



THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

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We are very excited to introduce an important undertaking in the area of Patristics and Church history. This initiative is the undertaking of Dr. Phillip Cuccia, who is a retired army officer and who served in armored and cavalry units before changing his job specialty to teaching Military History at West Point. He changed his job specialty once again to work in the Army attaché corps, serving in Italy at the U.S. Embassy in Rome. He has a Master's degree in security studies from Sapienza University in Rome and a Master's and Ph.D. in Napoleonic Studies from Florida State University. He currently teaches history for Liberty University. He established the Eusebius Society in 2019.

Welcome to the Eusebius Society, whose mission is to promote the study of Patristics through learning and sharing about the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea and other early Church Fathers, in order to gain a better understanding of the world of the early Christians and the Sacred Scriptures. My interest in writing about Eusebius and early Church history developed out of the intersection of my general interest in writing history and my interest in the mutual effect that culture has on religion and religion has on culture. I hope that these writings may spark some interest in the topic of the early Church Fathers, encouraging the reader to pursue further independent reading and study of the early Christian Church.

Eusebius is considered the first church historian. He was born about A.D. 260 and was probably a native of Caesarea, the limestone city built by Herod the Great on the coast of Palestine. Early in life, he became the disciple and close acquaintance of Pamphilus, a teacher who greatly influenced him. Pamphilus established at Caesarea a large and well-stocked library of theological books, which contributed greatly to Eusebius' education. Eusebius had already published many books when he paused his own publications to help his tutor with composing the work, *Defense of Origen*.

In A.D. 309 Pamphilus and Eusebius were imprisoned as confessors of Christ. However, they continued to labor with their writings until Pamphilus was put to death for the Faith—a martyrdom which greatly affected Eusebius. When released from prison, Eusebius went to Tyre, where he honored his mentor's memory by assuming the name Eusebius Pamphili “Eusebius, son of Pamphilus,” and contributed the sixth and final book to the *Defense of Origen*. Completing his tribute to his mentor, he wrote a *Life of*

Pamphilus, which, like his part of the *Defense of Origen*, is lost.

In A. D. 311 Eusebius left Caesarea for Egypt where he was once again imprisoned, but only briefly, and the next year he returned to Palestine. It is unknown when he was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood but it is known that in A. D. 314 he was consecrated Bishop of Caesarea, a position he held for the remainder of his life. Although twice imprisoned, he toiled his whole life edifying his fellow Christians. His publication output was phenomenal: he is credited with no less than 46 works, some of them in 10, 15, 20 and even 25 volumes. He was not content to write books and forget about them, as he revised and enlarged them, putting forth newer and better editions.

As an introduction to the Eusebius Society, I thought it would be interesting to look at the genealogy of Jesus. St. Matthew's Gospel gives an account of the genealogy of Jesus – the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel and hence the first story in the New Testament. But St. Luke's Gospel gives a totally different genealogy of Jesus. Why does Matthew give Joseph's father as Jacob and trace a different genealogy from Luke's gospel, which states that Joseph was the son of Eli?

Can they both be right?

Today people who dismiss the Scriptures because of this apparent discrepancy, are no different than people in ancient times who used it to dismiss Christian beliefs. Several early Christian authors responded to these criticisms. The Manichaeans used this discrepancy to promote their heresy. The Church Fathers Irenaeus, Augustine, Africanus, and Eusebius responded to the heretical writings concerning questions about these two divergent genealogies.

This quick video concerning these discrepancies aptly uses Eusebius' writings as one of the possible explanations:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWq3fVQuSuA&list=PL1mr9ZTZb3TXRZs52bpnVfiPM9TD_Ukfo

Eusebius explains in Book 1, Chapter VII of his *Church History*:

1. "Matthew and Luke in their gospels have given us the genealogy of Christ differently, and many suppose that they are at variance with one another. Since as a consequence every believer, in

ignorance of the truth, has been zealous to invent some explanation which shall harmonize the two passages, permit us to subjoin the account of the matter which has come down to us, and which is given by Africanus, who was mentioned by us just above, in the epistle to Aristides, where he discusses the harmony of the gospel genealogies. After refuting the opinions of others as forced and deceptive, he gave the account which he had received from tradition in these words:

2. For whereas the names of the generations were reckoned in Israel either according to nature or according to law – according to nature by the succession of legitimate offspring, and according to law whenever another raised up a child to the name of a brother dying childless; for because a clear hope of resurrection was not yet given they had a representation of the future promise by a kind of mortal resurrection, in order that the name of the one deceased might be perpetuated—
3. Whereas then some of those who are inserted in this genealogical table succeeded by natural descent, the son to the father, while others, though born of one father, were ascribed by name to another, mention was made of both of those who were progenitors in fact and of those who were so only in name.
4. Thus neither of the gospels is in error, for one reckons by nature, the other by law. For the line of descent from Solomon and that from Nathan were so involved, the one with the other, by the raising up of children to the childless and by second marriages, that the same persons are justly considered to belong at one time to one, at another time to another; that is, at one time to the reputed fathers, at another to the actual fathers. So that both these accounts are strictly true and come down to Joseph with considerable intricacy indeed, yet quite accurately.
5. But in order that what I have said may be made clear I shall explain the interchange of the generations. If we reckon the generations from David through Solomon, the third from the end is found to be Matthan, who begot Jacob the father of Joseph. But if, with Luke, we reckon them from Nathan the son of David, in like manner the third from the end is Melchi, whose son Eli was the father of Joseph. For Joseph was the son of Eli, the son of Melchi. [Eusebius quotes Africanus verbatim. In Africanus' original Epistle to Aristides, it does in fact state "For Joseph was the son of Heli, the son of Melchi." But Luke 3: 23-24 states "Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli, son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, son of ..." Africanus, and hence Eusebius, leaves out two generations skipping over Matthat and Levi.]
6. Joseph therefore being the object proposed to us, it must be shown how it is that each is recorded to be his father, both Jacob, who derived his descent from Solomon, and Eli, who

derived his from Nathan; first how it is that these two, Jacob and Eli, were brothers, and then how it is that their fathers, Matthan and Melchi, although of different families, are declared to be grandfathers of Joseph.

7. Matthan and Melchi having married in succession the same woman, begot children who were uterine brothers, for the law did not prohibit a widow, whether such by divorce or by the death of her husband, from marrying another.
8. By Estha then (for this was the woman's name according to tradition) Matthan, a descendant of Solomon, first begot Jacob. And when Matthan was dead, Melchi, who traced his descent back to Nathan, being of the same tribe but of another family, married her as before said, and begot a son Eli.
9. Thus we shall find the two, Jacob and Eli, although belonging to different families, yet brethren by the same mother. Of these the one, Jacob, when his brother Eli had died childless, took the latter's wife and begot by her a son Joseph, his own son by nature and in accordance with reason. Wherefore also it is written: 'Jacob begot Joseph.' (Matthew 1:6) But according to law he was the son of Eli, for Jacob, being the brother of the latter, raised up seed to him.
10. Hence the genealogy traced through him will not be rendered void, which the evangelist Matthew in his enumeration gives thus: 'Jacob begot Joseph.' But Luke, on the other hand, says: 'Who was the son, as was supposed' (for this he also adds), 'of Joseph, the son of Eli, the son of Melchi'; for he could not more clearly express the generation according to law. And the expression 'he begot' he has omitted in his genealogical table up to the end, tracing the genealogy back to Adam the son of God. This interpretation is neither incapable of proof nor is it an idle conjecture." [Eusebius, Book I. Church History]

Thus, Eusebius gives an explanation to this apparent discrepancy in the genealogy of Jesus. There are many apparent biblical discrepancies that people bring up today. By looking at some of the earliest Christian writings, one can discover logical explanations to various apparent inconsistencies.

Featured image: "The Root of Jesse," attributed to Jan Mostaert, ca. 1500.

