

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Sunday before Christmas
December 20, 2020
Revision B

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-40

The genealogy of Christ from either Matthew 1 or Luke 3 is not used at all in the West and is largely scoffed at as being very dull reading. Similarly, the Epistle reading consists of a long list of people who might be referred to as God's Hall of Fame. This is also omitted in the Western lectionaries.

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Differences in Genealogies

A glaring difference between Matthew's and Luke's genealogy is that Matthew traces Christ's roots back to David through Solomon, whereas Luke traces Christ to David through Nathan, another of David's sons by Bathsheba (1 Chronicles 3:5). See the Appendix for a complete list of the genealogies as listed in Matthew, Luke, Kings, Chronicles and Genesis.

One will note that both Matthew's and Luke's genealogies trace Christ's line through Zerubbabel and his father Shealtiel (highlighted in Table I); where Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah following the return from exile in Babylon (Haggai 1:1, 2:2, Ezra 3:2). What is difficult to understand about these two genealogies is how both could be correct. How could Shealtiel have two fathers: Neir and Jeconiah (Matthew 1:12, Luke 3:27)? How could Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary, have two fathers: Heli (or Eli) and Jacob (Matthew 1:16, Luke 3:23)?

According to Jewish law, both can be correct. (See the Family Tree of Jesus). If Heli and Jacob were half-brothers with the same mother and Heli married but died childless, Jacob would be obligated to marry Heli's widow and raise up children for his brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). Thus, Joseph could have been the natural son of Jacob but the legal son of Heli. Julius Africanus¹ states that this is, in fact, what happened.

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¹ Julius Africanus, Letter to Aristides, I, vi

Similarly, in the case of Shealtiel: Matthew traces Joseph back to David through the line of the reigning kings of Judah. Luke traces Joseph back to David through a royal line that wasn't the royal family. The problem occurred with Shealtiel who was born in captivity. Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was taken into captivity at the age of 18 (2 Kings 24:8-12) but lived in prison until he was 55 years old (2 Kings 25:27-30). According to some commentators, Shealtiel was the natural son of Neir but married Jeconiah's only child (a daughter), making him the legal heir to the throne and the legal son of Jeconiah (Keil, quoted by Unger, Bible Dictionary).

One might ask why Matthew and Luke would record different genealogies. One answer to this is that Matthew effectively records Mary's genealogy while Luke records Joseph's genealogy. From Figure 1, Joseph and Mary had the same grandfather (Matthan), making them cousins. Thus, Matthew records Mary's genealogy under the name of Joseph's (natural) genealogy since the genealogies of women were not traced. In Mary's case, this makes sense since Jesus did not have a human father. Luke, thus, recorded Joseph's legal genealogy since Jacob raised up children for his brother Heli and Joseph was legally Heli's son.

These genealogies crisscross again with Shealtiel. Matthew follows the legal side since his genealogy traces the reigning kings. Luke follows the natural generation back to David. Since Matthew wrote his Gospel first, Luke can be seen as adding to what Matthew wrote for completeness. [Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew before leaving for (black) Africa shortly after Pentecost. Nathaniel took a copy of it written in the original Hebrew to Thomas in India by c. 50 AD. Luke's Gospel was written a few years before Acts, which ends chapter 28 in 62 AD.]

Another aspect of Matthew's genealogy is the omission of some names found in 2 Kings and 1 Chronicles. Between Joram and Uzziah, 2 Kings and 1 Chronicles include three additional names (Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, 1 Chronicles 3:11-12) and one additional name between Josiah and Jeconiah (Jehoiakim: 1 Chronicles 3:15) around the time of the Babylonian captivity. Most studies of the Kings of Judah deal with who reigned when; Matthew's and Luke's genealogy on the other hand addresses parentage, not a succession of kings. During this time also, there was a number of occasions where there were co-regencies: father and son reigning at the same time. In addition, one of the omitted names, Ahaziah, reigned for only one year. Thus, the matter of the missing names in Matthew's genealogy is complicated and can't be easily dismissed as an error. **John Chrysostom refers² to a work by Jerome and another by Justin Martyr that explains the reason for these missing names in Matthew's genealogy (Homily IV on Matthew 1). Neither of these works is easily available in English.**

Eusebius of Caesarea, the Church Historian, stated³ that the Gospel accounts are accurate, but also very intricate.

“Some of those who are inserted in this genealogical table succeeded by natural descent, the son from the father; while others, though born of one father, were ascribed by name to another. Thus, neither of the Gospels is in error. Both these accounts (Matthew and Luke) are strictly true and come down to Joseph with considerable intricacy indeed, yet quite accurately”.

² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV,

³ Eusebius of Caesarea, “Church History”, I, vii, 1-10, Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, vol. 1.

A textual error can be noted by comparing Luke's genealogy with the Hebrew text from Genesis. Luke includes the Patriarch Cainan in his genealogy (Luke 3:36), as does the Septuagint. However, the Hebrew Old Testament omits Cainan (Genesis 10). Probably the best explanation for this is that there is a copying error in the oldest extant Hebrew texts that is not in the oldest extant copy of the Greek Septuagint.

Irenaeus of Lyons compares⁴ the purpose of the four Gospels using their opening statements: John states Christ's eternal generation from the Father, while Luke takes up Christ's priestly character. Matthew describes Christ's humanity and Mark begins with the fulfillment of prophecy in Christ.

“John relates Christ's original, effectual, and glorious generation from the Father, thus declaring, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1). Also, ‘All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made’ (John 1:3). For this reason, too, is that Gospel full of all confidence, for such is His person. But the Gospel according to Luke, taking up His priestly character, commenced with Zachariah the priest offering sacrifice to God. Now the fatted calf was made ready, about to be immolated for the finding again of the younger son (Luke 15:13-23). Matthew relates His generation as a man, saying, ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Matthew 1:1). And also, ‘The birth of Jesus Christ was as follows’ (Matthew 1:18). This, then, is the Gospel of His humanity. For this reason, the character of a humble and meek man is kept up through the whole Gospel. Mark, on the other hand, commences with a reference to the prophetic spirit coming down from on high to men, saying: ‘The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophet Isaiah’ (Mark 1:1-2), pointing to the winged aspect of the Gospel. On this account he made a compendious and cursory narrative, for such is the prophetic character. And the Word of God Himself used to converse with the ante-Mosaic patriarchs, in accordance with His divinity and glory; but for those under the Law he instituted a sacerdotal and liturgical service.”

Genealogies: Why Bother?

The main point of both Matthew's and Luke's genealogy of Christ is to emphasize the Incarnation. Christ had been sent by the Father (1 John 4:10, John 8:18-29) and had offered His flesh as the “one sacrifice for sins forever” (Hebrews 10:12, 9:28, 1 John 2:2, Galatians 2:4). He is called “the first fruits of those who had died” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23); without Him, we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). The Apostle John linked the spirit of the Antichrist with those who denied that Christ came in the flesh (1 John 4:3); he also stated that many false prophets (i.e. heretics) have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

John Chrysostom had to deal with many of these false prophets who denied that Jesus was truly a man. [If He weren't a man like us, He couldn't die in our place as the “one sacrifice for sins forever”]. They claimed He took a semblance of a body, but from heaven, similar to the

⁴ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, III, xi, 8.

theophanies that visited Abraham (Genesis 18). They claimed that He passed through the Virgin Mary's womb as water through a conduit or channel. Chrysostom answers this⁵ by saying:

“If this were so, He has nothing in common with us, but the flesh is of some other kind and not of the mass which belongs to us. How then was He of the root of Jesse? How was He a rod (Isaiah 11:1)? How the son of Man? How was Mary His mother? How was He of David's seed (John 7:42)? How did He take the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7)? How was the Word made flesh (John 1:14)? Therefore, that He was of us and of our substance and of the Virgin's womb is manifest from these things and from others beside”.

Chrysostom continued⁶ to say that by becoming a son of David, He was able to make God a father to us.

“Hearing these things, arise and surmise nothing ordinary; but even because of this very thing, especially marvel: that being Son of the Un-originate God and His true Son, He allowed Himself to be called Son of David that He might make you son of God (Romans 8:14-19). He allowed a slave (i.e. Joseph) to be father to Him, that He might make the Lord Father to you, a slave”.

Genealogy Traced Through Joseph

One will note that both Matthew's and Luke's genealogy trace Jesus' ancestry through Joseph and not Mary, even though Joseph had no part in Mary's conception. There are several reasons for this. The first and most obvious one is that it was not customary to trace the genealogy of women. Genealogies were traced through the head of the family -- the husband (compare Genesis 5 and 10).

A second reason for tracing Jesus' genealogy through Joseph is that he was Jesus' legal father according to Jewish law. However, this didn't really make any difference to the genealogical line since Joseph and Mary were cousins. They had a common grandfather: Matthan (Matthew 1:15). From Matthan back to David, the ancestry was the same for Mary as it was for Joseph; thus Matthew traces Mary's ancestry by tracing Joseph's.

Appendix A shows Jesus' family tree going back to Matthan. Note how there can easily be two distinct lines going back to David: one as mentioned by Matthew through Matthan, Luke mentions the other and going through Heli (or Eli) and Matthat. Either of these lines fulfills Jacob's prophecy for his son Judah: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from his loins, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the expectation of the Gentiles” (Genesis 49:10 OSB).

Matthew's genealogy lists three sets of fourteen generations from Abraham to Christ. Yet only thirteen are listed from the Babylonian captivity to Christ (if Christ is the thirteenth). There are two possible explanations for this. John Chrysostom thought⁷ that Matthew had included the

⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 6.

⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, II, 3.

⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 1

Babylonian captivity itself as one generation . Another possibility is the age difference between Joseph and Mary: Joseph was 80; Mary was 15. They were at least a generation apart in age.

Leo the Great stated⁸ that it is important for Christ not only to be perfect man, but also to be the descendant of David and Abraham. The first Adam and the last Adam had the same human nature. Wisdom built a house for herself in the body of the Virgin Mary, and thus, the Word became flesh. The form of God and the form of a slave came together into one person and the Creator of time was born in time.

“But it is of no avail to say that our LORD, the Son of the Virgin Mary, was true and perfect man, if He is not believed to be Man of that stock which is attributed to Him in the Gospel. For Matthew says, ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Matthew 1:1). He follows the order of His human origin, so as to bring the lines of His ancestry down to Joseph to whom the LORD’s mother was espoused. Whereas Luke going backwards step by step traces His succession to the first of the human race himself, to show that the first Adam and the last Adam were of the same nature. No doubt the Almighty Son of God could have appeared for the purpose of teaching, and justifying men in exactly the same way that He appeared both to patriarchs and prophets in the semblance of flesh. For instance, when He engaged in a struggle, and entered into conversation with Jacob (Genesis 32:24), or when He accepted hospitable entertainment, and even partook of the food set before Him (Genesis 18:1-15). But these appearances were indications of that Man whose reality it was announced by mystic predictions would be assumed from the stock of preceding patriarchs. And the fulfillment of the mystery of our atonement, which was ordained from all eternity, was not assisted by any figures because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon the Virgin. The power of the Most High had not over-shadowed Mary: so that ‘Wisdom has built a house for herself’ (Proverbs 9:1 LXX) within her undefiled body, and thus, ‘the Word became flesh’ (John 1:14). The form of God and the form of a slave coming together into one person, the Creator of times was born in time; and He Himself through whom all things were made, was brought forth in the midst of all things. The New Man was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and took on Him our old nature, being consubstantial with the Father, and deigned to be consubstantial with His mother also, being alone free from sin. If Christ had not united our nature to Him the whole human race would be held in bondage beneath the Devil’s yoke, and we would not be able to make use of the Conqueror’s victory, if it had been won outside our nature.”

Leo the Great also stated⁹ that Christ had to have been fully human, like us, to have been crucified for us. He rendered void the force of the old bond, by paying it for all, because He alone of us all did not owe it. By one man’s guilt all had become sinners; so, by one man’s innocence all might become innocent.

“The true birth of Christ, therefore, is confirmed by the true cross; since He is Himself born in our flesh, Who is crucified in our flesh, which, as no sin entered into it, could not have been mortal, unless it had been that of our race. But in order

⁸ Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Letters, XXXI, 2.

⁹ Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Letters, CXXXIX, 3.

that He might restore life to all, He undertook the cause of all and rendered void the force of the old bond, by paying it for all, because He alone of us all did not owe it: that, as by one man's guilt all had become sinners, so by one man's innocence all might become innocent, righteousness being bestowed upon men by Him Who had undertaken man's nature. For in no way is He outside our true bodily nature, of Whom the Evangelist in beginning his story says, 'the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1), with which Paul's teaching agrees, when he says 'of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God' (Romans 9:5), and so to Timothy 'Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel'" (2 Timothy 2:8).

The Virgin Birth Was Concealed

Not everyone knew that the Virgin Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus. This was done to protect both her and Joseph from the wrath of the Jewish leaders.

Another reason for tracing Christ's genealogy through Joseph was to conceal the Virgin birth. Elizabeth and Zachariah knew (Luke 1:41-45), as did Joseph and the two midwives who attended Mary at Jesus' birth. But the shepherds aren't told these details (Luke 2:8-20). Early historical accounts of Joseph and Mary's life reveal that some of the priests had been told of the Virgin birth, but they don't seem to have believed it. For more details see the Feast Day for the Nativity of Mary.

According to Mosaic Law, if a betrothed virgin willingly had sex with someone, both she and her lover were to be stoned to death for adultery (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). In order to protect the Virgin Mary from suspicion, Joseph was directed to raise the Holy Child as his own Son (Matthew 1:18-25). This did create some controversy in that Joseph was presumed by the priests to have "defiled" the Virgin Mary before their marriage. Both Joseph and Mary denied any wrong doing under oath before the priests in Jerusalem and the "waters of conviction" were applied to them both. [The "water of conviction" was holy water used in the Old Testament to discern extra-marital affairs before the Lord in the Temple. See Numbers 5:11-31.] When neither Joseph nor Mary was "convicted", the priest stated, "If the Lord God did not disclose your sin, neither will I judge you". Thus the priests were presented with evidence of the Virgin birth, but they do not seem to have grasped it.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁰ that the reason for concealing this from the Jewish leaders was that, "If after so many miracles, they still called Him son of Joseph (i.e. and not Son of God), how before the miracles would they have believed that He was born of a virgin?" (Homily III on Matthew 1). Ignatius of Antioch stated¹¹ that the virginity of Mary after conception and after the birth of her Son was hidden from the Prince of this world also. (Ad Ephesians 19:1)

In our Gospel reading, we notice Joseph's difficulty when he discovered Mary was pregnant. From historical sources, Joseph was away from home for about six months building

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 1.

¹¹ Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Ephesians, 19, 1.

houses near the Sea of Galilee beginning just before the Annunciation. During this period, Mary visited Elizabeth, her cousin, for three months before the birth of John the Baptist. Upon his arrival home, Joseph was confronted with a very obviously pregnant Mary, who was six months along.

This put Joseph in a major dilemma. Mary had been born of aged parents similar to John the Baptist. Prior to the conception of Mary by Anna, her mother, her parents had vowed to the Lord that if He gave them a child, they would dedicate the child to the Lord's service just as Hannah did with the Prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1:10-28). And thus Mary grew up living in the Temple just as Samuel did.

By the time Mary was twelve, both her parents had died of old age, leaving her an orphan. She, herself, had also vowed to the Lord to serve Him in fasting and prayer just like the Prophetess Anna did at that time (Luke 2:36-38). By the time Mary reached age fourteen, however, the priests did not like the idea of a young girl living in the Temple since hanky-panky could cause the Temple to be defiled.

After much discussion they consulted the Lord in the Holy of Holies and Joseph, a recent widower was selected to be her husband/caretaker so that she could continue her vow as she wished without causing embarrassment to them. Joseph responded by saying, "I am an old man and have children. Why do you hand over to me this infant who is younger than my grandsons?" Yet he did as he was instructed, and intended to honor Mary's vow.

But now, seeing her six months pregnant, he didn't know what to do. Mary and her five young virgin friends testified that no one had touched Mary and that they had been continuing in prayer and fasting since Joseph left. Joseph was very self-restrained; he did not get passionate or jealous. "Being a just man, he did not want to make her a public example (i.e. death by stoning) and was considering divorcing her secretly" (Matthew 1:19). While he considered this, an angel appeared to him in a dream and explained things to him (Matthew 1:20-23). The child Mary was carrying was the Messiah and was conceived of the Holy Spirit! Thus the angel addressed Joseph as "son of David" and commanded Joseph to call His name Jesus (meaning "Savior"). By Joseph naming the child, Joseph assumed the role of His father and publicly accepted Jesus as his own son, thus deflecting suspicion regarding Jesus' true parentage.

Chrysostom comments¹² on this to note Joseph's wakefulness to the things of God in his willingness to do what the angel asked.

"Do you see his obedience and his submissive mind? Do you see a soul truly awakened and in all things incorruptible? For neither when he suspected something amiss could he endure to keep the Virgin with him; nor yet when he was freed from this suspicion, could he bear to cast her out, but rather he keeps her with him and ministers to the whole dispensation.

Anyone Who Was Interested Could Have Discovered What Was Concealed

¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, V, 5.

John Chrysostom stated¹³ that Christ's birth in Bethlehem was a Divine dispensation; He didn't leave Bethlehem immediately either to give people time to investigate everything exactly. When people refused to see what had happened, Christ hid Himself for 30 years; then He revealed Himself again from a more glorious beginning at the Jordan with John the Baptist. Just so that no one could say "We didn't know when or where He was born", the wise men came from Persia knowing just that. No one else has come from Bethlehem as a Ruler except Christ; so, there is no excuse for missing Him. By investigating everything carefully, one could determine that Christ was both a man as Ruler, and God Who created the universe.

"But why, if He was to come from Bethlehem, did He live in Nazareth after the birth, and obscure the prophecy?" No, He did not obscure it, but unfolded it the more. For the fact, that while His mother had her constant residence in Nazareth, He was born in Bethlehem, shows the thing to have been done by a Divine dispensation. And let me add: neither did He move from Bethlehem immediately after His birth, but stayed forty days, giving opportunity to them that were inquisitive to examine all things accurately. Because there were many things to move people to make such an inquiry, at least if they had been minded to pay attention to them. Thus, at the coming of the wise men the whole city of Jerusalem was in a flutter, and together with the city the king, and the prophet was brought forward, and a court of high authority was summoned (Matthew 2:1-5); and many other things too were done there, all which Luke relates minutely. Such were what concerns Anna, Simeon, Zachariah, the angels, and the shepherds; all which things were to the attentive sufficient to give hints for ascertaining what had taken place (Luke 2). For if the wise men, who came from Persia, were not ignorant of the place, much more might they, who lived there, acquaint themselves with these things."

"Christ manifested Himself then from the beginning by many miracles, but when they would not see, He hid Himself for 30 years, to be again revealed from another more glorious beginning. For it was no longer the wise men, nor the star, but the Father from above that proclaimed Him at the streams of Jordan. The Spirit likewise came upon Him, guiding that voice to the head of Him just baptized; and John, with all plainness of speech, cried out everywhere in Judaea. Inhabited and waste country alike were filled with that kind of doctrine; and the witness too of the miracles, and earth, sea, and the whole creation, uttered in His behalf a distinct voice. But at the time of the birth, just so many things happened as were fitted quietly to point out Him that came. Thus, in order that the Jews might not say, 'We don't know when He was born, nor where', both all these events in which the wise men were concerned were brought about by God's providence. Similarly, the rest of the things which we have mentioned; so that they would have no excuse to plead, for not having inquired into that which had come to pass. But note also the exactness of the prophecy. For it does not say, 'He will abide' in Bethlehem, but 'He will come out' from there. So that this too was a subject of prophecy, His being simply born there. Some of them, however, being past shame, say that these things were spoken of Zerubbabel. But how can they be right? For surely 'his goings forth' were not 'from of old, from everlasting' (Micah 5:2). And how can that suit him which is said at the beginning, 'Out of you shall He come forth' (Matthew

¹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, VII, 2.

2:6). Zerubbabel was not born in Judaea, but in Babylon, whence also he is called Zorobabel, because he had his origin there. And as many as know the Syrians' language know what I say.”

“And together with what has been said, all the time also since these things is sufficient to establish the testimony. For what saith he? ‘You are not the least among the princes of Judah’ (Matthew 2:6), and he adds the cause of the pre-eminence, saying, ‘out of you shall He come’. No one else has made that place illustrious or eminent, except Him alone. For example: since that birth, men come from the ends of the earth to see the manger, and the site of the shed. And this the prophet foretold aloud from the first, saying, ‘You are not the least among the princes of Judah’; that is, among the heads of tribes. By which expression he comprehended even Jerusalem¹⁴. But not even so have they paid attention, although the advantage passes on to themselves. Because of this the prophets at the beginning say nowhere so much of His dignity, as touching the benefit which accrued to them by Him. For when the Virgin was bearing the child, Matthew said, ‘You shall call His name Jesus’; and he gives the reason, ‘for He shall save His people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:21). The wise men also said not, ‘Where is the Son of God?’ but ‘He that is born King of the Jews’ (Matthew 2:2). And here again it is not affirmed, ‘Out of you shall come forth’ the Son of God, but ‘a Ruler, that shall shepherd my people Israel’ (Matthew 2:6). It was necessary to converse with them at first, setting out in a tone of very exceeding condescension, lest they should be offended; and to preach what related to their salvation in particular, that hereby they might be the rather won over. At any rate, all the testimonies that are first cited, and for which it was the season immediately at the time of the birth, say nothing great, nothing lofty concerning Him. Those subsequent to the manifestation of the miracles are different; for these speak more distinctly concerning His dignity. For instance, when after many miracles children were singing hymns to Him, hear what the prophet said, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You hast perfected praise’ (Matthew 21:16, Psalm 8:2). And again, ‘I will consider the Heavens, the works of Your fingers’ (Psalm 8:3); which signifies Him to be Maker of the universe. And the testimony too, which was produced after the ascension, manifests His equality with the Father; thus saying, ‘The Lord said unto my Lord, sit on My Right Hand’ (Psalm 110:1, Acts 2:34). And Isaiah also said, ‘He that riseth up to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust’” (Isaiah 11:10, Romans 15:12)

Cyril of Jerusalem stated¹⁵ that although Jesus means “Savior”, his Name was veiled due to the murderous spirit of the Jews. Even before He was born, He had a people, since He has existed from eternity.

“There is One Lord Jesus Christ, a wondrous name, indirectly announced beforehand by the Prophets. For Isaiah the Prophet says, ‘Behold, your Savior has come to you, having his reward and his work before his face’ (Isaiah 62:11 LXX). Now Jesus in Hebrew is by interpretation Savior. For the Prophetic gift, foreseeing the murderous spirit of the Jews against their Lord, veiled His name, lest from

¹⁴ That is, Bethlehem was greater than Jerusalem!

¹⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, X, 12.

knowing it plainly beforehand they might plot against Him readily. But He was openly called Jesus not by men, but by an Angel, who came not by his own authority, but was sent by the power of God. He said to Joseph, ‘Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus’ (Matthew 1:20-21). And immediately he renders the reason of this name, saying, ‘for He shall save His people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:21). Consider how He who was not yet born could have a people, unless He was in being before He was born. This also the Prophet says in His person, ‘From my mother's womb he has called My Name’ (Isaiah 49:1 LXX); because the Angel foretold that He should be called Jesus. Again, concerning Herod’s plot against him, he says, ‘He has made my mouth as a sharp sword, and he has hidden me under the shadow of his hand’” (Isaiah 49:2 LXX).

John of Damascus stated¹⁶ that the Virgin Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ. There are three reasons for this: (1) The term “first-born” does not imply the birth of others and could refer to “only begotten”. (2) The word “till” refers only to the appointed time, not to subsequent times. (3) After such a miraculous birth, it is not a chaste mind that thinks of sex with other men.

“The ever-virgin One thus remains even after the birth still virgin, having never at any time up till death consorted with a man. For although it is written, Joseph ‘did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son’ (Matthew 1:25), yet note that he who is first-begotten is first-born even if he is only-begotten. For the word ‘first-born’ means that he was born first but does not at all suggest the birth of others. And the word ‘till’ signifies the limit of the appointed time but does not exclude the time thereafter. For the Lord says, ‘And lo, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age’ (Matthew 28:20), not meaning thereby that He will be separated from us after the completion of the age. Paul, indeed, says, ‘And thus we shall always be with the Lord’ (1 Thessalonians 4:17), meaning after the general resurrection.”

“For could it be possible that Mary, who had borne God and from experience of the subsequent events had come to know the miracle, should receive the embrace of a man? God forbid! It is not the part of a chaste mind to think such thoughts, far less to commit such acts.”

Matthew concludes the Gospel lesson by saying that Joseph “did not know her until she brought forth her firstborn Son” (Matthew 1:25). Chrysostom comments¹⁷ on this as follows:

“He has used the word *until* not that you should suspect that afterwards he did know her, but to inform you that before the birth, the Virgin was wholly untouched by man. But why then, it may be said, has he used the word *until*? It is usual in Scripture to do this, and to use the expression without reference to limited times. For so with respect to the ark it is said ‘The raven did not return until the water was dried from off the earth’ (Genesis 8:7 LXX). And yet the raven did not return even after that time. And when discoursing also of God, the Scripture says:

¹⁶ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 14.

¹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, V, 5.

‘From age until age, Thou art’ (Psalm 90:2 LXX), not as fixing limits in this case. And again when it is preaching the Gospel beforehand, it says: ‘In His days shall righteousness spring up and abundance of peace until the moon be removed’ (Psalm 72:7 LXX). It does not set a limit to this fair part of creation. So then here likewise it uses the word *until* to make certain what was before the birth; but as to what follows, it leaves you to make the inference.” Chrysostom continued to say that Joseph kept Mary a virgin the rest of his life.

He Will Be Called Emmanuel

“So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel’, which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:22-23).

Hilary of Poitiers pointed out¹⁸ that when Christ emptied Himself and took on human nature, the weakness of His humanity did not affect His Deity. The purpose was not that the Godhead should be lost, but that man should be born to God. When He asked to be glorified (John 17:1-5), He is asking that His humanity might be elevated to what His Deity was before the world began.

“This timeless and ineffable generation of the Only-begotten, which transcends the perception of human understanding, we are taught the mystery of God born to be man from the womb of the Virgin. This shows how according to the plan of the Incarnation, when He emptied Himself of the form of God and took the form of a servant, the weakness of the assumed humanity did not weaken the divine nature. That Divine power was imparted to humanity without the virtue of divinity being lost in the human form. For when God was born to be man the purpose was not that the Godhead should be lost, but that, the Godhead remaining, man should be born to be God. Thus, Emmanuel is His name, which means ‘God with us’ (Matthew 1:23), that God might not be lowered to the level of man, but man raised to that of God. When He asks that He may be glorified (John 17:5), it is not a glorifying of His divine nature, but of the lower nature He assumed. For He asks for that glory which He had with God before the world was made.”

Cyril of Jerusalem stated¹⁹ that Matthew addressed primarily Jesus’ humanity according to the flesh that he received from the Virgin Mary. Jesus has two fathers: David according to the flesh, and God from eternity past.

“If you hear the Gospel saying, ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham’ (Matthew 1:1), understand ‘according to the flesh’. For He is the Son of David at the end of the ages (Hebrews 9:26), but the Son of God before all ages, without beginning. The one, which before He had not, He received from the Virgin Mary; but the other, which He has, He has eternally as begotten of the Father. Christ has two fathers: one, David, according to the flesh, and one, God, His Father in a Divine manner. As the Son of David, He is subject to time, and to handling, and to genealogical descent. But as Son

¹⁸ Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, X, 7.

¹⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XI, 5.

according to the Godhead, He is subject neither to time nor to place, nor to genealogical descent: for ‘Who will declare His generation?’ (Isaiah 53:8) God is a Spirit (John 4:24); He who is a Spirit has been spiritually begotten, as being incorporeal, an inscrutable and incomprehensible generation. The Son Himself says of the Father, ‘The Lord has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, today I have begotten You’ (Psalm 2:7). Now this today is not recent, but eternal: a timeless today, before all ages. ‘I have begotten You from the womb before the morning’” (Psalm 110:3 LXX).

Leo the Great pointed out²⁰ some aspects of the Incarnation. Isaiah’s prophesy, “Who shall declare His generation?” applies both to His eternal birth from the Father before time, and to His birth of the Virgin Mary. Mary’s virginity was violated neither by her conception nor by her giving birth to Christ. The Incarnation produced one Person Who is truly human and truly Divine. Yet the two natures of Christ are in such close union that Christ is just one Son.

“The things which are connected with the mystery of today’s solemn feast are well known to you, dearly-beloved, and have frequently been heard. But as yonder visible light affords pleasure to eyes that are unimpaired, so to sound hearts does the Savior’s nativity give eternal joy; and we must not keep silent about it, though we cannot treat of it as we ought. For we believe that what Isaiah says, ‘who shall declare his generation?’ (Isaiah 53:8) applies not only to that mystery, whereby the Son of GOD is co-eternal with the Father, but also to this birth whereby ‘the Word became flesh’ (John 1:14). The Son of GOD, equal and of the same nature from the Father and with the Father, Creator and Lord of the Universe, is completely present everywhere, and completely exceeds all things. In the due course of time, which runs by His own disposal, He chose for Himself this day on which to be born of the blessed virgin Mary for the salvation of the world, without loss of the mother’s honor. For her virginity was violated neither at the conception nor at the birth: ‘that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord through Isaiah the prophet. ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, “God with us”” (Matthew 1:23). For this wondrous child-bearing of the holy Virgin produced in her offspring one person which was truly human and truly Divine. Neither substance so retained their properties that there could be any division of persons in them. Nor was the creature taken into partnership with its Creator in such a way that the One was the in-dweller, and the other the dwelling, but so that the one nature was blended with the other. Although the nature which is taken is one, and that which takes is another, yet these two diverse natures came together into such close union that it is one and the same Son. He says both that, as true Man, ‘He is less than the Father’ (John 14:28), and that, as true God, ‘He is equal with the Father’” (John 10:30).

Irenaeus of Lyons stated²¹ that the Holy Spirit both proclaimed through the prophets what was to come, and also interpreted this through the elders. The prophets described the Incarnation, and they clearly made it known that Christ would be both God and man. The Apostles and elders understood what the prophets wrote, and proclaimed the virgin birth, His humanity and His deity.

²⁰ Leo the Great, Sermons, XXIII, 1.

²¹ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, III, xxi, 4.

For the one and the same Spirit of God, who proclaimed by the prophets what and of what sort the Advent of the Lord should be, did by these elders give a just interpretation of what had been truly prophesied. By the Apostles, He Himself announced that the fullness of the times of the adoption had arrived, that the kingdom of heaven had drawn near, and that He was dwelling within those that believe on Him who was born Emmanuel of the Virgin. To this effect they testify, saying, ‘After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 1:18). The angel Gabriel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God’ (Luke 1:35). The angel said to Joseph in a dream, ‘So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child’ (Matthew 1:22-23). But the elders have thus interpreted what Isaiah said: ‘And the Lord again spoke to Ahaz, saying, “Ask for yourself a sign of the Lord your God, in the depth or in the height”. And Ahaz said, “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord”. And he said, “Hear now, O house of David; is it a little thing for you to contend with men? And how do ye contend against the Lord? Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Emmanuel. Curds and honey, shall he eat, before he knows either to prefer evil *or* choose the good. For before the child shall know good or evil, he refuses evil, to choose the good”’ (Isaiah 7:10-16 LXX). Carefully, then, has the Holy Spirit pointed out, by what has been said, His birth from a virgin, and His essence, that He is God (for the name Emmanuel indicates this). He shows that He is a man, when He says, ‘Curds and honey shall He eat’ (Isaiah 7:15). In that He terms Him a child also, in saying, ‘before He knows good and evil’ (Isaiah 7:16); for these are all the tokens of a human infant. But that He ‘will not consent to evil, that He may choose that which is good’ — this is proper to God. By the fact, that He shall eat curds and honey, we should not understand that He is a mere man only; nor, on the other hand, from the name Emmanuel, should suspect Him to be God without flesh.

Ambrose of Milan compared²² the action of the Holy Spirit on the Virgin Mary to create Christ’s humanity to His action on the Font in Baptism to create the new birth. This should elevate Baptism in our minds to something more than just washing with water (1 Peter 3:21).

“So, then, having obtained everything, let us know that we are born again, but let us not say, ‘How are we born again?’ Have we entered a second time into our mother’s womb and been born again? I do not recognize here the course of nature. But here there is no order of nature, where is the excellence of grace. Again, it is not always the course of nature which brings about conception, for we confess that Christ the Lord was conceived of a Virgin, and reject the order of nature. For Mary conceived not of man, but was with child of the Holy Spirit, as Matthew says: ‘She was found with child of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 1:18). Then, the Holy Spirit came down upon the Virgin, wrought the conception, and effected the work of

²² Ambrose of Milan, Concerning the Mysteries, IX, 59. The “mysteries” is what the Early Church called the Eucharist.

generation. Surely, we must not doubt that coming down upon the Font, or upon those who receive Baptism, He also effects the reality of the new birth.”

Justin Martyr stated²³ that circumcision, the Law and the sacrificial system began with Moses due to the hardness of heart of His people. These all have an end in Christ. Instead we have a spiritual circumcision through baptism like that experienced by Enoch and those like him.

“Circumcision began with Abraham, and the Sabbath, sacrifices, offerings and feasts began with Moses, and it has been proved they were enjoined on account of the hardness of your people’s heart. So, it was necessary, in accordance with the Father’s will, that they should have an end in Him who was born of a virgin, of the family of Abraham and tribe of Judah, and of David. Christ the Son of God, who was proclaimed as about to come to all the world, to be the everlasting Law and the everlasting covenant, was shown by the aforementioned prophecies. And we, who have approached God through Him, have received not carnal, but spiritual circumcision, which Enoch and those like him observed. And we have received it through baptism, since we were sinners; and all men may equally obtain it. But since the mystery of His birth now demands our attention, I shall speak of it. Isaiah then asserted in regard to the generation of Christ, that it could not be declared by man: ‘Who shall declare His generation?’” (Isaiah 53:8)

Joseph Was Instructed to Call His Name Jesus

“Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus” (Matthew 1:19-25).

John Chrysostom stated²⁴ that some women were barren in order to emphasize the virgin-birth of Christ and to help us believe. Elizabeth had two hindrances: her age (70 years) and her extreme post-menopausal womb. The Virgin Mary had just one hindrance: not having shared in marriage. The manner of the birth of Christ was too grand for marriage. Mary would not have been considered worthy to bear Christ if she had previously known her husband. Christ needed to share in a birth like ours, but still be more special than our birth. This was done that we may learn both the pre-eminence and the fellowship with us of Him who was born.

“It is necessary to state the cause for which those women were barren. It was in order that when you have seen the Virgin bringing forth our common Master, you might not disbelieve. Therefore, exercise your mind in the womb of the barren; in order that when you have seen the womb, disabled and bound as it is, being

²³ Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 43.

²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homily Against Publishing the Errors of the Brethren, 7.

opened to the bearing of children from the grace of God, you might not marvel at hearing that a virgin has brought forth. Or rather even marvel and be astounded; but do not disbelieve the marvel. When the Jew says to you, ‘How did the virgin bear?’, say to him ‘how did she bear who was barren and enfeebled by old age?’ There were then two hindrances, both her age and the unserviceableness of nature; but in the case of the Virgin there was one hindrance only, the not having shared in marriage. The barren one therefore prepares the way for the virgin. And that you may learn that it was on this account that the barren ones had anticipated it, in order that the Virgin’s childbirth might be believed, hear the words of Gabriel which were addressed to her. For when he had come and said to her, ‘You shall conceive in the womb and bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus’ (Luke 1:31); the Virgin was astonished and marveled, and said, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man’ (Luke 1:34). What then said the Angel? ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God’ (Luke 1:35). Seek not the sequence of nature, he says, when that which takes place is above nature; look not round for marriage and throes of child-birth, when the manner of the birth is too grand for marriage. ‘How can this be, since I know not a husband?’ Truly on this account shall this be, since you know no husband. For if you had known a husband, you would not have been deemed worthy to serve this ministry. So that, for the reason why you disbelieve, for this believe. And you would not have been deemed worthy to serve this ministry, not because marriage is an evil; but because virginity is superior. Right it was that the entry of the Master should be more distinguished than ours; for it was royal, and the king enters through one more distinguished. It was necessary that He should both share in a birth like ours, and be diverse from ours. Wherefore both these things are managed.”

“For the being born from the womb is common in respect to us, but the being born without marriage is a thing greater than on a level with us. The gestation and conception in the womb belong to human nature; but that the pregnancy should take place without sexual intercourse is too distinguished for human nature. For this purpose, both these things took place, in order that you may learn both the pre-eminence and the fellowship with you of Him who was born.”

Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Chrysostom also stated²⁵ that the Apostle John’s intent in his Gospel is different than that of the other evangelists. The others started with the humanity of Christ, giving details of how that happened. John started his Gospel with the Eternal Generation of Christ from the Father. Some heretics never got past Christ’s humanity; John’s Gospel needed to set that straight.

“John stated, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God’ (John 1:1). All the other Evangelists began with the Dispensation. Matthew says, ‘The Book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham’ (Matthew 1:1); Luke relates to us in the beginning of his Gospel the events relating

²⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, IV, 1.

to John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. Mark dwells on the same narratives, from that point detailing to us the history of John the Baptist. Why, when the others began with these matters, did John briefly and in a later place hint at them, saying, ‘the Word was made flesh’ (John 1:14). He passed by everything else, His conception, His birth, His bringing up, His growth, and at once discoursed to us concerning His Eternal Generation?”

“I will now tell you what the reason for this is. Because the other Evangelists had dwelt mostly on the accounts of His coming in the flesh, there was fear lest some, being of groveling minds, might for this reason rest in these doctrines alone, as indeed was the case with Paul of Samosata. In order, therefore, to lead away from this fondness for earth those who were like to fall into it, and to draw them up towards heaven, with good reason he commences his narrative from above, and from the eternal subsistence. For while Matthew enters upon his relation from Herod the king, Luke from Tiberius Caesar, Mark from the Baptism of John, the Apostle John, leaving alone all these things, ascends beyond all time or age. He darts forward the imagination of his hearers to the ‘was in the Beginning’, not allowing it to stay at any point, nor setting any limit, as they did in Herod, Tiberius, and John.”

Christ Came as Physician, Not Judge

In itemizing His genealogy, Matthew points out some not so illustrious aspects of Jesus’ ancestors. For example, “Jacob begot Judah and his brothers” (v.2). Together, Judah and his brothers are the twelve tribes of Israel. In Revelation 21:12, the gates of the New Jerusalem are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Yet four of the sons of Jacob (Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher) were children of slaves (Leah’s and Rachael’s maids Zilpah and Bilhah).

“Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar” (Matthew 1:3). Tamar was Judah’s daughter-in-law whose husband died. Judah had promised her his younger son for a husband according to Jewish law, but reneged on his promise. Tamar then pretended to be a prostitute and got pregnant by her father-in-law, Judah (Genesis 38:6-30). The twins that were born were likened by Chrysostom²⁶ to the Jew and Christian.

Another figure in Christ’s genealogy is the prostitute from Jericho, Rahab, who helped the spies and was spared during the destruction of Jericho (Joshua 2, 6). Boaz, Rahab’s son married Ruth, a poverty-stricken Gentile who renounced her father, household, race, country and kindred (Matthew 1:5, Ruth 1-4). Chrysostom noted²⁷ that Ruth is a model for the Gentile church in the New Testament.

Other kings in Christ’s genealogy, like Ahaz and Manasseh, led the people into idol worship, human sacrifice and witchcraft (2 Kings 16, 21). This ultimately led to the Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 24:1-4) and the burning and plundering of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25).

²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 4.

John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis, LXII, 4-10.

²⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 5.

Commenting on the many examples of wickedness in Christ's genealogy, Chrysostom wrote²⁸ that Christ came as a physician and not as a judge.

“If we were recounting the race of a mere man, one might naturally have been silent touching these things. But if of God Incarnate, so far from being silent one ought to make a glory of them, showing forth His tender care and His power. Because of this He came, not to escape our disgraces, but to bear them away. It is not only because He took flesh upon Him, and became man, that we stand justifiably amazed at Him. But also, because He permitted to have such relatives, being in no respect ashamed of our evils. And this He was proclaiming from the very beginnings of His birth that He is ashamed of none of the things that belong to us. He has come as a physician and not as a Judge”.

He Will Save His People from Their Sins

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

Irenaeus of Lyons summarized²⁹ the birth of Christ as follows: The Apostles recognized Christ as being both God and man. God had promised both David and Abraham that He would raise up one of their descendants as an eternal king. But Joseph had some difficulty with Mary being pregnant until an angel explained it to him. This clearly signified that the promise made to the fathers had been accomplished, that the Son of God was born of a virgin, and that He Himself was Christ the Savior whom the prophets had foretold

“John knew the one and the same Word of God, that He was the only begotten, and that He became incarnate for our salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord. Matthew recognized one and the same Jesus Christ, exhibiting his generation as a man from the Virgin. God had promised David that He would raise up from the fruit of his body an eternal King, having made the same promise to Abraham a long time previously. ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Matthew 1:1). Then, that he might free our mind from suspicion regarding Joseph, he says: ‘Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit’ (Matthew 1:18). Then, when Joseph had it in contemplation to put Mary away, since she proved with child, [Matthew tells us of] the angel of God standing by him, and saying: ‘Fear not to take unto you Mary your wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. Now this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet: Behold. a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is, God with us’ (Isaiah 7:14). This clearly signified that both the promise made to the fathers had been accomplished, that the Son of God was born of a virgin, and that He Himself was Christ the Savior whom the prophets had foretold.”

²⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 3.

²⁹ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, III, xvi, 2.

John Cassian pointed out³⁰ how the title “Savior” is given to Christ in one sense, but to men in another sense. It is only possible for Christ to be a savior from sin; others can be a savior from their enemies.

Scripture has most plainly pointed to the name of Christ by using the name of Savior: for Savior is the same as Christ, as the angel says: ‘For to you is born this day a Savior who is Christ the Lord’ (Luke 2:11). For everybody knows that in Hebrew ‘Jesus’ means ‘Savior’, as the angel announced to the holy Virgin Mary, saying: ‘And you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:21). We cannot say that He is termed Savior in the same sense as the title is given to others. ‘And the Lord raised up to them a Savior, Othniel the Son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother’ (Judges 3:9), and again, ‘the Lord raised up to them a Savior, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man’ (Judges 3:15). ‘He will save His people from their sins’ (Matthew 1:21). But it does not lie in the power of a man to redeem his people from the captivity of sin — a thing which is only possible for Him of whom it is said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). For the others saved a people not their own but God’s, and not from their sins, but from their enemies.

John Chrysostom pointed out³¹ that Christ did not repeal the Mosaic Law, but fulfilled it. Some early heretics stated that the Mosaic Law was of the devil; but if Christ established and fulfilled the Law, this stops their mouths. Christ fulfilled what the prophets had foretold by all the details of His life; He fulfilled the Law in several ways. First, He fulfilled the Law by keeping all of its precepts. Second, He fulfilled the Law by granting that we also would fulfill the Law by not walking according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Third, He fulfilled the Law by upgrading it to include anger and not just murder, lust and not just adultery.

“Christ did not say it once only, ‘I do not repeal the Law’, but He both repeated it again, and added another and a greater thing. ‘Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod or one letter point will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled’” (Matthew 5:17-18).

“Now this not only obstructs the obstinacy of the Jews, but stops also the mouths of those heretics³², who say that the old covenant is of the devil. For if Christ came to destroy his tyranny, how is this covenant not only not destroyed, but even fulfilled by Him? For He said not only, ‘I do not destroy it’; though this had been enough; but ‘I even fulfill it’, which are the words of one so far from opposing himself, as to be even establishing it. And how, one may ask, did He not destroy it? In what way did He rather fulfill either the Law or the prophets? The prophets He fulfilled, inasmuch as He confirmed by His actions all that had been said concerning Him. The evangelist Matthew used to say³³ in each case, ‘That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet’. Both when He was born (Matthew 1:22-23), and when the children sung that wondrous hymn to Him (Matthew 21:16), and when He sat on the donkey (Matthew 21:4-9), and in very many more instances

³⁰ John Cassian, Seven Books on the Incarnation, IV, 12.

³¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XVI, 3.

³² That is, some of the Gnostics and the Manichaeans.

³³ Matthew uses this expression 16 times throughout his Gospel.

He worked this same fulfillment. All these things would have been unfulfilled, if He had not come. But the Law He fulfilled, not in one way only, but in a second and third also. In one way, by transgressing none of the precepts of the Law. For that He did fulfill it all, hear what He said to John, 'For thus it fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness' (Matthew 3:15). To the Jews also He said, 'Which of you convicts Me of sin' (John 8:46)? And to His disciples again, 'The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me' (John 14:30). And the prophet too from the first had said that 'He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth'" (Isaiah 53:9).

"This then was one sense in which He fulfilled it. Another, that He did the same through us also; for this is the marvel, that He not only Himself fulfilled it, but He granted this to us likewise. Which thing Paul also declared saying, 'Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes' (Romans 10:4). And he said also, that 'He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Romans 8:3-4). And again, 'Do we then make void the Law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law' (Romans 3:31). For since the Law was laboring at this, to make man righteous, but had not power, He came and brought in the way of righteousness by faith, and so established that which the Law desired. What the Law could not do by letters, this He accomplished by faith. On this account He said, 'I did not come to destroy but to fulfill the Law'" (Matthew 5:17).

John Chrysostom stated³⁴ that Noah, Abraham, Job and Moses didn't have the written Word. Their minds were pure and they had the grace of the Spirit instead. Similarly, the Apostles didn't have the written words of Christ that are recorded in the New Testament. Since we don't have the grace that they did, we need the written word

"It was fitting for us not at all to require the aid of the written Word, but to exhibit a life so pure, that the grace of the Spirit should be instead of books to our souls. Books are inscribed with ink; even so should our hearts be with the Spirit. But, since we have utterly put away from us this grace, come, let us at any rate embrace the second-best course. The grace of the Spirit was better; God has made this clear, both by His words, and by His doings. To Noah, Abraham, and his offspring, to Job, and Moses too, He discoursed not by writings, but Himself by Himself, finding their mind pure. But after the whole people of the Hebrews had fallen into the very pit of wickedness, then and thereafter was a written word, and tablets, and the admonition which is given by these."

"One may perceive that this was the case, not of the saints in the Old Testament only, but also of those in the New. For neither to the Apostles did God give anything in writing, but instead of written words He promised that He would give them the grace of the Spirit. For 'the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you' (John 14:26). And that you may learn that this was far better, listen to what He said by the Prophet: 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put My Law in their minds, and

³⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, I, 1.

write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people' (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-11). Also 'All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children' (Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45). And Paul too, pointing out the same superiority, said that they had received a Law: 'clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart' (2 Corinthians 3:3). But since in process of time they made shipwreck, some with regard to doctrines, others as to life and manners, there was again need that they should be put in remembrance by the written word."

The Fullness of Time

The Patriarch Jacob had said that Jesus would come when the Jewish rulers had come to an end (Genesis 49:10 LXX). This happened when Jerusalem was destroyed in 66-70 AD. Daniel also prophesied the exact year when Messiah would come (Daniel 9:24-26). It was this prophecy that the Magi followed in order to know when to come to worship the newborn King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-2).

Chrysostom noted that Matthew began his Gospel with the genealogy: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Commenting on this, Chrysostom said³⁵:

"Observe a most admirable order in the things he (Matthew) has mentioned. For he did not proceed directly to the birth, but puts us in mind, first, how many generations He was from Abraham, how many from David and how many from the captivity of Babylon. Thus, he sets the careful hearer upon considering the times, to show that this is the Christ who was preached by the prophets. For when you have numbered the generations and have learned by the time that this is He, you will readily receive likewise the miracle which took place in His birth".

The Apostle Paul spoke of this also: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

John Chrysostom stated³⁶ that the Scriptures are very clear about the birth of Christ. He was born into a very poor family; yet He did not need wealth to save the world.

"Let us then, beloved, pay attention to the Scriptures; and if no other part be so, let the Gospels at least be the subjects of our earnest care; let us keep them in our hands. For immediately when you open the Book you see the name of Christ there, and hear one say, 'The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. When His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, she was found with Child of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 1:18). He that hears this will immediately desire virginity, will marvel at the Birth, and will be freed from earthly things. It is not a little thing when you see the Virgin deemed worthy of the Spirit, and an Angel talking with her. And this is merely scratching the surface; but if you persevere to go on to the end, you

³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 4.

³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LIII, 3.

shall loathe all that pertains to this life, and mock all worldly things. If you are rich, you shall think nothing of wealth, when you hear that she who was (the wife) of a carpenter, and of humble family, became the mother of your Lord. If you are poor you shall not be ashamed of your poverty, when you hear that the Creator of the world was not ashamed of the humble dwelling.”

Chrysostom also mentions that there is great significance to the names themselves in Jesus’ genealogy and that it was not without purpose that these names were given to His forbears. For example, the root meaning of some of the more familiar names is:

| | |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| Abraham | Exalted father |
| Isaac | He laughs (Genesis 18:12) |
| Jacob | Heel, footprint (Genesis 3:15) |
| Judah | Praised |
| Joseph | He increases |
| David | Beloved one |
| Solomon | Peaceable or Peacemaker |
| Zerubbabel | Begotten in Babylon |
| Zadok | To be just or righteous |

In mentioning this, Chrysostom had access to works by Justin Martyr and Jerome on the same subject.

Thus, the central feature of the genealogy of Christ is the Incarnation. Some of the heretics over the last 1900 years have denied that Christ was truly a man; reading the genealogies contradicts the heretics very strongly.

APPENDIX A
Genealogies in the Scriptures

| LUKE (Legal tree of Joseph) | MATTHEW (The Kings of Israel) | 2 KINGS & 1 CHRONICLES | GENESIS (Hebrew) | GENESIS (Septuagint) |
|--|--|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Adam | | Adam | Adam | Adam |
| Seth | | Seth | Seth | Seth |
| Enosh | | Enosh | Enosh | Enosh |
| Cainan | | Cainan | Cainan | Cainan |
| Mahalalel | | Mahalalel | Mahalalel | Mahalalel |
| Jared | | Jared | Jared | Jared |
| Enoch | | Enoch | Enoch | Enoch |
| Methuselah | | Methuselah | Methuselah | Methuselah |
| Lamech | | Lamech | Lamech | Lamech |
| Noah | | Noah | Noah | Noah |
| Shem | | Shem | Shem | Shem |
| Arphaxad | | Arphaxad | Arphaxad | Arphaxad |
| Cainan | | | | Cainan |
| Shelah | | Shelah | Shelah | Shelah |
| Eber | | Eber | Eber | Eber |
| Peleg | | Peleg | Peleg | Peleg |
| Reu | | Reu | Reu | Reu |
| Serug | | Serug | Serug | Serug |
| Nahor | | Nahor | Nahor | Nahor |
| Terah | | Terah | Terah | Terah |
| Abraham | Abraham | Abraham | Abraham | Abraham |
| Isaac | Isaac | Isaac | Isaac | Isaac |
| Jacob | Jacob | Jacob | Jacob | Jacob |
| Judah | Judah | Judah | Judah | Judah |
| Perez | Perez | Perez | Perez | Perez |
| Hezron | Hezron | Hezron | Hezron | Hezron |
| Ram | Ram | Ram | | |
| Amminadab | Amminadab | Amminadab | | |
| Nahshon | Nahshon | Nahshon | | |
| Salmon | Salmon | Salmon | | |
| Boaz | Boaz | Boaz | | |
| Obed | Obed | Obed | | |
| Jesse | Jesse | Jesse | | |
| David | David | David | | |
| Nathan | Solomon | Solomon | | |
| Mattathah | | | | |
| Menan | Rehoboam | Rehoboam | | |
| Melea | | | | |
| Eliakim | Abijah | Abijah | | |

| LUKE (Legal tree of Joseph) | MATTHEW (The Kings of Israel) | 2 KINGS & 1 CHRONICLES | GENESIS (Hebrew) | GENESIS (Septuagint) |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jonan | Asa | Asa | | |
| Joseph | Jehoshaphat | Jehoshaphat | | |
| Judah | Joram (Jehoram) | Joram (Jehoram) | | |
| Simeon | | Ahaziah | | |
| Levi | | Joash | | |
| | | Amaziah | | |
| Matthat | Uzziah (Azariah) | Uzziah (Azariah) | | |
| Jorim | Jotham | Jotham | | |
| Eliezar | Ahaz | Ahaz | | |
| Jose | Hezekiah | Hezekiah | | |
| Er | Manassah | Manasseh | | |
| Elmodan | Amon | Amon | | |
| Cosam | Josiah | Josiah | | |
| Addi | | Jehoiakim | | |
| Melchi | Jeconiah | Jeconiah (or Jehoiachin) | | |
| Neir | | | | |
| Shealtiel | Shealtiel | Shealtiel | | |
| Zerubbabel | Zerubbabel | Zerubbabel | | |
| Rhesa | | | | |
| Joannas | Abiud | | | |
| Judah | Eliakim | | | |
| Joseph | | | | |
| Semei | Azor | | | |
| Mattathiah | | | | |
| Maath | Zadok | | | |
| Naggai | | | | |
| Eslì | Achim | | | |
| Nahum | | | | |
| Amos | Eliud | | | |
| Mattathiah | | | | |
| Joseph | Eleazar | | | |
| Janna | | | | |
| Melchi | Matthan | | | |
| Levi | | | | |
| Matthat | Jacob | | | |
| Heli | | | | |
| Joseph | Joseph | | | |