

Jesus' Genealogy

Question:

When giving the genealogy of the Messiah, the gospels of Matthew and Luke appear very different. Why?

Our Answer:

Numerous differences in these two genealogies have been identified. The basic differences are:

Matthew's genealogy has 41 names, including Jesus' name; Luke's genealogy has 74 names.

Matthew divides his genealogy into three parts of 14 generations each. Luke's genealogy has no such arrangement.

Matthew's arrangement employs the word "begot" throughout, whereas Luke says "the son of."

Matthew goes through David's son, Solomon, whereas Luke traces Jesus' line through David's son, Nathan.

Matthew begins with Abraham, the father of the Hebrew race, and moves forward, whereas Luke begins with Jesus and moves backward to Adam, the father of the human race. This particular difference may be due to the fact that Matthew's gospel was, in all probability, directed to a Jewish audience, while Luke's audience was most likely Gentile.

There has been considerable debate among scholars concerning why these accounts differ. Some argue that Luke gives Mary's genealogy, but substitutes Joseph's name (Lk 3:23) to avoid mentioning a woman.

Others argue that Luke provides Joseph's literal genealogy, whereas Matthew gives the throne succession.