

Genealogies of the Bible

The central character of the Bible is Jesus Christ. The first part, the Old Testament, consists of 39 'books' which tell of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants. These books tell of how the descendants of Abraham broke the covenant in their faithlessness and unfaithfulness to God. These books of the Old Testament also tell of how God would make a new covenant. Jesus is the mediator of that new covenant. The last 27 books, called the New Testament, tell of the life and work of Jesus and those who followed Him.

Drawing up a genealogy of the human family of Christ is not quite as easy as it seems. The Bible contains a number of genealogical lists: Genesis 5 (Adam to Noah), Genesis 11 (Noah to Abraham), Ruth 4:18-22 (Judah to David), 1 Chronicles 1-3 (Adam to Elioenai), 1 Chronicles 4-9 (the descendents of sons of Jacob, grandson of Abraham), Matthew 1:1-16 (Abraham to Joseph, Mary's husband), Luke 3:23-38 (Adam to Joseph, Mary's husband). The genealogies recorded in Genesis and Ruth, except for the few alternate spellings that seem to plague all genealogists, is parallel with that of Luke and 1 Chronicles. Sometimes a name was inserted in one genealogy that wasn't found in another, but they are clearly the same genealogies.

For the generations from Abraham to David, the genealogies recorded in Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Matthew, and Luke all agree. It's after that that it becomes a bit muddled. Matthew and Luke are clearly not the same genealogies from David to Shealtiel. Matthew tracks through David's son, Solomon. Luke takes a more obscure path through David's son, Nathan. 1 Chronicles also records the royal line; for this reason, the genealogies of 1 Chronicles and Matthew are parallel from Abraham to Shealtiel to Zerubbabel.

After Zerubbabel, 1 Chronicles lists five generations of siblings and cousins, none of which include the Abiud of Matthew's genealogy. Luke's genealogy also records Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, but none of the names of the generations following match either those of 1 Chronicles or Matthew. There is a lesson behind these incongruities, and a lot of conjecture as to why they don't match, but it is not my intention to argue these. The point that both Matthew and Luke were making was that Jesus was both human (hence, the genealogy) and divine: "son of God" (Luke 3:38), "what is conceived in [Mary] is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). The genealogies also agree that Jesus is a descendent of David, which is significant because of many prophecies concerning the one who would rescue Israel and through whom God would establish His kingdom promised that such a ruler would come through David's line.

The genealogies of the Bible provide a framework for interpreting human history as it is narrated from the Biblical perspective. Although it is silent concerning the generations between Zerubbabel and Joseph, whether they be nine as recorded in Matthew or seventeen as recorded in Luke, the Bible is very vocal and sometimes quite personal concerning the events that occurred from the creation of the world until the rule of Xerxes and the Persian Empire.

It may seem that limiting one's discussion of the Biblical perspective of history to the genealogies would confine the historian-theologian-genealogist to the Old Testament narrative. God is not bound by time; neither is the Biblical perspective. Many of the events and human interest stories of the Old Testament are the foundation for understanding the Jesus Christ of the New Testament. Thus, though the finite timeline displayed on the following pages shows only concrete eras of history --Creation to the Patriarchs, the Patriarchs, Theocracy, Monarchy, and Exile--the discussion is not limited to those eras. Some discussion will be given Old Testament concepts, themes, and human interest stories that are retold and interpreted in the New Testament.

Creation to Patriarchs

Table 1 shows the timeline and genealogy from Creation through the Patriarchs. As with the remaining tables in this document, the three columns show the Biblical books that describe the lives and eras in which various generations lived (left); the fathers, mothers, when known, and sons (mid right); and, if recorded, the siblings, half-siblings, and step-mothers of the principal progenitor in each generation. Numbers in parenthesis note the birth order of the progenitor. Thus, in the second row, we see that Seth was the son of Adam and Eve and younger brother of Cain and Abel. His story is recorded in the first book of the Bible, Genesis.

Table 1. Creation to Patriarchs

Biblical Reference	Parents	Brothers, half-brothers, and (stepmoms)
Genesis	Adam & Eve	
	Seth	Cain, Abel, (3*)
	Enosh	
	Kenan	
	Mahalalel	
	Jared	
	Enoch	
	Methuselah	
	Lamech	
	Noah	
	Shem	(1*), Ham, Japheth
	Arphaxad	Elam, (2*), Asshar, Lud, Aram
	Cainan	
	Shelah	
	Eber	
	Peleg	Joktan
	Reu	
	Sereg	
	Nahor	
	Terah Abram (Abraham)	

*Note: numbers in parentheses denote birth order.

"In the beginning, God created" (Genesis 1:1) begins the Biblical narrative. The first six chapters of Genesis tell of the creation and fall of man. God spoke everything into existence. Last, God created Adam and Eve and put them in a beautiful garden in which they could eat anything they wanted except the fruit of the tree of knowledge. They disobeyed and were banished from the garden. Outside the garden, there was strife between their sons, Cain and Abel. Cain was jealous that God accepted Abel's gifts, but not his own, so he killed Abel. For that, he was exiled from his family. The genealogy continues through Adam and Eve's third son, Seth. Each generation wandered farther and farther from God, increasing in disobedience and violence. Only one man, Noah, was obedient. God told him to build an ark and to warn the people of coming destruction. After years of preaching and building, not one person heeded the warning, but the ark was finished. Noah, his wife, his sons, his daughters-in-law, and one pair of every animal went in the ark. It rained for 40 days and nights, flooding the earth and drowning every creature that was not on the ark. Noah and his family waited for the waters to recede, then let the ark with the animals. God placed a rainbow in the sky to remind Noah and all who would come after him of His promise never to destroy the entire earth by flood again.

From this section of the Biblical narrative, there is one theme and three people whose stories are retold and reinterpreted in the New Testament writings: creation, Adam, Abel, and Noah.

Concerning creation, John begins his gospel as Genesis begins but adds a very philosophical tone in his continuation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...through Him the world was made" (John 1:1-2). Later in this chapter, the reader discovers that the Word to which John refers is Jesus. The writer of Hebrews also brings together the themes of creation, speech, and the deity of Jesus in the opening of the letter, "In the past, God spoke to

our forefathers through the prophets, but in these last days, he speaks to us through His Son...The Son is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of His being, upholding all things by the power of his word" (1:1,4). Paul, in his letter to the Galatians calls Jesus, "the first-born of all creation" (1:15). How can a person accept this teaching that is so incomprehensible to the human mind? "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

In addition to referring to Jesus as a participant speaking creation into existences, the New Testament also teaches that creation, because of Adam's disobedience, is broken. In its brokenness, creation "has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth"(Romans 8:22). Not only did Adam's disobedience affect creation, it also affects humankind. Adam's disobedience brought sin and death (Romans 5:12). Adam is thus portrayed in the New Testament as the prototype of sin and death (Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15); Jesus is the redeemer, undoing what Adam did both to humankind—"For just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus] the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19)—and to creation: "creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

Whereas Adam represents disobedience, Abel represents righteousness and faith. He represents an unjust shedding of blood (Matthew 23:35, Luke 11:51, Hebrews 12:24). The writer of Hebrews portrays Abel as having a legacy of faith: "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead" (11:4). Jesus, another righteous person who was put to death unjustly, speaks a stronger message. The blood he shed on the cross "speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 11:24).

Noah represents righteousness and judgment. Noah's act of faith, preaching the word of righteousness and acting upon it, brought salvation both to him and his family (Hebrews 11:7, 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 2:5). Jesus told his disciples that his return would be like the days of Noah, "People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:27, Matthew 24:37). Just as the righteous Noah was saved by his faith, so, too, those who follow Jesus are saved on the Day of Judgment (Matthew 24:37-38).

The Patriarchs

Those of the ten generations between Noah and Abraham seem to be as inconsequential as the ten between Adam and Noah. There is the story of men trying to build a tower into the heavens "to make a name for [themselves]"(Genesis 11: 4). God "confused their languages" (11:7) and the people scattered before they completed their project, settling in various places on the earth. In Genesis 12, we meet Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham, as he hears the call of God. In contrast to the insignificance of the previous ten generations, the stories of the next four generations, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, is told in great detail. Table 2 shows the family tree of the Patriarchs of the Hebrew family and faith.

paragon of virtue—not
chosen, obedient

Table 2. Patriarchs

Biblical Reference	Parents	Brothers, half-brothers, and (stepmoms)
Genesis	Abraham & Sarah	
	Isaac & Rebekah	Ishmael (m. Hagar, maid); (2*); Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, Shuah (m. Keturah)
	Jacob & Leah	Esau, (2T*)
	Judah & Tamar	Reuben, Simeon, Levi, (4*); Dan, Naphtali (m, Bilhah, the maid); Gad, Asher (m. Zilpah, the maid); Issachar, Zebulun; Joseph, Benjamin (m. Rachel)

*Note: numbers in parentheses denote birth order.