

**Towards an Understanding of Jesus' Genealogies**  
**Comparing Matthew 1:2-16 and Luke 3:23-38**

**Matthew**

Jesus  
 Joseph      Mary  
 Jacob  
 Matthan  
 Eleazar  
 Eliud  
 Achim  
 Zadok  
 Azor  
 Eliakim  
 Abihud

Zerubbabel  
 Shealtiel  
 Jeconiah  
 Josiah  
 Amon  
 Manasseh  
 Hezekiah  
 Ahaz  
 Jotham  
 Uzziah  
 Joram  
 Jehoshaphat  
 Asa  
 Abijah  
 Rehoboam

Solomon  
 David      Bathsheba  
 Jesse  
 Obed  
 Boaz      Ruth  
 Salmon      Rahab  
 Nahshon  
 Amminadab

Ram  
 Hezron  
 Perez  
 Judah      Tamar  
 Jacob  
 Isaac  
 Abraham

**Luke**

Jesus  
 (as supposed) Joseph  
 Eli  
 Matthat  
 Levi  
 Melchi  
 Jannai  
 Joseph  
 Mattathias  
 Amos  
 Nahum  
 Hesli  
 Naggai  
 Maath  
 Mattathias  
 Semein  
 Josech  
 Joda  
 Joanan  
 Rhesa  
 Zerubbabel  
 Shealtiel  
 Neri  
 Melchi  
 Addi  
 Cosam  
 Elmadam  
 Er  
 Joshua  
 Eliezer  
 Jorim  
 Matthat  
 Levi  
 Simeon  
 Judah  
 Joseph  
 Jonam  
 Eliakim  
 Melea  
 Menna  
 Mattatha  
 Nathan  
 David  
 Jesse  
 Obed  
 Boaz  
 Salmon  
 Nahshon  
 Amminadab  
 Admin  
 Ram  
 Hezron  
 Perez  
 Judah  
 Jacob  
 Isaac  
 Abraham  
 Terah  
 Nahor  
 Serug  
 Reu  
 Peleg  
 Heber  
 Shelah  
 Cainan  
 Arphaxad  
 Shem  
 Noah  
 Lamech  
 Methuselah  
 Enoch  
 Jared  
 Mahalaleel  
 Cainan  
 Enosh  
 Seth  
 Adam  
 God

**Major differences in the genealogies:**

1. Luke locates his genealogy between Jesus' baptism and temptation. Notice that all three places emphasize Jesus as the "Son of God." Matthew locates his genealogy at the beginning of his gospel.
2. Luke begins with Jesus and works backwards to Adam. Matthew begins with Abraham and then traces the royal line from David to Jesus.
3. Luke traces the family line from Adam to Jesus. Matthew only includes from Abraham to Jesus.
4. Matthew arranges his genealogy around three sets of fourteen generations (Matthew 1:17). As you can see, to fit this pattern, Matthew leaves out many steps in the genealogy, which is common (cf., Matthew 1:1 where Jesus is called "the son of David" and "the son of Abraham"). Luke's genealogy is arranged around eleven groups of seven names.
5. Luke includes only men in his genealogy (which is interesting to me since one of Luke's themes is Jesus' interaction with and care for women (e.g., 1:5, 24-58; 7:12-13, 37-50; 8:2-3; 10:38-42; 23:27-29; 23:55-24:10). Matthew includes women in his genealogy. (It is interesting to note the reputation and natural origin of the women he includes).
6. Luke seems to say that Jesus' "granddaddy" was a man named Eli and follows his line to David through Nathan. Matthew seems to say that Jesus' "granddaddy" was a man named Jacob and follows his line to David through the royal line of Solomon.

**How can both genealogies be true?!? Possible solutions:**

1. Matthew is providing the genealogy of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. Luke as actually giving the genealogy of Mary so that "Joseph, the son of Eli" should be read as "Joseph, the son of Eli *by marriage*." Those arguing against this view simply say, "Luke doesn't even mention Mary." However, two things need to be remembered: 1) No women are mentioned in Luke's genealogy, and 2) Luke is speaking of a virgin birth, which is unprecedented in history. We don't know how historians of his day would communicate a virgin birth--since Jesus is the only one!
2. There are two other popular solutions that require an understanding of "levirate marriage". Basically, when an Israelite man died without an heir, God commanded his next of kin (usually his brother) to marry her so that their firstborn could assume the name of the dead brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Ruth 3:9-13; 4:1-10; Luke 20:27-33). The purpose of levirate marriage was to keep the name and family-line of a deceased brother alive.

**(OVER)**

**Works used extensively in this document:**

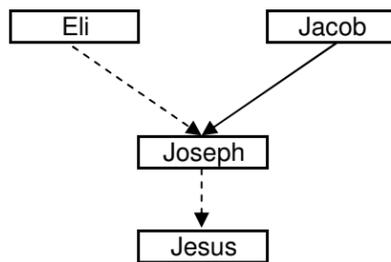
1. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 348-60.
2. Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 118-20.
3. John Piper, "Who Was Jesus' Grandfather?" [www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/who-was-jesus-grandfather](http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/who-was-jesus-grandfather)

## Possible solutions to the genealogical mystery in Matthew 1 and Luke 3:

### 2a. Africanus (c. AD 220):

Eli died childless, and his half-brother, Jacob (who had same mother but different father), married Eli's widow and fathered Joseph.

Luke gives his genealogy through Eli, Joseph's legal father.  
Matthew gives his genealogy through Jacob, his actual father.

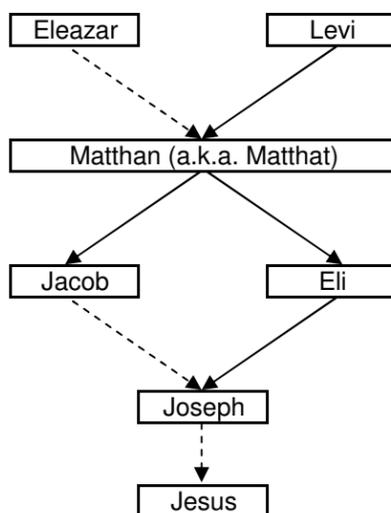


### 2b. John Gresham Machen (1881-1937):

Matthew's purpose was to show that Jesus was the legal heir of David's throne had Israel's monarchy continued.

Luke's purpose was to give the physical ancestors of Jesus (or in one or two cases a very close adoptive relation).

- Eleazar, the legal heir of David's throne died without widow or son.
- A close relative Levi, married his widow and fathered "Matthan" or "Matthat" (as Luke spells it).\*
- Matthan had two sons, Jacob and Eli.
- Jacob dies without sons, and Eli marries his wife and had Joseph.
- Therefore, Joseph is the legal heir through Jacob's line, but the actual physical son of Eli.



\* Names with different spellings are quite common in the Bible (For example, compare 2 Kings 11:2 with 11:21 where Joash and Jehoash are different spellings for the same person). We do this in English as well: Geraldine = Gerry, color = colour, etc.

## Lessons learned from Luke's genealogy:

1. The fact that these two very different genealogies exist side-by-side in a Bible that claims to be the word of God ought to make us thankful for how faithfully the Bible has been preserved. Do you realize how easy it would have been to "fix" if someone with an agenda wanted to make the Bible "look" error-free? Instead, this mystery is preserved--even though it causes problems for us.

The truth does not have to be protected by being adjusted!

2. Luke is making a point with the placement of Jesus' genealogy tucked in-between Jesus' baptism and temptation. One of the main points of all three of these accounts was to show that Jesus truly is the Son of God. God declares it at the baptism, Satan declares it at the temptation, and Luke declares here in the genealogy.
3. In all respects, Jesus is a fitting Savior! He is the new and better Adam (Luke 4:1-13; cf., Romans 5:12-18). He is the Son of Abraham who inherits all the promises to Israel (Genesis 17:7-8; Galatians 3:16; Matthew 1:1). Jesus is also the Son of David, Israel's true King (Luke 1:32, 69; 2:4; 18:38).
4. As the Savior, Jesus came to rescue--not just God-fearing Jews--but all the descendents of Adam! In fact, Simeon calls Him the "Light of revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:29-32). See also Luke 13:29; 24:47, etc. This is a good reminder that our mission is for "all the nations"--to unite them under one King--King Jesus!