

The genealogy of Christ*

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LUKE'S IS ONE of two genealogies in the Gospels, the other being that given by Matthew. Matthew concentrates chiefly on Joseph's affairs concerning Christ's birth, and the genealogy given in chapter 1 is evidently through him. This genealogy goes back to Abraham. In reality, of course, Jesus was not Joseph's son, yet nevertheless he would legally be regarded as such, and thus Matthew provides the evidence that Jesus Christ is "the son of David, the son of Abraham". The process of Divine selection in the events of the history of Christ's lineage is emphasised by Matthew in the mention of five women (including Mary): a cast-off widow who committed incest, a foreign harlot, a Moabitess, an adulteress and a virgin. This can provide a useful study in itself.

The genealogy in Luke is different. Firstly it is evidently through Mary. Luke concentrates on Mary's circumstances concerning Christ's birth, and, although Joseph's name heads the list, this was to satisfy Jewish custom, and Luke adds the comment: "(as was supposed) the son of Joseph". It is also worth noticing that Luke takes the genealogy back to Adam, again another of the small hints throughout the Gospel that Luke was a Gentile and writing to Gentiles, and was seeking to establish that the gospel was for them as well; Christ was not only the "son of Abraham" but also the son of Adam, the second Adam who was to conquer where the first Adam had failed.

But the important historical difference in the two genealogies is the difference in the line of descendants from David to Christ. Ezekiel 21 is often quoted in lectures to establish that by Divine declaration the rulership of Judah's kings was to cease "until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (v. 27); that Zedekiah was a "profane wicked prince"; and that one day a righteous king would take the throne.

Although this is absolutely true, to stop here is to miss the full implication of the Old Testament prophecies. As important as Ezekiel's words are, we should also be aware of Jeremiah 22, where the prophet, speaking of Coniah (or Jehoiachin) and his captivity, says, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. 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" (vv. 29,30). The words are clear. No descendant of Jehoiachin was to inherit the throne of David. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was in fact the brother (or perhaps uncle) of Jehoiachin (2 Chron. 36:9,10).

Therefore, by Divine declaration, the 'high line' through King Solomon of the Davidic dynasty is banned for ever from occupying the throne. Thus the continuation of Jeremiah's prophecy in chapter 23 sets an important contrast: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch" (v. 5).

The "Branch" of the kings of Judah growing out of David was ruthlessly and justly cut off. But from him (the "stem of Jesse" of Isaiah 11?) a new branch would spring forth in all its royal splendour. That Branch is "The LORD our Righteousness".

The genealogy given by Luke is therefore seen to be absolutely essential to establish the right of Christ to inherit the throne. The words of the angel to Mary are specific: "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (1:32); and Luke sets out to prove this legal claim. Christ, Luke tells us, is he "whose right it is" because he is "the son of Nathan, which was the son of David" (3:31), and not, as Matthew writes, the son of Solomon, the son of David. The inheritance had to come through Mary, seeing that God is the Father of Christ.

Having seen how important it was that Luke should establish Christ's legal claim through his mother, we are left to speculate how it was legally possible for this to happen. But perhaps we are not left to speculate after all! The Bible provides a possible answer. It is found by bringing out into the open one of those rather obscure Old Testament incidents that sometimes cause us to wonder why God thought it necessary to include them in His Word. In Numbers 27 we have recorded an incident where a man died having daughters but no sons. The usual thing in such cases was

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that the inheritance went to his brother. But the daughters of this man, Zelophehad, asked Moses if it were possible for the inheritance to pass to them. On the basis of this incident the Divine decree is made, "If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter" (v. 8).

One can imagine that from this time the inheritance was occasionally passed on to future generations in this way. It is reasonable to suppose, although we are without Scriptural proof, that Mary's father died in the same position, so that she and her Son in turn became the rightful heirs in this way. Scripture is silent as to Mary's family, apart from the fact that we know she had a sister (Jno. 19:25).

Luke indeed proves that here is the one whose right it is.

Echoes of Elijah and Elisha in the Gospel of Luke

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As we read through the Gospel of Luke, events in the life of John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus, and aspects of their preaching, bring to mind parallels from the ministries of the two great Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha. These patterns reflect the constant work of God in striving to bring sinful men and women to salvation.

THE WORK OF the two Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha came at a watershed in the history of God's people, particularly in relation to the ten-tribe kingdom. The prophets' work covered a period of approximately seventy years. It was a major appeal to the people to turn to God before the Assyrians came. If Elisha died at around 795 B.C. then there were fewer than seventy-five years until the ten tribes went into captivity.

There is a very telling expression in 2 Kings 10:32: "In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short". These words mark the beginning of the final period of Israel's existence. Jehu had executed judgement on the house of Ahab, removing Baal worship in the process. The army of Hazael king of Syria began to raid Israel, bringing areas and towns under his control. Then in 721 B.C. the

Note

Our Australian Editor, Brother Geoff Henstock, comments that, though this article puts the most commonly held view amongst us, given, for example, by Brother Robert Roberts in Nazareth Revisited (pp. 44-5), there are three other views. Brother Frank Jannaway suggests in Christadelphian Answers that it is the other way round; Luke presents Joseph's genealogy and Matthew Mary's (p. 20). Brother Harry Whittaker, in Studies in the Gospels, presents a third view, that Joseph and Mary were cousins, and that the Luke genealogy is of both Joseph and Mary, with Matthew's being that of Joseph (p. 5). Yet another view, presented by F. W. Farrar in Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: St Luke, is that both genealogies are Joseph's (p. 372); but this seems to have nothing to commend it, and has not, to my knowledge, been advocated in the Brotherhood.—T.B.

Assyrians finally removed the ten-tribe kingdom.

When we come to the New Testament we see the ministries of John the Baptist and Christ following a similar pattern in regard to character and events. Within forty years of the deaths of John and Jesus, the Roman

destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people took place; the words of Jesus in the Olivet Prophecy, recorded in Luke 21, were fulfilled.

In the Luke record

Altogether there are twenty-six references in the synoptic Gospels to Elijah, nine in Luke, and also one in Luke to Elisha. All three synoptic Gospels record the transfiguration, when Elijah appeared, and also the statement by the disciples that people were saying that Jesus was Elijah, so there is duplication in these references.

The message of the angel concerning John to Zacharias as he served in the temple was that he would come "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Lk. 1:17). Here was confirmation that the prophecies of Isaiah 40:3-5 and Malachi 3:1; 4:5,6 would find