

Jechoniah is mentioned as among the descendants of David in 1Chron 3.17. Although he seems lost amid a whole slew of names, it’s important to have him there because this is the time after the deportation and the beginning of a new era. Jechoniah is also found in Jer 24 where the Lord speaks of the exiles: “I will set my eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land...I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord” [vss. 6-7].

As with Jechoniah, Shealtiel is listed among the successors of King David in 1Chron 3.17. Though we have little information about him, Ez 3.2 states that (in the context of the feast of booths) “Shealtiel with his kinsmen built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings upon it as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God.” The phrase pertaining to Moses reads literally “man God.”

***Kai***

Zerubbabel similarly is included in the list of successors to King David, 1Chron 3.19. In the second year after the deportation Zerubbabel “made a beginning” [vs. 8] or *chala*. This verb fundamentally means to perforate, to lay open, and conveys the idea of an opening. An important part of this was the appointment of Levites to oversee work on the Lord’s house.

***Kai***

**Vs. 13: and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor,**

Abiud is mentioned only in Matthew’s genealogy yet despite no information about him, he was just as important succession-wise as any of his predecessors or successors in the race, if you will, to Christ’s birth.

### ***Kai***

Eliakim, along with two others, are on the walls of Jerusalem which is surrounded by Sennacherib's army and about to be attacked and taken (cf. 2Kg 18.26+). The three are delegated to negotiate with the Assyrian envoys who offer generous terms of peace which King Hezekiah rejects. Eliakim is mentioned in the Book of Isaiah in this same context whom the Lord foretells will be king. "I will clothe him with your robe and will bind your girdle on him and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah" [22.21].

### ***Kai***

Like the anonymous Abiud in vs. 13, Azor is mentioned only in Matthew's genealogy yet is another link on the passage to Christ's birth.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 14: and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,**

There is no information as to Zadok, not to be associated with a person of the same name during the reign of King David.

### ***Kai***

Achim is mentioned only in Matthew's genealogy, yet another "link" closer to the birth of Jesus Christ.

### ***Kai***

Eliud falls under the same category as a link. This fairly rapid succession can be taken as a way of passing through these kings as quickly as possible until we get to the threshold, if you will, of Jesus' birth which is approaching quickly.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 15: and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob,**

Matthew's genealogy contains the only reference to Eliud who is the father of Eleazar who similarly is mentioned here. However, both are passed over quickly not out of disregard but of greater anticipation, of being at the very threshold of Jesus' birth. Most likely they would prefer this as they await his birth.

### ***Kai***

Matthan is also mentioned once in the genealogy.

### ***Kai***

**Vs. 16: and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born who is called Christ.**

Jacob similarly is unknown but holds the distinct honor of being the grandfather of Jesus through Joseph. We have, of course, no information if he lived to see Jesus born or if Jesus had any interaction with him. If so, Jacob, as common with elderly people, was fond of recalling the past and could have passed on stories about his ancestral heritage.

Joseph is famous for not having uttered a word in the Gospels but for having several dreams with respect to Jesus. Mt 1.18 says that Mary “was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.” The verb here is passive, “was found” (*heurethe*). Most likely Joseph was the first person to do this finding which prompted his filing for divorce. Apparently Mary had said nothing about her pregnancy. It was impossible to give an explanation even to her husband though during their courtship Joseph must have gotten wind of some rather strange events in her life. This would have come about through Mary’s relationship with her cousin Elizabeth who gave birth to John later known as the Baptist. And so the passive “was found” suggests an indirectness necessary to preserve the mystery surrounding Mary as opposed to hiding it as commonly understood.

The genealogy comes to an end after going through forty-one individuals who stand in the line of Jesus’ lineage. The birth of a son to a father and so forth proceeds linearly. It stops with Jesus and goes in a radially different direction with his ascension into heaven. That is to say, there’s no further need of linear movement. The vertical one takes over now first with Jesus’ ascension and later with the descent (also on the vertical plane) of the Holy Spirit. Those born of the Spirit, while living just as those in the genealogy, differ from them on another level since no longer are they concerned with the physical propagation but with a spiritual one.

**Vs. 17: So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.**

This verse sums up the generations from three major periods in Israel’s history equally divided into fourteen generations. Vs. 17 doesn’t begin with a *kai* since there is no longer need for what it represents. As for this connective, it occurs forty-one times as an unbroken line from Abraham to Jesus.

**Vs. 18: Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.**

This verse has no direct relationship with the just concluded genealogy. However, it is included because of the intervention by the Holy Spirit who go Mary pregnant. As noted with regard to 16, the genealogy through all three major periods (Abraham, King David and the Babylonian deportation) occur through the medium of time and space. That is to say, they are relative to a particular place as well as people. Now the Holy Spirit who remains in the background with Mary’s pregnancy is preparing that vertical line of birth which will become the church. In other words, the Holy Spirit is silently present through active throughout the bulk of Jesus’ years prior to his short ministry of three years.

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