

A FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

The question frequently arises as to how it can be shown from the Bible that Jesus was actually a physical descendent of David. This is a very important question since the Old Testament prophecies stated repeatedly that the Messiah was to be a descendent of David (Psalm 132:11, Isaiah 9:6-8).

There are two genealogies given for Jesus, one in Matthew 1:1-16, and the other in Luke 3:23-36. However, it appears that neither of these says that Jesus was a physical descendent of David since both of them point to Joseph as the immediate predecessor of Jesus. Since we know that Joseph was not the father of Jesus, showing that Joseph was an offspring of David proves nothing about Jesus being a physical descendent of David.

However, the New Testament says clearly that Jesus was physically of the line of David: "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, **concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh**, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:1-4). A similar statement is found in Acts 13:22-23: "And after He had removed him (Saul), He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found **David the son of Jesse**, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.' **From the offspring of this man**, according to the promise, **God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus.**" This has to refer to Mary, because her flesh is the only flesh Jesus received from a human person.

Over the centuries, many different explanations have been given as to why we have two genealogies for Jesus, neither of which seems to prove the physical descent of Jesus from David. To date, no explanation has proved to be without problems. The simplest, in my opinion, is to attribute Matthew's genealogy to Joseph, thus showing Jesus to be a legal descendant of David; while attributing Luke's genealogy to Mary¹, thus showing Jesus to be a physical descendant of David.

One reason for the above conclusion lies in the fact that Luke's genealogy passes from David through Nathan (3:31), while that of Matthew goes from David through Solomon (1:6). While both genealogies include Zerubbabel and Shealtiel, they differ in the other names from David down to the father of Joseph. It would be hard to believe that Joseph, on the male side, had two genealogical lines! So, the conclusion is that one belonged to Mary. Notice also that Joseph is listed as the son of Eli in Luke (3: 23), and the son of Jacob in Matthew (1:16). It is clear that one man cannot have two fathers!

Support for the above conclusion is found in the Jewish Talmud which states that tradition revealed Mary's father was named Heli (Eli)². Since it is well known that names of females were often substituted by the names of their husbands in genealogical records, this would be an argument in favor of Luke's genealogy being actually that of Mary.

At any rate, both accounts show Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus. Matthew says Joseph was the husband of Mary by whom Jesus was born (1:16), and that he had no sexual relations with her until after the birth of the Christ child (1:24-25). Luke says Joseph was the supposed ("as it was being thought") father of Jesus (3:23).

1. It is said that Annius of Viterbo (15th century), was the first to make this claim, (Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 16, the Gospel according to Luke, p. 71).
2. Jerusalem Talmud, Haggigah, Book 77, p. 4

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