

The Good Word

PUBLISHED BY ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV AND ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT ORTHODOX CHURCH, LA MESA, CA
WITH THE BLESSING OF BISHOP AUXENTIOS OF ETNA AND PORTLAND



THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST, PART I¹

by Dr. Seraphim Steger

IMPORTANCE OF BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES: LINE OF DESCENT OF CHRIST FROM ABRAHAM THROUGH KING DAVID PROPHESED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

St. Paul, *circa* AD 62-64, warned us not to *heed fables and endless genealogies* in his *1st Letter to Timothy* (1 Tim. 1:4) and to *avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the Law* in his *Letter to Titus* (Tit. 3:9). Nevertheless, both St. Matthew and St. Luke have each included a detailed the genealogy in their Gospels. Neither of these genealogies are fables, foolish, nor endless but affirm that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God -- fulfilling many Old Testament prophecies that He would be of the seed of Abraham, Judah, and David, e.g.:

Genesis 12:3, And I will bless them that bless thee [Abram], and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 49:10, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh² come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Psalms 2:7, I will declare the decree, the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Psalms 132:11, The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne

Jeremiah 23:4-5, Behold, the days come, saith the

1. Scripture passages are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.

2. Shiloh. The *Septuagint Lxx* Brenton translation renders this: *A ruler shall not fail from Juda, nor a prince from his loins, until there come the things stored up for him; and he is the expectation of nations.* Rabbinic (Rashi on Gen 49:10): "This refers to the King Messiah, to whom the kingdom belongs (שִׁלוֹה) [Shiloh], and so did Onkelos [AD 30-120, the translator of the Hebrew Old Testament] render it [into Aramaic]: *until the Messiah comes, to whom the kingdom belongs.*"


LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 5 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Nevertheless, these two recorded genealogies of Jesus Christ in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke have at times aroused great attention among heterodox, heretics, and the faithful because of their marked differences. Both trace the same line of descent from the Patriarch Abraham through Judah down to King David, albeit in opposite orders. Then they markedly diverge from one another. The genealogy in the *Gospel According to St. Matthew* proceeds through David's son King Solomon and through the Royal line of the known subsequent Kings of Judah down to Jacob who *begat Joseph the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ:*

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW:

Gospel of St. Matthew 1:1, 1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 3 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; 4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; 5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; 7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; 8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; 9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; 10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; 11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: 12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel³; 13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; 16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of

3. This follows the order of *1 Chronicles/1 Paraleipomenon (Lxx)* 3:19 in the Greek *Septuagint (Lxx)*. The Jewish Masoretic Hebrew text from which most English translations are made, reverses the order making Zorobabel the father of Salathiel.



whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.⁴ 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

In contrast the genealogy in the *Gospel According to St. Luke* proceeds through a different son of King David, Nathan, and then through a much longer and different list of ancestors. It beginning with *Jesus himself ... being as was supposed the son of Joseph which was the son of Heli* and culminating in *Adam, which was the son of God*:

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE:

Gospel of St. Luke 3:23- 38, 23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, 24 Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, 25 Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge, 26 Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda, 27 Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, 28 Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, 29 Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, 30 Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, 31 Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, 32 Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson,

4. This third set of 14 generations in St. Matthew's Gospel only contains 13 generations. Another well known issue in the biblical text.

33 Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, 34 Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, 35 Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, 36 Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, 37 Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, 38 Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

These two genealogies reunite in St. Joseph the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary, who neither fathered Jesus Christ nor had any relations with the Ever-Virgin Mary. Thus, both genealogies are presented as being the genealogy of St. Joseph the Betrothed, but fathered by two different fathers: Jacob and Heli respectively! How could that possibly be? That is a good question!

From the early centuries various Church Fathers and other writers have tried to reconcile these two genealogies either through biblically condoned levitical marriages between the two lines⁵ or by proposing that the genealogy in St. Luke, or rarely in St. Matthew, is really that of the Holy Virgin Mary. Both of these proposals ignore what our Holy Orthodox Tradition tells us elsewhere, that the parents of St. Mary were Saints Joachim and Anna, commemorated on September 9th and celebrated in the Menaion Services of the Orthodox Church as the Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God! How do we reconcile this 3rd genealogy with that of either St. Matthew or St. Luke? This is another interesting question. In this and the subsequent issue we will examine these variant hypotheses.


We will start with the third theory, that the genealogy in St. Matthew represents that of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary since it is the easiest to understand and quickest to dismiss.

DISCUSSION OF THE THEORY THAT THE GENEALOGY IN ST. MATTHEW IS THAT OF THE VIRGIN MARY

There are two ancient Christian writers whom some believe to infer that St. Matthew's genealogy is that of St. Mary: Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) and Victorinus (AD c. 250-303), Bishop of Pettau/Poetovio.

Clement of Alexandria was a teacher at the Catechetical Academy in Alexandria, well schooled in Greek Philosophy, and teacher of Origin (AD 185-254). Many of his teachings were regarded as a heretical by

5. Julius Africanus Bishop of Emmaus; Eusebius of Caesarea; St. Hiliary, Bishop of Potiers; St. Ephraim the Syrian; St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan; St. John Chrysostom; St. Augustine of Hippo



St. Photios the Great (AD 810-891). Regarding the genealogy in St. Matthew, he wrote the following in his *Stromata* (*Miscellanies*, c. AD 198-203):

“And in the *Gospel according to Matthew*, the genealogy which begins with Abraham is continued down to Mary the mother of the Lord. For, it is said, from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon till Christ are likewise 14 generations”⁶

It is a bit stretch to say that Clement supports St. Matthew’s genealogy as being that of *Mary the mother of the Lord* as opposed to what it actually seems to say, i.e., that Matthew continued his genealogy down to her but doesn’t specifically include her in it.

Neither is Victorinus, the Bishop of Pettau/Poetovio, so clear in supporting the genealogy as being that of St. Mary’s. Why? Because what he wrote about in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* was about the third of the four living creatures surrounding the throne of God in Revelation 4:7 ... *and the third beast had a face as a man*. He interpreted each of them allegorically as one of the four writers of the Gospels:

“And in the figure of a man, Matthew strives to declare to us the genealogy of Mary, from whom Christ took flesh. Therefore, in enumerating from Abraham to David, and thence to Joseph, he spoke of Him as if of a man: therefore his announcement sets forth the image of a man ... And Matthew, *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham*; this is the form of a man.”⁷

Without further information, again, it is very difficult to say that Bishop Victorinus truly believed this was specifically the genealogy of the Virgin Mary.

Regardless, two separate passages in the writings of the Prophet Jeremiah (active from c. 623-587 BC) in the Old Testament Scriptures exclude the possibility of the line of descent in the *Gospel of St. Matthew* as being the genealogy of the Virgin Mary:

THE CURSE ON KING JECHONIAH (CONIAH) OF JUDAH

Jeremiah 22:24 As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah⁸ the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; 25 And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the

Chaldeans. 26 And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. 27 But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return. 28 Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? Wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? 29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. 30 Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

Jeremiah 36:30. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Joachim his father, king of Judea, There shall be from him none sitting upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the heat of day, and in the frost of night. 31 And I will look upon him, and upon his sons, and will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, upon the land of Judah, all the evils that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

We can see from the LORD’S curse on the royal line descending through Jechoniah, son of Jehoiakim, none of Jechoniah’s seed would ever sit or prosper on the throne of David. That would include the entire line in the genealogy of St. Matthew’s Gospel from Jechoniah through St. Joseph. That the names of four of Judah’s Kings⁹ are missing from the genealogy is well known, but Jechoniah’s name is very clearly there!

One of the great early Fathers of the Church, St. Irenaeus of Lyon (AD 120-202), addressed this curse and its implications in no uncertain terms:

ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON ON THE LORD’S CURSE ON JECHONIAH


“9. But besides, if indeed He [Christ Jesus] had been the son of Joseph, He could not, according to Jeremiah, be either king or heir. For Joseph is shown to be the son of Joachim and Jechoniah, as also Matthew sets forth in his pedigree. But Jechoniah, and all his posterity, were disinherited from the kingdom; Jeremiah thus declaring, *As I live, saith the Lord, if Jechoniah the son of Joachim king of Judah had been made the signet of my right hand, I would pluck him thence, and deliver him into the hand of those seeking thy life* [Jeremiah 22:24-25]. And again: *Jechoniah is dishonoured as a useless vessel, for he has been cast into a land which he knew not. Earth, hear the word of the Lord: Write this man a disinherited person; for none of his seed, sitting on the throne of David, shall prosper, or be a prince in Judah* [Jeremiah 22:28]. And again, God speaks of Joachim his father: *Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Joachim his father, king of Judea, There shall be from him none sitting upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the heat of day, and in the frost of night. And I will look upon him, and upon his sons, and will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, upon the land of*

6. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Bk I, Ch. xxi, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 2, Fathers of the Second Century*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, p. 334. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.vi.iv.i.xxi.html>

7. Victorinus of Pettau, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, Chapter 4, on verses 7-10, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 7*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994 p. 348. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07.vi.ii.iv.html>

8. *Coniah* is another name for King *Jechoniah* of Judah, the son of King Joachim.

9. The names of these Kings are Ahaziah, Jehoash, Amaziah -- descendants of King Ahab through his wicked daughter Athaliah, whose mother was the very wicked Jezebel-- cursed to the 3rd and 4th generation. The 4th king is Jehoiakim, the father of Jechoniah.



Judah, all the evils that I have pronounced against them [Jeremiah 36:30-1] Those, therefore, who say that He was begotten of Joseph, and that they have hope in Him, do cause themselves to be disinherited from the kingdom, failing under the curse and rebuke directed against Jechoniah and his seed. Because for this reason have these things been spoken concerning Jechoniah, the [Holy] Spirit foreknowing the doctrines of the evil teachers; that they may learn that from his seed—that is, from Joseph—He was not to be born but that, according to the promise of God, from David’s belly the King eternal is raised up, who sums up all things in Himself, and has gathered into Himself the ancient formation [of man].”¹⁰

Through this line of reasoning, St. Irenaeus excludes that the genealogy in Matthew could ever be the genealogy of St. Mary, the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, since Jechoniah’s physical line of descent was cursed by the LORD.

Were the above writings of both Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215), and Victorinus of Pettau (AD 250-303) truly supportive of the genealogy in St. Matthew being the line of human descent to St. Mary, the curse would negate their claims as well. However, it does not negate the genealogy from being the true line of physical descent to St. Joseph the Betrothed from the tribe of Judah, nor of his being one of King David’s descendants through Solomon and Jechoniah. This is important legally for Saints Mary and Joseph as we will see later in the writings of St. Ephraim of Syria.

Despite being unconditionally condemned by the LORD in the 6th century BC through the Prophet Jeremiah and reaffirmed by St. Irenaeus in the second century AD, this ancient heresy of the genealogy in the *Gospel of St. Matthew* being that of the Virgin Mary has resurfaced in the modern heterodox world. It is found in Wikipedia under the entry “*Genealogy of Jesus*” both in the text and in the table entitled “*Patrilineage of Jesus according to Matthew.*” The Wikipedia authors mention that a Victor Paul Wierwille promoted this theory in his book *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*.¹¹ Secondly, in my own reading I have noted that the contemporary Messianic Jewish authors of the *Cepher*¹² (an expanded Biblical Text which includes all the books of the *Septuagint* Old Testament text along with *Jubilees*, *Enoch*, and *Jasher* translated in a Jewish cultural

context) also incorporates this mistaken idea in their genealogy. These will both be discussed in turn.

Victor Paul Wierwille (1916-1985), who was raised as a protestant, studied at the University of Chicago Divinity School and received a Masters in Theology from Princeton University, deviated from his heterodox Christianity by espousing a modified modern day Arianism. Although he believed Jesus to be the Son of God and the Messiah, he refused to believe that Jesus Christ is God and that He is one of the hypostases of the Holy Trinity, but a created being. In 1955 Wierwille founded The Way International, an organization that used its publishing house and radio ministry to promote these heretical ideas. Later, he became acquainted with George Lamsa, translator of the Aramaic/Syriac *Peshitta*¹³ (the so-called *Lamsa Bible*), and, together, they produced the first American Aramaic grammar in 1960 for the study of ancient manuscripts. Later, he delved into the pentecostal world. In the chapter entitled *The Genealogy of Jesus Christ* in his aforementioned book, Wierwille proposed that the genealogy of Christ in St. Matthew’s Gospel is really that of the Virgin Mary based on mistranslations of the Greek text, whereas the Aramaic text (being, in his mind, the more ancient and more authoritative version of the *Gospel of St. Matthew*) had the correct readings. In his book he writes:

“In Matthew 1:16, Joseph is the anēr,¹⁴ “the man” of Mary. The Aramaic word translated in English “husband” is gavra. Gavra means “mighty man.” In Biblical culture the father who is the head of the household is “the mighty man.” The son would not be considered “the mighty man” of the household until the father died, at which time the younger person would become the head of the household. Therefore, the English phrase “Joseph the husband” in Matthew 1:16 is properly translated from the Aramaic as “Joseph the mighty man [gavra, the father] of Mary.

“This truth is substantiated even further in Matthew 1:19 where the word “husband” is properly translated in the King James Version. There, this word which refers to Mary’s husband Joseph is bala in Aramaic. It is not gavra, as in Matthew 1:16. That is because Matthew 1:16 speaks of Joseph who was Mary’s father, her gavra, while in contrast, Matthew 1:19 speaks of Joseph who was Mary’s husband, her bala.¹⁵ Hence, Mary’s father’s name was Joseph, and Mary’s husband’s name also was Joseph.

“We have utilized Greek, Aramaic, the recorded genealogies, and ancient custom to demonstrate that the word “husband” in Matthew 1:16 should be rendered “father.” However, if all of this evidence were not enough, there is yet one more safeguard supplied by God’s Word which proves that

10. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies, Bk III*, Chapter xxi, ¶9, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol 1: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, p. 453, also at <http://www.ccel.org/print/schaff/anf01/ix.iv.xxii>

11. Victor Paul Wierwille, *The Genealogy of Jesus Christ*, in *Jesus Christ Our Promised Seed*, American Christian Press, New Knoxville, OH, 2006, pages 113-132. https://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/pdf/1982_promised-seed.pdf


12. פֶּפֶר *Cepher* [Hebrew for the “Book”], Cepher Publishing Group, Eureka, MT 2014, pp. 1464. The *Gospel According to Matthew* 1:1-17, p.1213.

13. The *Peshitta* is the official Bible of the Syriac Christian Church and is written in the Aramaic language.

14. Probably a printer font substitution error for the Greek ἀνδρα.

The greek word can encompass both *man* and *husband* in its meaning.

15. The corresponding Greek is : ο ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς



the Joseph of Matthew 1:16 was Mary's father."¹⁶ That safeguard is the counting of the generations from the carrying away into Babylon down to Christ, i.e., fourteen generations if Joseph is the father of Mary" [because only 13 generations are listed in St. Matthew 1:16 if Joseph is the husband].

Despite Wierwille's and Lamsa's claims of the Syriac/Aramaic Bible (the *Peshitta*) being the original form of the New Testament and therefore, the authoritative version, the vast majority of academic evidence points to the *Peshitta* being translated from the Greek and being developed initially from the *Diatessaron* (a harmony of the four canonical Gospels) created by Tatian (c. AD 120-180), a student of the martyr St. Justin the Philosopher (AD 100-165).¹⁷ The Syriac form of the *Diatessaron* came into prominent use in the Edessan Church towards the end of the 2nd century. Nevertheless, there is great uncertainty about whether Tatian composed his harmony in Greek or in Syriac. The oldest copy of the *Diatessaron*, a fragment of parchment found at Dura Europos, dates from before AD 256-7 (when the town fell to the Persians) and is written in Greek. The lack of extant ancient *Diatessaron* manuscripts in Syriac is the result of its suppression by Rabbula, the Bishop of Edessa (AD 411-435), who ordered that every priest and deacon were to have copies of the separate gospels. Thus, the *Diatessaron* was relegated to the dust bins of history in the 5th century.

Furthermore, the Arabic text version used for the English language translation of the *Diatessaron* in the Ante-Nicene Fathers series contains neither St. Matthew's nor St. Luke's genealogies within its text.¹⁸

If we restrict ourselves to the separate *Gospel of St. Matthew*, the Blessed Theophilus notes: "Matthew, then, first wrote the Gospel in the Hebrew language for the Jews who believed, eight years after Christ's Ascension. Some say that John translated it from the Hebrew language into Greek."¹⁹ There are other witnesses to this Hebrew Gospel in the *Church History* by Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 263-339) including Papias (AD 70-163) and Pantaenus (AD 120-216). In addition, St. Epiphanius (AD 320-403) Bishop of Salamis, St. Augustin (AD 354-430) Bishop of Hippo, the Blessed

Jerome (AD 342-420), and Bishop Sophronius (AD 560-638) of Jerusalem all testify of the Hebrew text of St. Matthew.²⁰ In his *Dialogue Against Pelagius* 3.2 (AD 415) the Blessed Jerome wrote: "In the Gospel according to the Hebrews which is indeed in the Chaldaean and Syriac speech but is written in Hebrew letters, which the Nazarenes uses to this day, called 'according to the apostles', or, as most term it, 'according to Matthew', which also is to be seen in the library of Caesarea ..." Interestingly, Jerome translated it into Greek in AD 398, but "although he had said that he possessed the original Hebrew Matthew when he wrote *Illustrious Men*, he never used it in his translation of the *Gospel of Matthew* for the Latin *Vulgate* [but used the best Greek texts available apparently belonging to the Alexandrian type of text]. This demonstrates that [later in his life] he did not really believe in its authenticity as the original Hebrew *Gospel of Matthew* or that he did not believe that he could discover what part of the text of the *Gospel of the Hebrews* was authentically part of the Original Hebrew Matthew and what part had been changed and corrupted."²¹

All this history casts doubt on the primacy of the separate Syriac *Gospel of St. Matthew*, as it is currently found in the *Peshitta*, as being the original version, especially since the Blessed Jerome avoided its use in favor of the oldest and best Greek manuscripts for his revision of the Old Latin Bible.

The English translation for St. Matthew 1:16 of the oldest copy of the Syriac Bible (*Peshitta*) [a 4th century manuscript, the Sinaitic Palimpsest, from St. Catherine's Monastery] reads as follows: *Jacob begat Joseph; Joseph to whom was espoused Mary the Virgin, begat Jesus who is called the Christ.*²² Here, the Syriac is more detailed than our current Greek text, with *Joseph* appearing twice, not first as father and the second as husband, but the second *Joseph* being in an explanatory subordinate clause specifying exactly who that first

16. *Ibid.*, p. 122-123

17. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament. An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, William B Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, IA, 1989, pp. 192-197.


18. Tatian, *Diatessaron*, § 1-4, pp. 43-50, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IX*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA 1994. <http://www.ccel.org/ccelfschaff/anf09.iv.iii.i.html>

19. Blessed Theophylact, *Preface, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew*, Chrysostom Press, Hot Springs, MO, 1993, p. 8.

20. The testimony of St. Sophronius of Jerusalem (AD 560-638) as it appears in his *Life of the Evangelist Matthew*, in Blessed Theophylact, *Preface, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew*, Chrysostom Press, Hot Springs, MO, 1993, p. 6, which is traditionally included in the introductory sections of the liturgical Gospels of the Orthodox Church in Greek and Church Slavonic, appears to be an exact copy of that of Blessed Jerome in his *Lives of Illustrious Men*, 36.

21. Rev. Ron Jones, *The Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, Its Authorship, Historicity and Relations to the Gospel of the Hebrews, The Scholarly Speculation of Jerome Concerning Matthew's Original Hebrew Gospel*. <http://hebrewgospel.com/Matthew%20Two%20Gospels%20Main%20Evidence.php>

22. Agnes Smith Lewis, *The Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest*, C. J. Clay and Sons, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1896, p.1. <https://books.google.com/books?id=LuutrGEDRB4C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>



Joseph was! Thus, the *Peshitta* appears to have included the name *Joseph* twice, back-to-back. However, it was definitely not as *father of Mary* followed by *husband of Mary*.

So, with the primacy of the *Peshitta* being highly questionable at best, and the Aramaic text of the earliest Syriac manuscript of the *Gospel of St. Matthew* contradicting Wierwille's assertion that the first *Joseph* was the father of the Virgin Mary and a second *Joseph* was the husband, Wierwille's innovative translation is proved false, if not willfully mistranslated. Even if the *Peshitta* contained the original form of the genealogy which was supposedly mistranslated into Greek, George Lamsa has translated St. Matthew 1:16 from the Aramaic into English as follows: 16 *Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ,*²³ a translation utterly damning to Wierwille's heretical theory and innovation.

Secondly, even if we were to believe his Aramaic-Greek linguistic gymnastics, Wierwille's conclusion of the necessity of there being two Josephs, a father and a husband, is flawed. Our Orthodox St. Joseph truly was a "mighty man," an elderly highly respected and pious head of a household which included 4 sons and 2 daughters born from his former wife who had reposed. So at the time of his betrothal to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, he was a mature adult worthy of the Aramaic title "gavra." When betrothed, he would also be worthy of the Aramaic title of "bala", i.e., "husband." Consequently, Wierwille's parsing arguments and reasonings crumble before thoughtful reading and common sense. Moreover, St. Irenaeus's analysis of the LORD'S curse in Jeremiah's prophecy above deals the ultimate death blow to Wierwille's interpretation.

To prove the point even further, let's look at the writings of that giant of Syrian Orthodox Christianity, St. Ephrem the Syrian

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO ST. EPHRAIM
THE SYRIAN (AD 308-373), IN HIS COMMENTARY ON
TATIAN'S DIATESSARON

"[Chapter] I. §25 ... *The Lord will give him the throne of David* (Luke 1:32). This [recalls the prophecy], *The sceptre will not depart until he comes*. When the angel instructed her that all things are easy for God to accomplish, since in the case of *Elizabeth, your kinswoman* (Luke 1:36), [God] has also given her conception in her old age, Mary replied, If it is thus for her, *Behold I am the servant of God; let it be to me as you have said* (Luke 1:38). From what the angel said to Mary, namely, *Elizabeth, your kinswoman*, it could be supposed that

23. *Holy Bible: From the Ancient Eastern Text: George M. Lamsa's Translation from the Aramaic of the Peshitta*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3zdWx3dCZl-RVdIRENjVG9zc2c/view>

Mary was from the house of Levi; nevertheless up to this, the prophecy was established within the framework of the husbands. The family of David continued as far as Joseph who had espoused her, and [the birth of] her child was [reckoned] through the framework of the men, for the sake of the family of David. It is in Christ that the seed and family [of David] are brought to completion. Scripture is silent [about Mary's genealogy] since it is the generations of men that it numbers and reckons. If Scripture had been accustomed to indicate the family [line] through the mothers, it would be in order for one to seek the family of Mary. But, lest [the words], *Elizabeth, your kinswoman*, were to show that Mary was also from the house of Levi, take note that [the evangelist] has said [elsewhere] concerning Joseph and Mary, that *They were both*²⁴ of the house of David. The angel did not say to Mary that Elizabeth was her sister but *Elizabeth, your kinswoman*.

"§26. If Mary had been from another tribe, it would have been a lie [to have said], *From the house of David*. For the angel said, *The Lord will give him the throne of his father, David. He is the son of Mary, however, and not the son of Joseph. He did not appear in the body from any other lineage, except from David*. For [the prophet] said, *There will come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse, and a scion will blossom from his root* (Isaiah 11:1). Zechariah also testified [to this] when he said, *He has raised up for us a horn of salvation in the house of David, his son* (Luke 1:69 St Ephrem's text). In like manner also the apostle said, *Our Lord Jesus Christ came from Mary, from the seed of the house of David*.²⁵ He wrote to Timothy as well, *Remember Jesus Christ, he who rose from the dead, he who came from the seed of the house of David* (2 Tim 2:8). In the letter of the Romans he said, *It was promised beforehand in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who appeared in the flesh from the seed of the house of David* (Rom 1:2-30. And in the letter of the Hebrews he also said, *It was known beforehand and revealed that our Lord would spring from Judah, from a tribe concerning whose priesthood Moses had nothing to say* (Heb 7:14). [This text] shows convincingly that Mary was not from the tribe of Levi, but from the house of Judah. In Acts it is written, *He swore an oath to David, I will set one of your descendants upon my own throne* (Acts 2:30; Ps 131:9 Lxx). However we find the tribes of Judah and Levi mixed up together through Aaron, who married [the sister of] Nashon (*cf.* Ex 6:23), the prince of the house of Judah, and through the priest Jehoiada who married the daughter of King Jehoram of the house of David (*cf.* 2 Chronicles/Paraleipomenon Lxx 22:11). Even the angel's word made reference to the close kinship of Elizabeth and Mary, these tribes were also [already] intermarrying with each other. Moreover, [the words] *Elizabeth, our kinswoman*, were spoken with reference to Israel, for both of these were of [that people].

24. Neither the Greek nor current *Peshitta* text say that both were of David's house. Rather, in Agnes Smith Lewis, *The Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest* [4th century AD], C. J. Clay and Sons, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1896, p.51-52, Luke 2:4 reads, "because they were both of the house of David." <https://books.google.com/books?id=LuuRtGEDRB4C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

25. A citation from the apocryphal third letter of Paul to the Corinthians (3 Cor 5), written about 190-206 A.D.)

Matthew wrote concerning the genealogy of Mary from whom our Lord was born.²⁶ This was why he began with, *From David and from Abraham*, according as the promise indicated. *Not to you and to your descendants as though unto many, but to you and to your descendant, which descendant is Christ* (Gal 3:16). Luke however [was concerned] only with Joseph, husband of Mary, and [went back] as far as Adam who is from God, so that he might teach that he, who in the beginning created Adam, established the Temple.²⁷ Adam therefore was from [?]²⁸ and Joseph was from the house of David, *For they were both from the house of David* (Luke 2:4). The evangelist Luke was expressing himself carefully when he said, *Our Lord began to be, as it were, just considered to be the son of Joseph*. **Luke did not mention Mary, for he did not record her genealogy**, in order to show that he who was not worthy to be a minister unto the [divine] economy and be called the husband of Mary, was of the family of David, since it was not fitting that he be from a stock other than that from which his mother Mary came.

“II. The Conception and Birth of Jesus §1: **[The fact that she was [first] betrothed and carried a man’s name and then after that became pregnant, [was] on account of the genealogy of kings, since it was impossible that a child, who had been enrolled among the kings [as] as son of David, be enrolled in his mother’s name.**²⁹ Alternatively, [it was] because of the minds of wicked men, who were falsely accusing her in the name of adultery. This was why she was entrusted to a chaste man, who, when he saw her pregnant, took care of her who was about to give birth. He did not drive her out of his house, but lived with her. Associating himself with her calumny, he was a witness before everyone on her behalf, that he who was to be born of her was not conceived through adultery but through the movement of the Spirit.”³⁰

St. Ephraim mentions only 1 Joseph, who espoused the Virgin Mary. Moreover, the critical need for the genealogy to be that of St. Joseph the Betrothed was so that Jesus could be “enrolled among the kings [as] as son of David,” since it was impossible that He could be enrolled in his mother’s name! This is another death blow to Wierwille’s heretical innovation/translation.

DISCUSSION OF THE THEORY THAT THE GENEALOGY IN ST. MATTHEW IS THAT OF THE VIRGIN MARY BY THE CURRENT MESSIANIC CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS OF THE *CEPHER*.

26. This comment by St. Ephraim appears on the surface to be supporting St. Matthew’s genealogy being that of the Virgin Mary. That contradicts what he has previously said. Below, in Chapter II §1 we get a better idea of his reasoning

27. Syriac text unclear here. Translation here is approximate.

28. Lacuna in St. Ephraim’s Syriac text. No parallel in Armenian version..

29. This is the extremely important legal reason for St. Matthew suppling this line of descent for St. Joseph the Betrothed that was mentioned on page 4.

30. *Saint Ephrem’s Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and Notes, Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, 1993, pp. 53-60.

As mentioned earlier, this highly dubious theory has also reappeared within the Messianic Jewish community, specifically the publishers of the *Cepher*.³¹ Their St. Matthew 1:16 reads: *And Ya’qov begat Yoceph the father of Miryam, of whom was born YAHUSHA, who is called MASHIACH*. In a separate article on their website they give their reasons for this translation:

“*Gospel According to Mattiyyahu [St. Matthew] ... 1:16 And (11) Yaaqov [Jacob] begat (12) Yoceph [Joseph] the father of (13) Miryam [Mary], of whom was born (14) YAHUSHA [Jesus], who is called MASHIACH [Christ].*³²

“... Given these testimonies, let us see if we can reconcile the text to itself, as the text says in the very next verse:

“*17 So all the generations from Avraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon to HaMashiach (the Christ) are fourteen generations.*

“As you can see, the lineage that is discussed in Mattiyyahu [Matthew] 1 is the lineage of Miryam, not the lineage of Yoceph (Joseph), because if it is the lineage of Joseph, then there are only thirteen generations to HAMASHIACH. This count is correct when you understand that Miryam had both a father and a husband who shared the same name: Yoceph ...³³

Here, the editors and publishers of the *Cepher* have conveniently and blatantly altered the text of the *Gospel of St. Matthew* by substituting *Joseph the father of Mary*, in place of *Joseph the husband of Mary* to suit their own purposes of making the numbered generations (in parentheses in their text above) add up to 14. So here we have a similar but much simpler alteration of the text of St. Matthew 1:16, i.e., one without the “primacy” claim of the original *Peshitta* text nor the linguistic gymnastics of Wierwille. But unlike Wierwille, these heterodox Messianic Christians were very much aware of the curse on Jeconiah’s descendants and basically proposed an incredulous theory to get around it.³⁴ But unfortunately, were St. Mary to be a descendant of Jeconiah, through St. Joseph, she would have 23 pairs of genes in all her tissues, and, inescapably, have half of those from the seed of Jeconiah’s descendants, i.e., from the subsequent male progeny in the Royal line. So, she would have inherited the curse as well from her father.

31. ספר *Cepher* [the *Book*, which includes the full texts of the Old and New Testaments (including the “Apocrypha”) plus *Jubilees*, *Enoch*, and *Jasher* in a very Jewish cultural translation], Cepher Publishing Group, Eureka, MT 2014, pp. 1464. The *Gospel According to Matthew* 1:1-17, p.1213.

32. Numbers in parentheses (#) indicate which generation from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ.

33. Cepher Publishing Group, *On the Genealogy of HaMaschiach*. <http://www.cepher.net/on-the-genealogy-of-hamashiach.aspx>

34. *Ibid*.



THE GOOD WORD

c/o St. Seraphim of Sarov & St. John of Kronstadt Orthodox Church
6063 Lake Murray Blvd.
La Mesa, CA 91942-2506,
U.S.A.

GETTING AROUND THE CURSE ON JECONIAH'S LINE: A JEWISH OBJECTION TO THE CONTINUED CURSE ON THE DESCENDANTS OF JECONIAH

The only apparent caveat to this curse on the descendants of King Jeconiah of Judah arises from the renowned Medieval Jewish scholar Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (AD 1040-1105), better known as Rashi. Commenting on *Jeremiah* 22:24 Rashi writes the following regarding King Jeconiah:

“And, according to the *Midrash Aggadah (Pesikta d’Rav Kahana*³⁵, p. 163a): In the place to which he was removed (רַבְּנָה), there he was rectified (יִצְחָק), for he repented in Babylon, and the Holy One, blessed be He, applied for absolution of the oath He had sworn, “Inscribe this man childless,” and Zerubbabel was born to him in Babylon, and it was said to him through the prophet (*Haggai* 2:23), *On that day, says the Lord of Hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, My servant; says the Lord, and I will make you as a signet; for I have chosen you, says the Lord of Hosts, directed toward what He said to his father, Though ... be a signet on My right arm, ... I will remove him (sic).*”³⁶

Nevertheless, one can easily counter Rashi’s objection that Zerubbabel’s being chosen by the LORD

for rebuilding the Temple, i.e., being made *as a signet* for that purpose, has no bearing on the curse on his descendants. Here Zerubbabel’s role in the rebuilding of the Temple is being used as a foreshadowing of Christ and what He will accomplish in the future in building the House of the LORD in the Kingdom of Heaven as St. Cyril of Alexandria (AD 376-444) instructs us:

“Such a statement is really not directed to Zerubbabel; rather, it was made to our Lord Jesus Christ as clearly prefigured in Zerubbabel, because he was of the tribe of Judah, and a king to boot, leader of those redeemed from captivity, and a kind of foreman of those building the house of the Lord, *Taking you, my servant*, accordingly, means the one who appeared in the form of a servant but is free by nature. At the same time when I choose to bring down the mighty ones from their thrones and expel the principalities, *I shall make you a seal*, the Son being the seal of the God and Father, bearing a complete and perfect likeness to him, and in his beauty reflecting the nature of the one who begot him. By him God also sets the seal of his peculiar likeness on us as well; by being conformed to Christ, we acquire the image of God, as it were.”³⁷

NEXT ISSUE: PART II ST. LUKE’S GENEALOGY, LEVIRITE MARRIAGE, AND THE TRUE GENEALOGY OF THE THEOTOKOS AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY

37. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets, Volume 3*, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 124, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2012, p. 88.

35. The *Midrash Aggadah (Pesikta d’Rav Kahana* is a collection of Aggadic Midrash (non-legalistic exegetical texts dating from as early as the 5th century AD to as late as AD 800)

36. Rashi’s commentary on Jeremiah 22:24, http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdoaid/16019