

What was Mary's lineage?

It is common knowledge that the genealogies contained in Matthew and Luke differ. Most conservative Bible commentators explain the difference by holding that Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1:1-16 is traced through Joseph's line to show Jesus' royal right to the Davidic throne; correspondingly, the genealogy in Luke 3:23-38 traces Jesus' ancestry through Mary's line. This means that Mary's lineage is recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

Mary's lineage, as recorded by Luke, does not mention Mary, but that's to be expected—including women's names in genealogies was not standard practice. It begins this way: "[Jesus] was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli" (Luke 3:23). This comment affirms the truth of Jesus' virgin birth (see Luke 1:29-38). Joseph was a "son" of Heli by virtue of his marriage to Mary, who would have been the daughter of Heli (Matthew 1:16 lists Joseph's biological father as Jacob).

Some notable points in Mary's lineage are that she was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Luke 3:34); she was specifically of the tribe of Judah (verse 33). She was also a descendant of Boaz (verse 32) and David (verse 31). Significantly, Luke traces Mary's lineage all the way back to Adam (verse 38). This fits with Luke's purpose as he wrote to Gentiles and emphasized that Jesus is the Son of God who came to save all people (cf. Luke 2:10-11).

Another issue relating to Mary's lineage is her relation to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Luke says that Mary was related to Elizabeth, who was in the tribe of Levi (Luke 1:5, 36). An argument sometimes put forward by those who deny the credentials of Christ is that, if Mary was Elizabeth's "cousin," then Mary must also have been a Levite. Some translations, such as the KJV, do state that Mary was the "cousin" of

Elizabeth (Luke 1:36). However, the English word cousin does not have to imply a close relation, and other versions of the Bible translate the word as “relative” (NKJV, ESV, CSB, BSB). Even if Elizabeth and Mary were close relatives, it was still possible for them to be of different tribes, as women were identified with their father’s tribe, not their mother’s. Elizabeth’s father was a Levite, making her a Levite by birth, but her mother may have been of Judah. Conversely, Mary’s mother may have been a Levite and kin to Elizabeth’s family, while Mary’s father was of Judah. Luke’s genealogy shows that Heli, whom we assume to be Mary’s father, was a direct descendant of Judah, not Levi. In addition, the angel Gabriel affirmed Jesus’ Judean lineage, telling Mary that “he will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David” (Luke 1:32, NLT). David was of the tribe of Judah.

Regardless of Mary’s specific lineage, that Jesus is a descendant of David and Judah is beyond doubt. Other Bible verses also point to the fact of Judah being the tribe of Jesus’ heritage, as the rightful Messiah and Savior of all (Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5).