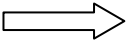
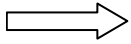
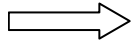


Who is Jesus?

King

One coming to the Gospel of Matthew for the first time might become quizzical as to why the author begins his book with a genealogy. If you are familiar with Matthew, you know that the overriding theme of the book is the Kingdom of God. If you have that in mind, you can understand Matthew's genealogy. It is very helpful for us to turn to other portions of Scripture where genealogies are used with the same thought in mind. However, before we do that, the structure of Matthew's genealogy ought to be taken into account. The author's historic record is not mere chronological scrutiny, but is written with a specific purpose in mind. Verse 17 of the first chapter provides a summary. A consideration of how time leading up to Christ is divided reveals what Matthew has in mind.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon were fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Abraham  David  Babylon  Christ

What does each “stopping point” signify in the mind of Matthew’s Jewish audience? Abraham was the father of the Hebrew nation, to whom God made the promise of an everlasting heritage. David was one of Israel’s greatest kings, through whom Israel had achieved its most successful military campaigns. The Babylonian Exile was God’s discipline on Israel for idolatry (2 Kings 17). What each of these three things have in common is **royalty**. In Genesis 22:17-18, God told Abraham that his offspring would be multiplied, and that all nations would be blessed in his offspring. Abraham was an old man with a barren wife and a few companions. However, the author of Genesis speaks of him in the context of royalty (kings of Egypt, Gerar, Shinar, Ellasar, Elam, Goiim, Sodom, Gomorrah, Adnam, Zebaiim, Bela). In addition to that, Melchizedek blessed Abraham (14:17-24). The author of Genesis is making it clear to reader that Abraham is on the level of royalty, the theme of which is carried throughout the rest of the Genesis. David’s royalty is more obvious, but God’s specific promise to him needs to be highlighted. In 2 Samuel 7, God makes a promise to David that his kingdom shall be eternal. This promise is also stated in Psalms 16:8-10 and 110:1. So from Abraham and David we see that Matthew is telling us that Jesus is none other than supreme royalty. But why mention Babylon? If Babylon was God’s chastisement on the kingdom of Israel, why bring this to the scope of royalty? In my opinion, Matthew highlights the Babylonian Exile in order to make it clear that this did not wipe out the royal lineage. In Habakkuk 1, God told the prophet that the Babylonians are coming and that no king or military can stop them (1:10). But they could not stop God’s king! While this lineage includes the great legacies of Abraham, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah it also includes some curious figures. First of all, there are women mentioned. This may not strike you as odd, but in the ancient Near East, women did not have equal status with

In the first lesson, one of the Greek vocabulary words was “Cristo~.” This is transliterated as “Christ” in English. But the actual definition of the word is “the Anointed One.” The Hebrew word “Messiah” means exactly the same thing. “Christ” comes from the Greek and “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew.

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men. Additionally, the reputation of several of these characters was not commendable. Tamar, Rahab, and the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba) were each involved in moral misconduct. Additionally, Rahab and Ruth were not Hebrews. Rahab was a Canaanite, and Ruth a Moabitess. Tamar may have been a Canaanite as well. To add to this, there are some of Israel's evil kings included: Joram, Ahaz, and Amon. What should we think of this? Why would Matthew tell us that these people are in the line of Christ? In my opinion, Matthew is making it clear that the king is from a race of sinners. Although Christ was without sin, he was born from a people who were full of it. This great a glorious king was willing to humble himself. This is not the kind of king that Matthew's audience, or most of us, would expect. Additionally, the heritage of the Hebrews is nothing worthy of bringing redemption to God's people. Jesus met the requirements for royalty in Israel as Abraham's descendant and David's son, but this was not enough. Therefore, the power of the king does not lie in his earthly heritage, but in his deity. We will explore this from John's account below.

Man

When Luke recorded his Gospel, he was not writing to Jews, but Gentiles. Therefore, he was not as concerned with Jesus' national heritage. He was specifically writing to Greeks. Greek philosophy did not like the idea that physical matter was good (as opposed to spiritual reality). But when Luke writes, he emphasizes the point that Jesus was a real man. For this reason, he includes a genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38), but it is different than Matthew's. Because Luke is showing the humanity of Christ, he traces the genealogy back to Adam, the first man. Luke does not give his account in connection with the birth of Christ, but with his adulthood. However, we will discuss it now in order to compare it with Matthew's. Although Joseph is mentioned as the father of Jesus, Luke mentions that he is the "supposed" father. In other words, people thought Joseph was Jesus' father.

But we know from the Nativity account that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was born. The reason this is mentioned is to point out the fact that Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph's, and Luke's is probably of Mary's. While Jesus had no direct blood relation to Joseph, he was his legal heir, which connects him back to David. At the same time, Mary's genealogy also goes back to David, and eventually Adam. The point is this: Jesus has a legal right to be king (through Joseph) and is a physical descendant of the first man, and of David (through Mary).



God

So far we have learned that Jesus was a true descendant of David, and met the legal and ethnic requirements of a king of Israel. We have also learned that Jesus was a biological descendant of Adam, which means that he was a real man. When I was younger, I was told that Jesus is half man, and half God. If that were true, then Jesus would not be God or man. If you had half of a dog, and half of a man, what would you have? You would have a halfadoghalfaman. It would not be either a dog or a man at all. Likewise, Jesus is not a blend of humanity and deity. He is fully God, and fully man. Confused? Get used to it! The Gospel of John does not describe the birth of Christ. John's purpose in writing was to emphasize the deity of Christ. When we say Jesus is "deity," we mean that

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he is God. Therefore, what is described in John 1 is how God became man. We find the use of the word “Word” which John is using to speak of the second person of the Trinity, the Son, who is Jesus. This is what we find about the Word:

1. **The Word was in the beginning (1:1-2).**
2. **The Word was with God (1:1-2).**
3. **The Word was God (1:1).**
4. **The Word made everything (1:3).**
5. **In the Word is life, which is the light of men (1:4).**
6. **The Word became flesh (1:14).**

Christians have historically understood this passage as is summarized in the following statements:

The Son of God was in the beginning with the Father, and is fully God, just as the Father is. He has made everything that has been created. He became a human, and remained fully God as a human.

However, that does not mean that this passage is without controversy. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are a cult which claims to be Christian, but they are not. The reason for this is that they teach that Jesus is not God, but was created by God. The Greek text of John 1:1 lies at the heart of the debate. The last part of John 1:1 in the Greek reads as the following:

Greek text:	καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος
Pronunciation:	(<i>kai theos ain ha log-oss</i>)
Word for word:	and God was the Word
Translation:	and the Word was God

Notice that there is no definite article (the word “the”) before the word “God.” Jehovah’s Witnesses say that this means that because Θεὸς has no definite article that it is not referring to God but “a god,” which is how they translate it. They believe this “god” is Jesus. But they have a big problem. In Greek, the order of words in a sentence are arranged for emphasis, so words earlier in a sentence are being given special attention. In this case, it is the word “God.” Also, in Greek, the subject of a sentence does not always come first as it does in English. In Greek the subject is identified by use of the definite article. In this situation, the subject is “the Word.” This is why we change the word order when we translate it into English. Otherwise it would not make sense and it would be a bad translation. Based on what we know about Greek grammar, this verse is teaching that the Word is God, not a god. John gives special emphasis to the word “God” to stress the deity of Christ. The Word is just as much God as God is. In other words, he is God! Therefore contrary to what Jehovah’s Witnesses may argue, this verse boldly goes against their teaching. If you do not understand the difference between the subject and predicate of a sentence, then you ought to go learn it. This example should show you how important grammar is in correctly interpreting the Bible.

There is another issue related to this text. As you just read, “Word” is Λόγος (logos) in the Greek. As a side note, pronounce this as “law-goss,” not “lo-gos.” Λόγος literally means “word.” One can look at the definition more broadly in Greek culture, from which we would derive the definition, “logic, or reason.” Generally, this was how Λόγος was defined in Hellenistic philosophy. The word was used to describe logic or reason that came from the divine. To simplify, Λόγος was a general concept to describe knowledge of revelation from some kind of divine origin (i.e., pagan gods).

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Many have said that when John was writing his Gospel, that he was interacting with this Greek concept. The idea would be that John was telling the Greek world that Jesus was the true **logo~**, because he is God and brings revelation from God. One of my professors, Dr. Varner, has argued that this is not the case. I think he presents a compelling case, which I will share with you. To begin with, it is highly unlikely that John is interacting with the Greek idea of the **logo~**. If he is, he was probably opposing it. John was a fisherman from the Galilean region. He was among the lower-class and was from the backwoods. His exposure to Hellenistic philosophy would have been minimal. John's education as a young person would have been primarily in the Hebrew Scriptures. Knowing this, there are good reasons to think that John's use of **logo~** is an Old Testament Hebrew idea, not a Greek idea. In the second lesson, you learned about the Septuagint (LXX). As John wrote his Gospel in Koine Greek, he would have read the LXX. There are numerous situations where the **logo~** is used in the LXX which we also translate as "word." The following chart will show you how a few Old Testament texts correspond to what John teaches about the **logo~** in his first chapter. Fill in the section on the right. I have also borrowed these observations from Dr. Varner.

Old Testament	John's Gospel	What does the Word Do?
Psalms 33:6	John 1:3	_____
Genesis 15:1; Ezekiel 1:3	John 1: 14,18	_____
Isaiah 55:10-11	John 1:11-13	_____

One additional observation will be made. In John 1:14, we are told that "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*" This can be literally translated as "*the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.*" In other words, when the Son of God became a man, he pitched his tent among us. When you hear the word "tabernacle" you undoubtedly think of the Old Testament tabernacle. That is what John had in mind. As you know, the tabernacle was the place where God met with man. But now, God met with man himself. He lived in a body just like ours and lived a life in our world. If John was opposing Greek philosophy, this is the point that would have made the most stark contrast. As you read above, the Greeks generally did not think that the physical matter (i.e., the body) was good. But John is saying that God became a real man.



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Reading Assignment

John 19-21

Matthew 1-7

Luke 1-7

Greek	Pronunciation	English	Part of Speech
l o g o ~	<i>law-goss</i>	word	<i>noun</i>
meta	<i>meta</i>	with	<i>preposition</i>
q e l w	<i>thello</i>	I wish, desire	<i>verb</i>
o i d a	<i>oi-duh</i>	I know	<i>verb</i>
pa t r / pa t r o t	<i>paw-ter / paw-tros</i>	father	<i>noun</i>

Here are the answers to the question “What does the Word do?”

Through, or by the Word, God *creates*.

The Word is *revelation* from God.

The Word does God’s will (*saves*).