

Concerning the Messiah's Lineage and Descent.

by John Gill

The Messiah was to be of the nation of Israel, the tribe of Judah, and the house and family of David, as prophesied in the Old Testament.

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1, Jeremiah 30:21, Matthew 1:1, Matthew 22:42, Luke 1:27, Luke 2:3-5, John 4:22, Acts 13:23, Romans 9:5, Hebrews 7:14

Topics: "Messiah's Lineage", "Prophecy Fulfillment"

Description

John Gill discusses the lineage and descent of the Messiah, emphasizing that He was prophesied to arise from the nation of Israel, specifically from the tribe of Judah and the house of David. He highlights that the Messiah's identity is rooted in Old Testament prophecies, which affirm that Jesus fulfills these requirements as a descendant of Abraham, Judah, and David. Gill argues against claims that the Messiah could come from other nations or tribes, asserting that Jesus' lineage is crucial to His role as the Savior. He also addresses misconceptions regarding the genealogy of Jesus, clarifying that both Mary and Joseph were of David's line, thus legitimizing Jesus' claim to the throne. Ultimately, Gill underscores the significance of Jesus' heritage in establishing His authority and identity as the Messiah.

Transcript

The Prophecies Respecting the Messiah

CHAPTER IV.

Showing the Lineage and Descent of the Messiah.

Having considered the time of the Messiah's coming into the world, it may now be proper to inquire into his lineage and descent from what nation he was to arise, in what tribe and family thereof he was to be born, of which the prophecies of the Old Testament are not wanting to inform us. And, First, It appears that he was to be of the nation and stock of Israel; no stranger might sit upon the throne of Israel, all their kings in common were to be of themselves, and much more the king Messiah, of whom it is prophesied in so many words (Jer. 30:21): Their nobles shall be of themselves, and their noble one, shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed out of the midst of them; which the Targum renders thus, their king shall be anointed from among themselves, and their Messiah shall be revealed from the midst of

them; and so it is applied in the Talmud.

"It is very well known, says Kimchi on the text, that the king Messiah shall be of Israel;" and it is as well known that Jesus was of the same stock and herein, principally, lies the glory and preferableness of that nation to the Gentiles; that of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever (Rom. 9:5), to which Jesus refers, when he said to the woman of Samaria, Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22); and the author of The Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons, &c. himself thinks, that it "seems to signify only, that the Messias, or savior, or redeemer of Israel, should arise out of the Jerusalem Jews."

The first prophecy concerning the Messiah, left it entirely undetermined as to what particular people, or nation, he should spring from had he arose from any nation, or any family, among men, it would have, been sufficient to have verified that; but after the promise and oath were made to Abraham, it was necessary that he should be of his seed, as Jesus is, who is therefore called the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1), and is an Israelite indeed, in the fullest, and most extensive sense of that phrase; hence it appears, that no one of any other nation could be the Messiah, whatever pretensions he might make unto it; Herod therefore could not be the Messiah, because he was an Idumean; this some have thought to be the principal tenet of those called Herodians, though they seem rather to be Herod's courtiers, or his menial servants; nor could it be Vespasian, he being a Roman; though Josephus, more out of flattery, perhaps than from his real judgment, bestowed that title on him.

Secondly, It is also as plain, that the Messiah was to be of the tribe of Judah hence he is called Shiloh, his, that is, Judah's son; on this score that tribe had the preeminence of the rest (1 Chron. 5:2), for Judah prevailed above his brethren, because of him the chief ruler, the Nagid, the prince Messiah, was to come; for which reason this tribe was preserved a distinct tribe until, and after, the times of Jesus, when the other tribes were not only carried captive, but scattered among the nations, and never more returned as such.

Now it is evident, as the apostle says (Heb. 7:14), that our Lord sprang out of Judah; hence one of his famous titles is, the lion of the tribe of Judah. Thirdly, It is no less manifest from the prophecies of the Old Testament that the Messiah was to be of the house and family of David hence. 1st, The Messiah is called the root of Jesse, and the rod which should come out of his stem, according to the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1, and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; which the Targumist paraphrases thus, "And a king shalt come forth from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah shall be anointed from his childrens' children;" and is acknowledged to be a prophecy relating to the Messiah, by many Jewish writers; as is also verses 10, where it is said, and in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people, &c.

This manifestly enough appears from the whole context, as might be easily argued and sufficiently proved, from the very great qualifications of this person (vv.2, 3), from his work and office, in judging the world; and that righteousness and integrity with which he will perform it (vv. 4, 5). from the peaceableness of his kingdom (vv. 6-9), and from the prodigious gathering of the Gentiles to him (vv. 10-12). The prophecy in verse 1 aptly enough expresses the very low, poor, and mean condition of Jesse's or David's family, at the time when the Messiah should spring from thence, which should be like to a tree cut down to its roots, and have nothing left but a stern or stump under ground, from whence should arise a noble branch; and well agrees with the state of that family, when Jesus came of it, which, though it had been very considerable and very flourishing, was now reduced very low; yet from thence, out of the very roots and stem of Jesse, God brought forth his servant the Branch.

The Jews to this day pray for the Messiah under the name of the son of Jesse. This prophecy cannot be understood of Hezekiah, as a late author says, because Hezekiah was now born when this prophecy was given out; nay must be then ten or twelve years of age. Secondly, On this account he is also called the son of David; this is a title which the Jews frequently give to the Messiah, and was much used by them in the times of Jesus, who put this question to some of them, saying, What think ye of Christ?

Whose son is he? (Matthew 22:42), to which they very readily reply, without any manner of hesitation, The son of David, it being an opinion universally received among them, that the Messiah should be of David's line; nor was this known only to the wise and learned, but even among the vulgar people, the poor blind man that begged by the way side, saluted Jesus with this title, as believing him to be the Messiah; nay, the very children in the temple cried, Hosanna to him, as the son of David and manifest enough it is he was of that family, for his supposed father Joseph, and his real mother Mary, were both of that house.

The author of the Scheme of Literal Prophecy says, "That it does not appear that the virgin Mary was of the line of David, but rather of some line in the tribe of Levi; and that Jesus could not be of the line of David, as descended from her, seems plain, since St. Matthew makes him to be of the line of David only on account of Joseph, who was not his father, and at the time of Jesus' birth only betrothed to the virgin Mary; (which should seem an extraordinary method of proceeding in St.

Matthew, if Jesus had been of the line of David by Mary) and since the Jews never reckon families by females." To which I reply, that Joseph, the husband of Mary, was of the line and family of David, is not disputed, and that Mary, was of the same line and family may be easily collected from her being taxed and enrolled in the same city with him (Luke 2:3-5). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

Now, as Grotius upon the place observes, had not Mary been of the house and family of David, she ought to have been taxed or enrolled in the city of her own family, and not in this; besides, she is expressly said to be of the house of David (Luke 1:27), where the angel Gabriel is directed to go to a virgin (espoused to a man whose name was Joseph) of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. Those words, of the house of David, are to be connected with the virgin, and not with Joseph; for the design of the words is not to give an account of Joseph, to whom the virgin was espoused, but of the virgin herself, who is here described by the place of her abode, Nazareth; her relation to Joseph, being espoused to him; her lineage and descent, being of the house of David; and by her name, which was Mary; and this sense and reading of the words the grammatical construction of them will easily admit of, as several learned men have observed.

What our author seems to have a regard to, as what would serve to support this his hypothesis, "That it does not appear that the virgin Mary was of the line of David, but rather of some line in the tribe of Levi," is, (Luke 1:5, 36), which he cites in his margin, in which place Elizabeth, who was of the tribe of Levi, is said to be cousin to the virgin Mary; from whence, I suppose, he would conclude, that they were both of a family; to which I answer, that though Elizabeth's father was of the house of Aaron in the tribe of Levi; yet, her mother might be of the house of David, in the tribe of Judah; and so Mary and she be cousins; nor can our author well object to me, that it was either unlawful or unusual to marry out of their tribes and families, for, according to his own hypothesis, Joseph of the house of David, in the tribe of Judah, must marry Mary, of the house of Aaron, in the tribe of Levi.

Again, whereas the same author says, "That Jesus could not be of the line of David, as descended from her, (the virgin) seems plain, since St. Matthew makes him to be of the line of David, only on account of Joseph who was not his father, and at the time of Jesus' birth only betrothed to the virgin Mary." I reply, that St. Matthew makes Jesus to be of the line of David, on the account of Joseph is certain; but how this makes it plain that he could not be of the line of David, as descended from the virgin, I cannot see; for if Joseph and Mary were both of one house and family, as I think has been already proved, then St.

Matthew's making Jesus to be of the line of David on the account of Joseph, who was the reputed father of Jesus, and was betrothed to his real mother Mary, makes him also to be of the same line, as descended from her. I perceive that this author thinks it to be an extraordinary method of proceeding in St. Matthew, in tracing the genealogy of Jesus down to Joseph, and not to Mary, if Jesus had been of the line of David by her, which I think need not seem so, since, as he himself observes, the Jews never reckon families by females; for it is a common maxim with them *Matris familia, non farnilia*, and therefore the genealogy of Jesus is reckoned not by Mary, but by Joseph, to whom she was espoused; besides, Joseph was the reputed father of Jesus, the Jews knew no other, and had Joseph been of any other family than that of David, they would have rejected Jesus on that very score; therefore it need not be wondered that St.

Matthew, in order to remove this stumbling block out of their way, gives us the genealogy of Jesus by Joseph; and it deserves to be observed, that it is not so much the design of St. Matthew to give us the natural descent of Jesus as St. Luke does, but to show us the royal line of Jesus, and that being the legal heir of Joseph, as he certainly was, being born of his wife, and that not in adultery, whilst he himself was living, had an undoubted right to the crown and throne of David.

For if a child begotten of a woman, after the death of her husband, by his next brother, was, according to the law, in Deuteronomy 25 to be accounted the son and rightful heir and successor of the deceased; much more might Jesus, who was born of the wife of Joseph whilst he was living, and that not begotten by another man, be accounted the son of Joseph, of the same house and family with him, nay appear to be his rightful heir and successor. So that from the whole, there appears to be a great deal of reason why St.

Matthew took such a method, notwithstanding Jesus was of the line of David, as descended from the virgin Mary: nor should this seem to be an extraordinary method of proceeding in him, seeing it was so very agreeable to the laws, customs, and usages of the Jews. 3dly, For the very same reason the Messiah is called David in many places of scripture, as in Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 34:23, 24 and 37:24, 25, and Hosea 3:5, in all which the Jews themselves acknowledge the Messiah is intended; and good reason there is for it, for they can never be understood of David himself, these prophecies being given out a great many years after his death; neither can they agree with any so well as with the Messiah, who was to be of his posterity, and therefore bears his name; which is no unusual thing for children to do; besides, the context of these several prophecies, and the manifest scope of them, determine them to belong to him.

Moreover, David was an eminent type of the Messiah, and that in many respects, as in the meanness of his descent, the comeliness of his person, his wisdom and prudence, his courage and valor, in his holiness, and the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, with which he was endued, as also in his kingly office, and in the battles which he fought, as well as in the conquests which he, obtained, and therefore the Messiah might well bear his name; and no wonder it is, that David should so often speak of the Messiah in his own person, and that many things which are spoken of David may very aptly be applied to him. Now of

this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus (Acts 13:23).

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