

Who was Joseph's Father?

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In the Freethinker's "non-tract" (No. 5) the atheists claim that the following is a contradiction in the Bible:

Who was Joseph's Father?

Matthew 1:16

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Luke 3:23

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,

The following are the full texts of the passages supposedly in contradiction.

Matthew 1:1-16

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias

and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Luke 3:23-38

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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

Now, I don't normally consult commentaries as they are usually in error when it comes to doctrine. However, though this could be an issue of doctrine, it is also an issue of Jewish custom. Thus, all that is required to be correct is that one be able to actually research and read the documents one will find regarding Jewish genealogies and how they are reckoned.

With reference to Matthew 1:16, Matthew Henry ((Matthew Henry, although a better Bible scholar than most, still has a Protestant view of the Scriptures and how certain information got in the Scriptures. Thus, one must be very careful in reading what he writes. He does not hold the Authorized King James Version to be the only word of God for the English-speaking people. However, as I stated in the main body, on this issue, it is almost impossible for him to be incorrect.)) makes the following commentary and observation:

10. The line is brought down, not to Mary the mother of our Lord, but to Joseph the husband of Mary (v. 16); for the Jews always reckoned their genealogies by the males: yet Mary was of the same tribe and family with Joseph, so that, both by his mother and by his supposed father, he was of the house of David; yet his interest in that dignity is derived by Joseph, to whom really according to the flesh he had no relation, to show that the kingdom of the Messiah is not founded in a natural descent from David. ((Henry, Matthew, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.))

With reference to Luke 3:23, again Matthew Henry is consulted:

2. *His pedigree, v. 23, etc.* Matthew had given us somewhat of this. He goes no higher than Abraham, but Luke brings it as high as Adam. Matthew designed to show that Christ was the son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, and that he was heir to the throne of David; and therefore he begins with Abraham, and brings the genealogy down to Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, and heir-male of the house of David: but Luke, designing to show that Christ was the seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, traces his pedigree upward as high as Adam, and begins it with Ei, or Heli, who was the father, not of Joseph, but of the virgin Mary. And some suggest that the supply which our translators all along insert here is not right, and that it should not be read which, that is, which Joseph was the son of Heli, but which Jesus; he was the son of Joseph, of Eli, of Matthat, etc., and he, that is, Jesus, was the son of Seth, of Adam, of God, v. 38. The difference between the two evangelists in the genealogy of Christ has been a stumbling-block to infidels that cavil at the word, but such a one as has been removed by the labours of learned men, both in the early ages of the church and in latter times, to which we refer ourselves. Matthew draws the pedigree from Solomon, whose natural line ending in Jechonias, the legal right was transferred to Salathiel, who was of the house of Nathan, another son of David, which line Luke here pursues, and so leaves out all the kings of Judah. It is well for us that our salvation doth not depend upon our being able to solve all these difficulties, nor is the divine authority of the gospels at all weakened by them; for the evangelists are not supposed to write these genealogies either of their own knowledge or by divine inspiration, but to have copied them out of the authentic records of the genealogies among the Jews, the heralds' books, which therefore they were obliged to follow; and in them they found the pedigree of Jacob, the father of Joseph, to be as it is set down in Matthew; and the

pedigree of Heli, the father of Mary, to be as it is set down here in Luke. ((Ibid.))

Even the Jews themselves confirm the fact that their genealogies were/are traced through the father.

SURNAME ADOPTION:

Most Jews did not have fixed hereditary surnames until the early 19th century. Before that, people were known only by their first name and a patronymic, i.e. their father's given name, e.g. "Yaacov ben Shmuel", meaning "Yaacov the son of Shmuel".

Jews were required to take surnames at various times: Austrian Empire (1787), Russian Pale (1804, not enforced until 1835/1845), Russian Poland (1821), West Galicia (1805), France (1808), various German states: Frankfurt (1807), Baden (1809), Westphalia (1812), Prussia (1812), Bavaria (1813), Wuerttemberg (1828), Posen (1833), Saxony (1834). ((<http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/faq.html>))

The following is extracted from Beth Chai a Jewish newsletter. In it a rabbi explains the reckoning of Jewish genealogy and the differences between modern reckoning and Biblical reckoning.

Rabbi's Message

As most of you are probably aware, the basic definition of a Jew is a member of the Jewish People, in other words, someone who is born to Jewish parents. The Jewish People are primarily a nation, an ethnicity; its members are essentially citizens rather than adherents to a creed. On the other hand, someone who is not Jewish can become a member of the Jewish People by the religious process of conversion. This is something akin to being a naturalized citizen, and here the individual's adoption of a creed typically comes into play.

When a child has only one Jewish parent, the criterion of Jewish identity becomes more complicated. This is because the definition of Jewishness in Biblical times was very different from what it is today. In ancient Israel, as in many cultures, women and children automatically assumed the status of the male head of the household. All women who married Israelites, whether or not their families were Israelites, became members of the Jewish People. All children born to Israelite men were considered Israelites. For example, Moses married Zipporah, a woman from a Midianite family. Zipporah then became a member of the Nation of Israel, and their son Gershon was fully an Israelite. Zipporah's father Jethro also seems to have become a part of the people. There was no such concept as conversion in Biblical times. Members of Israelite households were Israelites. There appear to have been other ancient examples of Gentile adults becoming part of the Nation of Israel without marrying into the Jewish People.

During the development of Post-Second-Temple Judaism, the Rabbis changed the definition of who is a Jew in order to allow for situations where the paternity of an individual might be in doubt. So in classic Jewish Law, the child's identity followed that of the mother. Today, Orthodox and Conservative branches of Judaism follow the Talmudic practice of determining identity by the child's mother. Reform and Reconstructionist authorities also include the Biblical definition of identity through the father. Another practice introduced by Rabbinic (Post-Second-Temple) Judaism is that of religious conversion.

Our practice at Beth Chai is very much like that of Biblical Judaism. We recognize as Jewish anyone who has a Jewish parent, whether by birth, adoption, guardianship or marriage. We consider any household where a Jew resides to be a Jewish household, and we accept as members of Beth Chai any and all members of Jewish households who wish to join our community.

My best wishes to you all for the New Year.

Dr. Arthur C. Blecher ((Original link: www.bethchai.org/January%202003%20beth%20chai%20issue.pdf. I saved the pdf and you may view it [here.](#)))

Now, there is one other item to deal with, that is, in Luke 3:23 it reads: "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,*"

If one genealogy is of Joseph, (in Matthew) and the other is of Mary (in Luke) why does it have to state that they are both of Joseph? Isn't that assuming that Joseph is His father, instead of God?

All of the controversy centers around the fact that most people in Jesus' day assumed that Joseph was indeed His father. Even the Lord Jesus' mother forgot that God was His Father as is testified to in Luke, chapter 2:

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And

he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.
(*Luke 2:41-51*)

Now. I always find this a little amazing. That His own mother could forget all the events of twelve years previous, and having to flee to Egypt to avoid the wrath of Herod because of the child ten years before. Nevertheless, like many mothers with several children (and Mary and Joseph had several, despite what the Catholics say), Mary got caught up in all the business of raising her children and forgot about the special circumstances of her first child – the one born to her when she was still a virgin.

Thus, the point of both genealogies is for the Jew, to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed of the lineage of David as the Old Testament prophets said He would be. Nevertheless, Joseph is not Jesus' father. Rather, God is Jesus' father. If it were not so, Jesus would have been fully a son of Adam, and none a Son of God. Yet, He is both – fully God and fully man. By this means Jesus is our near kin, and thus has every legal right to offer Himself in our place as payment for our sins, as it is written:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on *him the nature of angels*; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. (*Hebrews 2:14-17*)

Thus, the actual correct lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the one listed in Luke – which is the lineage of Mary. But, in

keeping with the understanding of the how Jewish lineage is given, Joseph, the husband of Mary, is again given as the last in the lineage prior to Jesus.

Conclusion

Again, we see that there exists no contradiction in Scripture. It simply is that the Jews, at that time reckoned the genealogies only through the father. Thus, many people would suppose that Joseph was Jesus' father, though he was not at all. Nevertheless, in the reckoning of the Jews, it was entirely, legally correct to list Jesus' lineage on both sides as Joseph's lineage.

Finis