

SOULMANNA

GENEALOGICAL PATTERNS

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham . . . And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.” **(Matthew 1:1, 16-17)** “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli . . . Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.” **(Luke 3:23, 38)**

Looking at the Word:

The genealogy of Jesus Christ may seem to be an obscure listing of forgotten men; something to be skipped over and ignored. But if we do so, then we miss the blessing from this portion of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The genealogy of Jesus Christ artistically presents the faithful unfolding of God’s plan in bringing a promised king to Israel and a perfect redeemer to a fallen world. There are several literary patterns which emerge from Christ’s genealogical record.

	Matthew 1:1-17	Luke 3:23-38
Generations Listed	Arranged in 3 groups of 14 generations	77 generations listed (78 if including God)
Directional Flow	Traditional lineage descending from Abraham down through David to Jesus	Inverted lineage ascending from Jesus up to Adam and God
Key Verse in the Passage	1:1 “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (first verse in the genealogy)	3:38 “the son of Adam which was the son of God” (last verse in the genealogy)

While Matthew states Christ’s genealogy is packaged into three groups of fourteen generations, Luke doesn’t specify an overall organizational structure.¹ Surprisingly, Matthew lists forty-one generations rather than the expected forty-two (3 x 14 = 42). Since the Gospel of Matthew targets a Jewish audience by presenting Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah (son of David), many commentators suggest that Matthew intended David’s generation be counted twice. To see chart click: [Jesus Christ’s Genealogical Chart.pdf](#) The name of David clearly enjoys genealogical prominence in Matthew: 1) David is listed before Abraham even though Abraham lived before David (1:1); 2) David is the only ruler expressly named as “king” (1:6); 3) Altogether David’s name appears five times and Abraham’s name appears three times but no other name appears more than twice in the genealogy; 4) The numerical value of David’s name in Jewish numerology may have influenced Matthew’s choice to structure his presentation model around groups of fourteen ($\tau + \iota + \tau = D + V + D = 4 + 6 + 4 = 14$), though it is also possible Matthew’s use of the number fourteen was only intended as a memorization tool.

Application and Meditation:

While David may have a pivotal role in the genealogy, it is Christ alone who has the preeminence. As Chouinard notes, “Instead of Jesus’ identity and character being defined by his forefathers, the forefathers are subordinated to their last descendant, who gives meaning and significance to Israelite history.”² While some on this list were kings, whose lives are chronicled in the pages of Old Testament Scripture, others lived in obscurity and, apart from being included in the genealogy of Christ, would have long ago been forgotten. Some lived surrounded by pomp and glory; others had none—yet each shared in the honor of forming a link in God’s plan of redemption, which has stretched across millennia. Each of the men and women listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ had a purpose which transcended personal circumstances. Cannot the same also be said of believers living today? We are not defined by social position or financial status but by our relationship to Jesus Christ. If we have been born again into the spiritual family of God, then we stand in a long line of believers. We also stand on the cutting edge of history moving forward with the gospel. Just as in the past, each generation of believers played a crucial role in the history of our own faith awakening, so today our gospel faithfulness is the key link to what takes place in the future. While we may not be able to discern the pattern which God is presently weaving around us, the impact of our gospel faithfulness will change the fabric of eternity for individuals, for families, and for entire nations.

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¹ Stein suggests the arrangement of generations in Luke’s genealogy of Christ to be: “Jesus to exile (3 x 7 generations); exile to David (3 x 7 generations); David to Abraham (2 x 7 generations); Abraham to Adam, son of God (3 x 7 generations).” He also notes there are seven generations between Adam and Enoch. Robert H. Stein, vol. 24, *Luke*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1992), 140.

² Larry Chouinard, *Matthew*, The College Press NIV commentary (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1997), Mt 1:1