

# Herodian Messiah

Case For Jesus As Grandson of Herod

Second Edition

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*Herodian Messiah*  
*Case For Jesus As Grandson Of Herod*

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**Other Books by Joseph Raymond**

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## About the Author

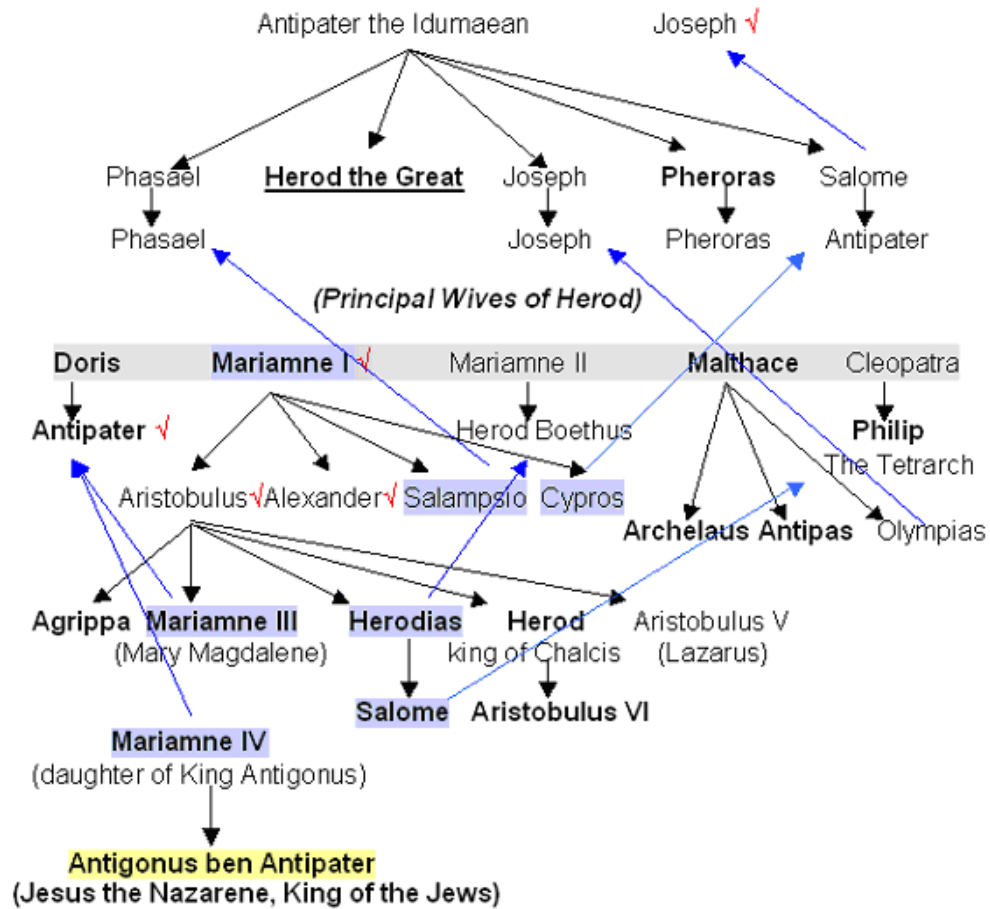
Joseph Raymond was raised in a devout Roman Catholic family in St. Louis, MO USA and educated in Catholic schools. He received degrees from two Jesuit universities graduating law school in 1986. Thereafter, he served as a Department of Justice lawyer in Washington, DC but later left the practice of law to found an internet company. In 1988, he began a spiritual journey of study and reflection largely focused upon the origins of Christianity. Once started, the journey is never complete. In January of 2012, Joseph Raymond gave an on-camera interview to Karga Seven Pictures in Los Angeles regarding theories contained in *Herodian Messiah* for an upcoming documentary to air on the Discovery Channel later in 2012.

# Acknowledgement

I wish to thank my old friend Jan Van Puffelen for his encouragement to pursue the self-study of religious history. He also conducted early debates with me on the theory of Jesus as a Hasmonean member of the House of Herod.

**JJR**

## Family Tree of Herod The Great



  Hasmonean Princess      ✓ Executed by Herod  
 First marriage of selected Herodian females.  
**Bold** denotes kings / tetrarchs and queens.



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# Introduction

The received Christian tradition asserts that 2000 years ago a carpenter's son of uncertain education and parentage accompanied by a small band of scruffy fishermen burst onto the sacred grounds of the Temple complex in Jerusalem claiming to be both a righteous teacher and king of the Jews. Surely, upon hearing this proclamation, the chief priests would have erupted in laughter taking the carpenter's son for an insane person. But the chief priests didn't laugh at Jesus, nor did the members of the Sanhedrin, nor the high priest, nor Herod Antipas, nor even the Roman prefect of Judea (Pontius Pilate). They all treated him as a serious and real threat to their power. Why? The Bible does not present Jesus as a military commander (unless one considers a dozen fishermen with swords under their cloaks to be a military force). The logical source of Jesus' perceived threat to the Roman and Jewish authorities must have been his royal bloodline, so unique and high standing that Pilate regarded Jesus as a rightful king.

Pilate therefore said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this reason I have been born, and for this reason I have come into the world, that I should testify to the truth."  
\* \* \* [Pilate] went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no guilt in him."<sup>1</sup>  
[Emphasis added.]

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this Gospel passage is that Jesus claimed to be a king and Pilate agreed he was a legitimate

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<sup>1</sup> *John* 18:37; See also *Luke* 23:3-4 (emphasis added).

Jewish king. Moreover, Pilate recorded on a board nailed to the cross the following words--"Iesvs Nazarenvs Rex Iudaeorum"<sup>2</sup>, which translates as **Jesus Nazarene King Jews**. How could it be that a carpenter's son raised in a tiny village of Galilee came to be regarded by the Roman prefect as a true Jewish king?

Orthodox Christianity responds with the claim that Jesus was a descendant of King David allegedly making him of royal blood.<sup>3</sup> This fact (even if true) would not have held much value for advancing the political career of Jesus when placed in context of the historical fortunes of the House of David in the first century of Common Era. At that time, a descendant of David had not sat on the Jewish throne for over 600 years. The entire extended Jewish royal family was deported to Babylon by the invading Chaldeans in 586 BCE. The Davidic princes stayed in Babylon never returning to Jerusalem even though the Persians overthrew the Chaldean dynasty fifty years later and their king (Cyrus the Great) granted permission to the Jews to return home. The Persians appointed a royal descendant of King David to the office of Exilarch as ruler over the exiled Jewish community and allowed them to populate their own towns. The Jews essentially formed an autonomous region inside Babylon where the Davidic royal family settled in as potentates. History records but a very small number of Jews said to descend from David returning from Babylonian captivity and taking up positions of authority in Jerusalem. None of these individuals made claims upon the Jewish throne; however, Davidic princes did serve in the Sanhedrin as president. Rabbi Hillel the Elder who lived during the time of Herod is such an example.

Also, being a descendant of King David didn't place you in an exclusive club in first century Judea. Jewish kings adopted the custom of eastern monarchs keeping numerous wives and even more concubines. King Solomon (son and successor of David)

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<sup>2</sup> See also *John* 19:21-22 where the chief priests attempt to dissuade Pilate from identifying Jesus as the king of the Jews in the message placed onto the cross. Pilate refused to change the inscription.

<sup>3</sup> See *Romans* 1:3: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh."

was said to have had 300 wives and 700 concubines. Jesus lived 1000 years after David, or 40 to 50 generations later. One can safely assume many thousands of Jews living in Palestine during the time of Jesus traced their ancestry back to King David. For a modern example, geneticists studying the DNA from present day Mongolia concluded that 8% of the males of the former Mongol empire trace their lineage back to Genghis Khan, a 13th century ruler. Eight percent of the males of this territory translates to 16 million men.<sup>4</sup> This degree of penetration of genes (no pun intended) occurred over a shorter time span than that which separated King David and Jesus. Descent from King David would not have been unusual during the time of Jesus. Further, the royal branch of the Davidic family tree resided in Babylon during the time of Jesus yet he was born in Judea.

Perhaps an example from the modern age gives us perspective on the notion that Jesus claimed the Jewish throne on the basis of descent from King David. A group of British historians asserted in the 2005 BBC program *Britain's Real Monarch* that strong proof exists for the contention that 15th century king Edward IV was illegitimate and, thus, the crown should have went to his younger brother George, Duke of Clarence. When the researchers followed the patrilineal line of descent from the Duke of Clarence down 500 years to the present day, they determined that an Australian rice farmer named Michael Hastings was the true king of England. What chance do you think the rice farmer from the Aussie outback has of reclaiming the British throne? Carrying this example back in time to Jesus, try and imagine a carpenter's son from Galilee turning up in the Jewish capital claiming to be the descendant of a Davidic king who ruled the country six hundred years in the past. The rice farmer at least possesses extant written birth records establishing his claim to royal ancestry. The parents of Jesus were portrayed in the New Testament as peasants. At a bare minimum one must accept the extreme difficulty the supporters of Jesus faced in authenticating a claim that he was of Davidic royal blood via an ancestor who lived

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<sup>4</sup> Hillary Mayell, National Geographic News (Feb. 14. 2003).

in Jewish antiquity and, further, distinguishing his particular ancestry as more significant than the many thousands of Jews of the first century of the Common Era who likely traced their roots back to King David.

The kicker to this line of reasoning is that the Romans recognized only one man and his descendants as the legitimate royal family of the Jewish kingdom—the Herodians. On what basis would a Roman prefect recognize a descendant of David from the countryside of Galilee as a legitimate Jewish king? I submit it is an absurd assertion when placed in the context of Roman and Jewish history. Even more perplexing is the Sanhedrin’s treatment of Jesus. The New Testament tells us the Sanhedrin convicted Jesus of the crime of blasphemy, a capital offense. Upon conviction, Jesus should have been taken to the courtyard outside the Hall of Hewn Stones and put to death.<sup>5</sup> The Bible records Stephen, a follower of Jesus, being condemned to death and summarily executed by the Sanhedrin in this fashion.<sup>6</sup> Further, Josephus records the Sanhedrin condemning and executing Jesus’ own brother (James the Just).<sup>7</sup> However, in the case of Jesus, the chief priests appeared before Pilate proclaiming they lacked the authority to execute the prisoner and asked Pilate to put Jesus to death. Why?

The Bible offers one possible explanation for these seemingly inconsistent actions by the Sanhedrin—the case of Paul of Tarsus. He too was taken into custody by Jewish authorities at the Temple but Roman soldiers saved Paul during his trial in the Sanhedrin because he was “a Roman citizen by birth.”<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> "According to the *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4.1 capital cases are to be held during the day and the verdict must also be reached during the day. \* \* \* If the verdict was guilty they must wait until the next day [to execute the prisoner]." CSI: Gethsemane to Golgotha by Steve Rush (PublishAmerica, 2005) at page 25. It appears the Sanhedrin violated their own procedural rules in a rush to prosecute Jesus.

<sup>6</sup> *Acts* 7:57-59. In another Bible passage, the Pharisees bring a woman before Jesus who had been caught committing adultery and asked, “Now the laws of Moses command that she be stoned: but what say you?” John 8:5.

<sup>7</sup> *Antiquities* XX 9:1 (200).

<sup>8</sup> *Acts* 22:25 through 23:10.

soldiers then brought Paul for trial before Roman authorities. If Jesus was a Roman citizen that would explain why the Sanhedrin lacked authority to execute him and instead demanded Pontius Pilate carry out the deed. In Roman provinces,<sup>9</sup> the tribunals of subject peoples lacked jurisdiction to administer criminal punishment against Roman citizens, especially in capital cases. This was an early form of diplomatic immunity. Roman citizens could only be executed by Roman tribunals and members of the royal family of a subject kingdom all received Roman citizenship. However, Roman citizens could not be executed by crucifixion under Roman law. So we are left with a conundrum--Roman citizenship would explain why the Sanhedrin lacked authority to execute Jesus but, if true, then Pilate lacked authority to crucify Jesus.

The few scattered facts listed above mark the point where my journey investigating the historical identity of Jesus began. This book presents a bold and, in some ways, shocking theory that Jesus was the grandson of both Herod the Great and King Antigonus (the last Hasmonean king). Although the premise has previously been proposed,<sup>10</sup> the case supporting the theory is original having been constructed through syntheses of Josephus, Philo, the canonical Bible, Roman history, and apocryphal Jewish and Christian texts. The proof is acknowledged to be less than conclusive; however, the theory harmonizes what we know of Jesus. I submit it offers a stronger case for the identity of the historical Jesus than the accepted tradition of a carpenter's son from a small Galilean village called Nazareth.

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<sup>9</sup> Judea was part of the Roman province of Syria.

<sup>10</sup> See King Jesus by Robert Graves (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1946). Note: although Graves wrote a work of historical fiction claiming Jesus was the son of Antipater, eldest son of Herod, Graves declined to give the proof for this theory. See also The Marian Conspiracy by Graham Phillips (Pan Books 2000).



# Chapter 1

## Summary Argument

I approached this work as a lawyer constructs a legal brief. First collect the facts, next research the law, then analyze the law to the facts (with a healthy dose of returning to step one when the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle refuse to align). Procedural rules require legal briefs filed with appellate courts to include an opening section setting forth a concise summary of the party's case. Before launching into a detailed examination of the matter, below is a summary of the legs upon which the theory stands. Each of these points shall be properly footnoted with source material in the body of this work.

1. Names of Hasmonean kings appear in the *Gospel of Luke's* genealogy for Jesus. Separate genealogies for Jesus given in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are inconsistent; however, the Roman Catholic Church attempts to explain this inconsistency through the assertion that the genealogy given in *Luke* is actually that of Mary the mother of Jesus while *Matthew* records the ancestors of Joseph the carpenter. I accept this premise regarding *Luke*. The genealogy list found in *Luke* contains the name "Melchi" which is Hebrew for king. The generation during which "Melchi" would have lived corresponds to the Hasmonean dynasty (i.e., the only Jewish kings of this period were the Hasmoneans). Further, *Luke* gives the father of Melchi as Jannai, which corresponds to the name of a specific Hasmonean king (Alexander

Jannai). The list also contains the name Levi, the priestly tribe to which the Hasmonean kings belonged. Summarizing the *Luke* genealogy, an ancestor of Jesus named Jannai had a son named Melchi (king) and a grandson Levi (priest). Jannai was a rare Jewish name of the period and Luke's Jannai lived during the Hasmonean dynasty. The only kings from the tribe of Levi were the Hasmoneans and Jannai was the best-known king of this dynasty. The evidence strongly supports the conclusion that *Luke* lists Hasmonean king Alexander Jannai as an ancestor of Jesus. The Hasmoneans were members of the tribe of Levi, not Judah which was King David's tribe.

2. The Hebrew name of the the last Hasmonean king, Mattatayah Antigonus, also appears as "Matthat" on *Luke's* list in the position of a close ancestor of Jesus. The identification of this individual as King Antigonus comes from the names of Matthat's immediate ancestors—Levi (priest), Melchi (king), and Jannai (King Alexander Jannai). Hasmoean king Mattatayah Antigonus was a grandson of King Alexander Jannai. Josephus identifies only one descendant of King Antigonus living until the last days of Herod the Great, a daughter who was married to crown prince Antipater ben Herod. I contend this daughter of Antigonus was the mother of Jesus.

3. Ancient tradition holds that Mary the mother of Jesus was from a priestly Levite family. The *Gospel of Luke* identifies Elizabeth as a "kinswoman" of Mary the mother of Jesus and, also, a "daughter of Aaron". This term means the daughter of a Kohen priest. The Kohanim were patrilineal descendants of Aaron<sup>11</sup> who controlled the Temple as the highest ranking Levitical priests. If Elizabeth was the daughter of a Kohen priest, in all probability her kinswoman Mary was as well given that Kohen priests tended to marry daughters of their Kohanim brethren. According to the Quran, Mary the mother of Jesus was a "sister of Aaron", also meaning the daughter of Kohanim. These two pieces of evidence

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<sup>11</sup> Meaning a Kohen priest must trace his ancestry father to son all the way back to Aaron.

point to an ancient tradition that Mary was the daughter of a Kohen priest.

4. Jesus had no officially acknowledged biologic father. Any claim he possessed to royal blood must have come from his mother Mary. If Mary was the daughter of a Kohen priest, the only source of Jesus' claim to royal lineage rested upon descent from the Hasmonean kings. The Kohanim were not descendants of King David and their only link to Jewish royalty was via the Hasmoneans.

5. The *Protoevangelium of James* describes the father of Mary as “exceedingly rich” and “hath a mark of royalty”. Mary assuredly grew up during Herod's reign and, in this period, only high-ranking Temple priests and Herodians were allowed to be exceedingly rich. The Hasmoneans were both rich (as elite Temple priests) and the royal family before Herod deposed them. Outside of Herod's family and political retainers, high ranking Temple priests were the only class of Jewish citizens who were rich. Only two families could have been considered both rich and royal during the reign of Herod--Herod's own family and the Hasmoneans—and only the Hasmoneans were both royal and priestly. Josephus tells us Herod killed off the Hasmoneans except for those Hasmoneans who were descendants of Herod. This leads us to the interesting case of Josephus himself. Josephus claims to be both of Hasmonean royal blood and born into a family whose ancestors included “high priests”. As no high priests were known to be members of Herod's family, my conclusion is that lesser ranking Hasmoneans within the Temple priesthood survived the purge of Herod. I argue that Mary the mother of Jesus was adopted into a Kohanim family of Hasmonean blood after the execution of her father, King Antigonus.

6. The synoptic Gospels of *Mathew*, *Mark* and *Luke* each record Jesus saying to the Pharisees that he was NOT a son of King David. Therefore, the claim of Jesus to the Jewish throne was not made on the basis of descent from David. See *Matthew* 22:41-45, *Mark* 12:35-37, and *Luke* 20:41-44.

7. The *Book of Jubilees* and other texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls talk of two messiahs, one from Judah and the other from

Levi. Another text of this milieu, the *Aramaic Levi Document*, goes a step further merging the two messiahs into one priest-king of the tribe of Levi. When Jesus claimed to be the messiah, he meant the priest-king messiah from Levi.

8. Jesus and his brother James shared the same mother, Mary. Early church historian Hegesippus stated that James entered the "Holy of Holies". Only the high priest could enter the holy of holies in the Temple. Prof. Robert Eisenman opines that James operated as an opposition high priest. All sacramental duties at the Temple above the lowest level were reserved for the Kohanim. The foregoing suggests James was a Kohen priest, which also means Joseph the carpenter (father of James the Just) was a Kohen priest as the status of Kohen only passed father to son.

Points 1-8 support the contention that Jesus descended from Hasmonean kings through his mother Mary. The more difficult leap is from the Hasmoneans to Herod. This proof is offered in points 9-14.

9. Herod infused his own family tree with Hasmonean blood. Josephus records Herod himself marrying the granddaughter of a Hasmonean king while his son Antipater married the daughter of the last Hasmonean king, Antigonus. Ironically, Marc Antony executed King Antigonus at the urging of (and most likely bribing by) Herod.

10. After Herod captured Jerusalem in 37 BCE, Josephus tells us Herod massacred the entire Hasmonean royal family except five individuals who became members of his family.<sup>12</sup> He later executed four of the five remaining Hasmoneans who were then members of his family. The fate of the fifth Hasmonean royal was

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<sup>12</sup> The five were Princess Mariamne bat Alexander (wife of Herod), Princess Alexandra bat Hyrcanus (mother of Mariamne), former high priest Hyrcanus II (grandfather of Mariamne), Aristobulus III (brother of Mariamne) and a daughter of King Antigonus who Josephus, inexplicably, fails to name. Josephus records Herod executing or murdering four of these five Hasmoneans. The unnamed daughter of King Antigonus survived to 4 BCE and then disappeared from the writings of Josephus. As explained later in this work, I conclude that the only Hasmonean of royal blood alive after 9 BCE not known to have been murdered by Herod (i.e., the daughter of Antigonus) was in fact Mary, the mother of Jesus.

unaccounted for by Josephus (and I theorize she was the mother of Jesus).

11. Therefore, any individual born of Hasmonean royal blood in the last few years before the start of the Common Era was in all probability a member of Herod's family although the case of Josephus indicates a lesser branch of the Hasmonean tree survived in the Temple priesthood outside of the family of Herod. However, the refusal of the Sanhedrin to execute Jesus after convicting him of a capital offense (claiming they lacked the authority to do so and demanding the Romans carry out the punishment) indicates Jesus held Roman citizenship. All members of Herod's immediate family were Roman citizens. The foregoing suggests that Jesus was a Hasmonean member of Herod's family. The Talmud makes the connection to Herod in more direct terms stating, "Jesus the Nazarene ... was close to the government."<sup>13</sup>

12. Jesus was born of Hasmonean royal blood during or near 3 BCE. Josephus recorded Herod's eldest son Antipater marrying the only known daughter of Hasmonean king Antigonus to survive until the end of Herod's reign. Those named by *Luke* as ancestors of Jesus match, to a degree, the lineage of Antigonus. This supports the hypothesis that the only surviving daughter of Antigonus mentioned in Josephus was the mother of Jesus.

13. The individual I reason to have been Jesus' mother was recorded by Josephus as married to Herod's son at the time Jesus was likely conceived. Discounting the possibility that a bastard could have been viewed by the Roman and Jewish authorities as a legitimate king, the fact that the mother of Jesus was married to Herod's son Antipater until his death in late 4 BCE strongly indicates Jesus was the grandson of Herod. This explains why the chief priests of the Sanhedrin declared they lacked authority to execute Jesus (he was a Roman citizen) and, further, why Pontius Pilate concluded that Jesus was indeed a Jewish king (he was the only man then alive who was the grandson of two Jewish kings, Herod and Antigonus). Further, it offers an explanation for the

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Schafer, Jesus in the Talmud (Princeton University Press 2007) at page 63, translating Babylonian Talmud, 43a.

Talmud's claim that Jesus was the son of a soldier named "Pantera". It's a bastardization of the name of Jesus' true father, Antipater, who lived in Rome most of his early life and assuredly commanded Roman auxiliary troops in Judea as coregent of the Jewish kingdom.

14. A theory with a moderate level of proof exists for the proposition that Antipater ben Herod descended from King David through the royal Idumean lineage of his mother Doris (who was born in Jerusalem although of Idumean royal blood). If true, this explains why Jesus allowed himself to be addressed as a "son of David" although Jesus never uttered those words.<sup>14</sup> Jesus could not publicly claim descent from David through his father Antipater without revealing that Herod was his grandfather. The Jewish people's hatred for Herod required Jesus to remain silent upon the identity of his father. The Gospels present Jesus as allowing the people to suppose he was the son of Joseph the carpenter. In modern parlance, this would be termed political expediency.

Chapter 2 begins with an in depth look at the largest stumbling block to the theory—how could Jesus claim to be the messiah if he denied he was a descendant of David? Once clearing that hurdle, the book examines the evidence from *Luke's* ancestor list in Chapter 3, the cornerstone upon which the theory rests. Also presented are alternative views of other biblical figures building upon the Herodian-Hasmonean theme including Mary Magdalene, Paul of Tarsus, and further discussion of Antipater ben Herod (the father of Jesus).

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 8.

## Chapter 2

# Jesus, Messiah of Levi

In 2007 while building my theory of Jesus as a mixed Herodian-Hasmonean prince, I ~~spammed~~ circulated via email the supporting evidence for my theory (as it then stood) to several randomly selected professors of religion from universities throughout the United States. Only one responded and asked to remain anonymous. She wasn't warm to the theory; however, she did give me one important piece of advice--my theory must explain how Jesus could be the messiah without being a descendant of King David. In her view, the entire theory was dead in the water until I convincingly cleared this hurdle. This chapter states the case for Jesus as messiah from the priestly tribe of Levi.

### Fall of the House of David

David is thought to have ascended to the Jewish throne in the eleventh century BCE, although history lacks archeological evidence outside of the Bible to even support his existence. He was the youngest son of Jesse, a Judean shepherd. Although born of common blood, God directed the prophet Samuel to anoint David king.<sup>15</sup> According to Samuel, God promised the Jewish throne to "the seed" of David forever.<sup>16</sup> However, Yahweh is not

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<sup>15</sup> 1 *Samuel* 16:1-13.

<sup>16</sup> 2 *Samuel* 7:12-13; another passage is thought to indicate that the Jewish king must also descend from David's son Solomon and not one of his numerous other sons. 1 *Chron* 28:5-7.

a God to make open-ended promises lacking qualifiers. Like any good lawyer, Yahweh provided himself an out in his contract with the House of David.

The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore."<sup>17</sup> [Emphasis added.]

The Davidic dynasty came crashing down when King Nebuchadnezzar II captured Jerusalem in 597 BC taking Jewish king Jeconiah and the entire extended royal family to captivity in Babylon and, later adding insult to injury, destroyed the Temple. Jeconiah descended from David and sat upon his throne; therefore, the only conclusion for the Jewish people to draw from this turn of events was that David's descendants broke the covenant with God. By failing to keep the covenant, God allowed the Chaldeans to sack Jerusalem, carry the Davidic king and his extended family off into captivity, and destroy the Temple.

If there be any doubt that Yahweh viewed the covenant with David breached, one need read no further than the curse of Jeconiah proclaimed by the prophet Jeremiah.

"As surely as I live," declares the Lord, "even if you, Jeconiah<sup>18</sup> son of Jehoiachin king of Judah, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off. I will hand you over to those who seek your life, those you fear—to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to the Babylonians. I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another country, where neither of you were born, and there you both will die. You will never come back to the land you long to

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<sup>17</sup> *Psalm* 132:11-12.

<sup>18</sup> Some Bible translations use the name Jehoiachin, which is an alternate for Jeconiah.

return to."

Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Lord says: "Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah.<sup>19</sup> [Emphasis added.]

Clearly Jeconiah and his descendants were mud under Jewish law, which is odd given that the *Gospel of Matthew* names Jesus a descendant of the accursed Jeconiah. See Matthew 1:12. For this reason, Jesus' alleged genealogy given in *Matthew* is illegitimate for a claimant to the Jewish throne under Jewish scripture. The Roman Catholic Church asserts *Matthew's* genealogy is that of Joseph the carpenter, the step-father of Jesus. I view it as highly suspect.

King Jeconiah strikes me as something of a biblical fall guy. He ascended to the throne at age 18 while the Chaldean army besieged Jerusalem. His reign lasted all of three months before his capture and exile to Babylon. What could the kid have done in 3 months to deserve Jeremiah's wicked curse upon him, his mother, and all his descendants? Jeconiah seems to have been made to pay for his father's sins. His father, King Jehoiakim, gained the throne as a puppet to Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt after pharaoh deposed and killed Jehoiachin's older brother. Jehoiachin heavily taxed the Jewish people in order to pay tribute to pharaoh and burned a scroll containing the prophecies of Jeremiah because they criticized the king.<sup>20</sup> Another ancestor, King Manasseh, reinstated pagan worship in the Temple<sup>21</sup> and built altars to pagan gods in Judea.<sup>22</sup> The point to be gained from this discussion is that the royal line

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<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah 22:24-30 (New International Version).

<sup>20</sup> *Jeremiah* 36:1-32.

<sup>21</sup> *2 Kings* 21.

<sup>22</sup> *2 Chronicles* 33:1-10.

from David had fallen out of favor with God by the sixth century BCE. Further, the curse of Jeconiah explains why the royal descendants of David residing in Babylon never returned to Israel to reclaim the Jewish throne.

#### Until Shiloh Comes

Although open to interpretation, a passage from *Genesis* lends credence to the position that the Jewish throne does not eternally belong to the descendants of King David. It reads, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes: And unto him shall the obedience of the people be.”<sup>23</sup> The Talmud interprets this reference to Shiloh to mean the Messiah.<sup>24</sup> Substituting Messiah for Shiloh renders the phrase, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until the Messiah comes, and unto him shall the obedience of the people be.” David was of the tribe of Judah. If the scepter passed out of the hands of Judah when the Messiah came, then the Messiah was not to come from the tribe of Judah. Consider further that Shiloh was a city located in the traditional homeland of the tribe of Ephraim<sup>25</sup> and, therefore, outside of the territory of Judah. It's difficult to conger a reading of this line from *Genesis* that equates Shiloh with Judah.

Moving past the issue of whether or not the House of David perpetually retained divine right to the throne of Israel, what other tribe possessed scriptural support for a claim upon the Jewish throne? If not Judah, then whom?

#### Sectarian Jewish Belief In Two Messiahs

Mashiach is the Hebrew word translated into English as messiah. It means "anointed one" denoting one chosen by God. The prophet Samuel anointed David with oil as king of Judah at the direction of God.<sup>26</sup> This is why Jesus was anointed with costly oil before he entered Jerusalem to claim the throne. The act of

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<sup>23</sup> *Genesis* 49:10 (American Standard Version).

<sup>24</sup> Sanhedrin 98b.

<sup>25</sup> Shiloh was also the original location of the Arc of the Covenant.

<sup>26</sup> 1 *Samuel* 16:1-13.

anointment signified the messiah and king. The Jewish concept of messiah in the time of Jesus grows nebulous beyond reference to an anointed king. “While messianic doctrine varied in detail from sect to sect, it generally represented a desire for a king who was appointed directly by God to perform supernatural wonders for the Jews. He was to remove from them oppression and injustice, defeat all forces of evil, and usher in the true reign of God.”<sup>27</sup>

Josephus identified three major Jewish sects existing in the first century CE: the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. Modern Rabbinic Judaism grew out of the Pharisee movement. In examining the historical Jesus, prime importance should be given to his own testimony. The Gospels lay bare the antipathy Jesus held for the Pharisee movement. The below-quoted words of Jesus directed to the Pharisees as recorded in *Matthew* dispel any ambiguity on the subject.

Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?<sup>28</sup>

The Sadducees were aligned with the Herodians and the occupying Romans. Sadducee doctrine conservatively centered upon the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) and departed even further from the teachings of Jesus than the Pharisees. For instance, the Sadducees denied the existence of an afterlife.

As discussed in Chapter 8, I view the Jewish reform movement established by Jesus as a synthesis of Essene and Therapeutae doctrine. The Therapeutae were a community of ascetic monks based in Egypt as described in the works of Philo of Alexandria. Saving a discussion of this topic for later in this work, suffice it to say the teachings of Jesus fall outside the canon of Pharisee / Rabbinic Judaism. On this basis, we direct our search for an alternative concept of Messiah to pre-Christian, non-

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<sup>27</sup> The Jews in the Time of Jesus by Stephen M. Wylen (Paulist Press 1996) at page 25.

<sup>28</sup> *Matthew* 23:31-33.

canonical Jewish texts with special emphasis on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

*The Book of Jubilees*

The *Book of Jubilees* is an apocryphal Jewish work predating Herod's reign that forms an important key for understanding the particular theology used by the Hasmoneans to justify their position on the Jewish throne as priests of the tribe of Levi. "The prevailing opinion today in *Jubilees* scholarship \* \* \* dates the composition of the book to 161-140 BCE."<sup>29</sup> I use the word apocryphal to describe *Jubilees* because it is not part of modern day Jewish or Christian canon. However, fragments of fifteen copies of *Jubilees* were found among the *Dead Sea Scrolls* at Qumran. The work obviously held importance for the community that assembled the scrolls at Qumran in antiquity. A "major eschatological passage in *Jubilees* \* \* \* warn[s] against contact with Gentiles and their ways, lest you be destroyed."<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 8 herein for a discussion of the teaching of James the Just on this issue. The "ideas of the Book of Jubilees (and, therefore, one infers, some form of the text itself) was known to Paul and to the authors of Luke and Acts, James, Hebrews, and 2 Peter."<sup>31</sup>

*Jubilees* rewrote much of the first five books of the Jewish Bible adding in additional material and characters. It gives a prominent role to the patriarch Jacob. Of particular note for our purposes is *Jubilees* treatment of Jacob's sons Levi and Judah, who are given precedence over his other sons. Judah was the progenitor of King David's tribe and Levi of a priestly tribe by the same name. According to *Jubilees* Jacob took only Levi and Judah to visit his father Isaac while he lay on his deathbed, although Jacob had twelve sons. Levi held his grandfather's right hand and Judah the left while their grandfather Isaac gave them his blessing.

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<sup>29</sup> *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* By Michael Segal (BRILL 2007) at page 36.

<sup>30</sup> *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees* by Gene L. Davenport (Brill Academic Publishers 1997) at page 32. See *Jubilees* Chapters 22 and 23.

<sup>31</sup> *Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds* by Donald Harman Akenson (University Of Chicago Press 2001) at page 146.

He blessed Levi first thusly, "shall the seed of thy sons be for glory and greatness and holiness, and may [God] make them great unto all the ages. And they shall be judges and princes, and chiefs of all the seed of the sons of Jacob."<sup>32</sup> Note that Isaac made Levi "chief and judge" over all Jacob's sons, which implicitly included Judah. Isaac then gave Judah the following blessing, "Then shall the Gentiles fear before thy face. ... And when thou sit on the throne of honor of thy righteousness, there shall be great peace for all the seed of the sons of the beloved."<sup>33</sup> In *Jubilees*, Judah's descendants sat on a throne but Levi's held all real power. In the *Jubilees* formulation, Levi stood first among the sons of Jacob.

#### *Dead Sea Scrolls and Two Messiahs*

Several other apocryphal works go further than *Jubilees* speaking of the salvation of the Lord springing from Levi and Judah.<sup>34</sup> Texts among the *Dead Sea Scrolls* reference two messiahs. The *Rule of the Community* and the *Damascus Document* reference the coming of "the messiahs of Aaron and Israel."<sup>35</sup> Aaron was a descendant of Levi. The term "Israel" is thought to refer to Judah. Note that Aaron (Levi) was listed ahead of Israel (Judah) in each instance where these phrases were used in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Hasmonians, as descendants of Levi, claimed they fulfilled the prophecies found in these messianic texts. The primacy of Levi in these scriptures formed the foundation for legitimatization of Hasmonian rule yet did not go so far as proclaiming Levi king.

That final step to Levi's kingship was taken by the *Aramaic Levi Document* (ALD).

According to ALD, Levi is a pious and even prophetic figure, a person beloved by God and the recipient of two divine visions. "We

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<sup>32</sup> *Jubilees*, 31:14-15 (emphasis added).

<sup>33</sup> *Jubilees*, 31:18-20.

<sup>34</sup> See *Testament of Dan*, *Testament of Naphtali*, and *Testament of Joseph*; See also *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* by Michael Stone (Fortress Press 1984) at page 338.

<sup>35</sup> See *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls* By James H. Charlesworth, et alia (Mohr Siebeck 1998).

have magnified you over everyone,” an angelic speaker says to him at the conclusion of the second. In addition to being installed as a priest, Levi is also portrayed as a sage and champion of wisdom. Indeed, he says to his children that they will be “chiefs and judges and ... and servants ... even priests and kings ... your kingdom will be ... and will have no end forever ... and will not depart from you until all ... ." (4Q213, frag. 2, 10-18).<sup>36</sup>

The notation “4Q213” is a Dead Sea Scroll identifying number meaning Qumran Cave 4, Text 213. Scholars debate whether ALD was written before or after *Jubilees* but all agree it is pre-Christian. Fragments of ALD was also found in the Cairo Genzia indicating that this text had a wider following than an obscure desert sect as some scholars maintain were the compilers of the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>37</sup>

In the two messiah formula, Levi stands above Judah (David’s tribe). ALD elevates Levi’s descendants to the Jewish throne as the lone messiah. Although a sectarian view out of the mainstream, the concept of two messiahs with one coming from the tribe of Levi clearly existed in the Jewish world during the time of Jesus. Further, one ancient Jewish text pre-dating Jesus (ALD) declares a single messiah and king from the tribe of Levi. Authority for a king from the tribe of Levi is found not just in obscure texts but, also, in the historical record of the Jewish people in the person of the Hasmonean kings. Thus, the concept of a messianic king from the tribe of Levi was established in both Jewish religious writing and history by the time Jesus launched his public campaign.

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<sup>36</sup> The Ladder of Jacob by James L. Kugel (Princeton University Press 2006) at page 153, emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran by Lawrence H. Schiffman (Brill Academic Pub, 2005) at p. 177-78, edited by Esther G. Chazon, Devorah Dimant and Ruth A. Clements.

### Hasmonean Kings, Tribe of Levi

When the Jewish kingdom lay oppressed by the successors to Alexander the Great (known as the Seleucid empire) in the second century BCE, it was not the descendants of King David who came to rescue the nation but Kohanim priests from the tribe of Levi—i.e., the Maccabees a/k/a the Hasmoneans. These Jewish priests expelled the Greeks from the holy land through protracted guerilla warfare. After their victory against the Seleucid army, the Hasmoneans entered Jerusalem in triumph and ritually cleansed the Temple as a precursor to reestablishing traditional Jewish worship according to the laws of Moses. This cleansing and rededication of the Temple by the Hasmoneans is celebrated today by the major Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. The Hasmonean priests elevated their leader to king and ruled an expanded Israel for 100 years before their dynasty fell to Herod and the Romans. The Hasmonean priests were not descendants of David. One view of Jesus' actions in expelling the money-changers from the Temple is that it constituted a cleansing of corrupting practices not unlike the deeds of his Hasmonean forbearers.

The military accomplishments and enforcement of Jewish law by the Hasmoneans (i.e., expelling a foreign oppressor and cleansing the Temple) are what all Jews expected from a messiah. Against this biblical and historic backdrop, I submit the Jews of the first century of the Common Era did not restrain their concept of a messiah and king exclusively to the House of David.

### Jesus Says He Is NOT A Son of David

Those with a Christian upbringing are taught in Bible class that Jesus descended from King David, a claim resting chiefly on the letters of Paul.<sup>38</sup> However, careful examination of the NT Gospels reveals Jesus, in his own words, rebuking the suggestion that he is a son of David, see *Matthew* 22:41-45, *Mark* 12:35-37, and *Luke* 20:41-44. Jesus relies upon *Psalms* 110 in these parallel

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<sup>38</sup> Paul of Tarsus claims Jesus descended bodily from King David. *Romans* 1:3 and 2 *Timothy* 2:8.

passages. All three Gospels record the words in nearly identical fashion. Here is *Luke's* formulation.

Then Jesus said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David? David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: 'The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' David calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"<sup>39</sup>

Obviously, Jesus refers to himself in the third person as "the Christ". The confusion in this passage centers upon reference to two different lords. The *Book of Psalms* is a collection of wisdom sayings allegedly from the mouth of King David. Psalm 110 starts with, "The Lord says to my Lord." The initial "Lord" is clearly God. Who then is the second lord? It's not David; he's narrating and addresses the individual as "my Lord". The salient point made by Jesus in quoting Psalm 110 is that David is NOT the second lord but is subservient to this individual. Who then is this person?

There is only one logical conclusion to be drawn from reading the quoted language from *Luke* together with Psalm 110-- Jesus identifies the second lord in Psalm 110 as the Christ or Messiah. Further, Jesus equates himself with this individual. It's the only way to make sense of what Jesus is saying. Let's now rephrase *Luke 20* using this interpretation.

Then Jesus said to them, "How is it that they say I am the son of David? David himself declares in the *Book of Psalms*: 'God said to my Lord (the Christ), sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' David calls the Christ 'my Lord'. Thus, the Christ is not a son of David."

Carrying this logic through, the bottom line is that Jesus proclaims that the Christ does NOT descend from David. This implicitly means Jesus identifies himself as the messiah of Levi and not of

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<sup>39</sup> New International Version.

Judah. It is the only messiah known to Jewish scripture other than the messiah of Judah. This fits neatly into the tradition of *Jubilees*, *Aramaic Levi*, and other texts from the *Dead Sea Scrolls* that proclaim Levi to be messiah and superior to Judah (David). This argument is not a novel invention by Jesus. It was first used by the Hasmonean kings, who were his forefathers.

A phrase found in verse 4 of Psalm 110 lends further weight to the conclusion that the second lord referred to in verse 1 of Psalm 110 is the messiah of Levi. In verse 4, God tells the second lord, “Thou art a **priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.**”<sup>40</sup> Emphasis added. Melchizedek was a shadowy figure appearing only twice in the Old Testament, once each in Genesis and Psalms. The unique quality of Melchizedek is that he was both a king and a priest. David was not a priest. The descendants of Levi, on the other hand, are proclaimed in *Aramaic Levi* to be both kings and priests just like Melchizedek. The *Book of Jubilees* goes further in connecting Levi and Melchizedek.

*Genesis* states that Melchizedek was a “priest of God Most High”.<sup>41</sup> The term “God Most High” is only used in the biblical texts of *Genesis*, *Psalms*, and *Daniel*. Melchizedek is the only individual described in Jewish Rabbinic canon as a priest of the “Most High God.” The *Book of Jubilees* (a book outside the Jewish canon) relates a dream of Levi at Bethel. “Levi dreamed that they had ordained and made him the **priest of the Most High God.**”<sup>42</sup> Emphasis Added. Melchizedek and Levi are the only individuals recorded in pre-Christian orthodox or sectarian Jewish scripture as “priests of the Most High God.” The second lord discussed in Psalm 110 who is identified as a priest of the order of Melchizedek is in fact the messiah of Levi, a priest of the Most High God, and the person now known to the Western World as “the Christ”.

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<sup>40</sup> Melchi is the Hebrew for king. Melchizedek literally translates as righteous king.

<sup>41</sup> *Genesis* 14:18.

<sup>42</sup> *Book of Jubilees*, Chapter 32.

### Letter to the Hebrews

The theory that Jesus presented himself as the messiah of Levi holds together tightly if one only tests it against the Gospels of the New Testament. Those calling Jesus “son of David” in the NT Gospels are variously described as blind men, the crowd, children at the Temple, beggars, and angels. The same cannot be said for the *Letter to the Hebrews* also found in the New Testament. It directly assaults the argument painstakingly built in this chapter.

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."<sup>43</sup>  
[Emphasis added.]

*Hebrews* is easy to dismiss as an authoritative work in my view. First, no one knows who authored this document. Most agree it was not authored by Paul. His letters begin with “Paul, a bond-servant to Christ Jesus.” Second, the line of reasoning contained in the quoted passage is faulty. Let’s break it down.

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<sup>43</sup> *Hebrews* 7:11-17 (New International Version).

Melchizedek lived in the time of Abraham. Levi came along several generations later and Aaron was one of his descendants. The priesthood was reserved for descendants of Levi while the most sacred duties at the Temple were reserved for a further subgroup of Levi, the sons of Aaron (known as Kohanim). The author of *Hebrews* suggests that in order for Jesus to overturn the laws of Moses, that a new priesthood must emerge outside of the priesthood established by Moses. Perhaps the author of *Hebrews* never read the *Gospel of Matthew*, which quotes Jesus thusly, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”<sup>44</sup> Jesus interprets the laws of Moses but he never claims they are invalid or lack authority. As discussed in Chapter 8, Paul of Tarsus does make the outlandish claim that Jesus came to destroy Jewish law so one cannot discount his authorship of *Hebrews* on this ground alone.

Continuing the analysis of *Hebrews*, how is the “order of Melchizedek” a new priesthood if it existed in the ancient time of Abraham? The priesthood of Melchizedek was obviously very ancient and not a new innovation, strike two. The author of *Hebrews* then says the tribe of Judah never served at the altar under Mosaic Law yet, somehow, God chose the descendants of David from the tribe of Judah for his new priesthood naming them priests of the order of Melchizedek. One can only assume the author of *Hebrews* based this leap in conclusory reasoning on Psalm 110, the only passage used by the NT Gospels to connect Jesus with Melchizedek. Remember that Jesus referred to Psalm 110 while rebuking people for calling him a son of David. Further, Levi was a priest of the order of Melchizedek, not David. The author of *Hebrews* identification of the second lord in Psalm 110 as King David is not only a ludicrous construction of the words of this Psalm but contradicts the interpretation Jesus himself espoused for the passage. The entire twisted logic found in *Hebrews* regarding Melchizedek is necessitated by the assertion that Jesus was a priest and king yet still a descendant of David. If one instead accepts the position that Jesus was the descendant of

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<sup>44</sup> *Matthew* 5:17.

Hasmonean kings, we immediately overcome the necessity for disavowing the Levitical priesthood as somehow invalidated by God in the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>45</sup>

The first edition of this book ended the discussion of the above-quoted language from *Hebrews* at this point. My previous assumption had been that the author of *Hebrews* pulled the concept of a priestly line of Judah out of thin air with no prior textual support for such a claim. Since initial publication of this book, I became aware of an interesting reference in an apocryphal text known as *Testament of Levi* (TPL) that indeed speaks of a priesthood of Judah.

And they [angels who spoke to Levi in a dream] said to me, Levi, thy seed shall be divided into three branches, for a sign of the glory of the Lord who is to come; and first shall he be that hath been faithful; no portion shall be greater than his. The second shall be in the priesthood. The third—a new name shall be called over Him, because He shall arise as King from Judah, and shall establish a new priesthood, after the fashion of the Gentiles, to all the Gentiles.<sup>46</sup> [Emphasis Added.]

Interesting similarities exist between this section from TPL and *Hebrews*; however, the individual who the angels prophesy to Levi as the “King of Judah” who shall establish a new priesthood is a descendant of Levi (presumably having married into the tribe of Judah). In TPL the descendants of Levi essentially take over leadership of Judah. This hybrid figure is a priest-king who starts a new priesthood relegated to gentile ministry. If one reads the

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<sup>45</sup> One caveat on this point—Jesus lacks Kohanim priestly status under my theory as his father (Antipater) was not of Levi even though his mother was. That disqualified Jesus from the Jewish priesthood; however, he could still have been a rabbi. There was no ancestral barrier to become a rabbi. This point would not disqualify Jesus from the office of Jewish king and messiah. In this office, he would have still been the ultimate authority over the Jewish people.

<sup>46</sup> *Testament of Levi* 8:14. See <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf08.iii.v.html>.

entire passage in TPL containing the above-quoted language, it is clear this new priesthood does not supplant or do away with the Levitical priest but merely serves as an auxiliary priesthood meant for gentiles only. If *Hebrews* borrowed from TPL in arguing Jesus was the king of Judah who established a new priesthood, then it implicitly means Jesus was also a priestly descendant of Levi.

#### Paul of Tarsus

Paul contends in two of his letters found in the New Testament that Jesus descended from King David. See *Romans* 1:3 and 2 *Timothy* 2:8. Paul also removed the possibility of arguing that he referred to adoption of Jesus by Joseph, who the *Gospel of Matthew* identifies as a descendant of David. In *Romans*, Paul declares Jesus “was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh.”<sup>47</sup> Emphasis added.

It’s tempting to try and downplay his words on the basis that Paul joined the Jesus movement after the crucifixion and, therefore, may have lacked direct knowledge of the ancestry of Jesus. This defense supposes Paul merely repeated what he had been told by others (i.e., hearsay). I devote an entire chapter in this book to Paul (see Chapter 7) and conclude Paul was himself a Herodian-Hasmonean, a cousin of Jesus. The New Testament tells us Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, an official of the Sanhedrin, and a leader of anti-Nazarene forces before his conversion. Setting aside my theory on Paul’s ancestry, I find it hard to believe a person with those credentials didn’t know exactly who Jesus was.

Christian doctrine maintains Jesus had no biologic father. My theory asserts the father of Jesus was Antipater ben Herod, the eldest son of Herod the Great. If one accepts that Jesus had a biologic father, then one possible way to harmonize Paul’s letters with the theory is if the biologic father of Jesus descended from King David. Then Paul’s statement in his letters would be correct while, on the other hand, Jesus could also descend from Hasmonean kings through his mother. Chapters 2 and 3 of this book present a reasonable case that Mary was a Hasmonean

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<sup>47</sup> *Romans* 1:3.

princess. Chapter 9 makes the case for identifying the father of Jesus (Antipater ben Herod) as a descendant of David, although it is more speculative than the proof for Mary as a Hasmonean. This theory allows Paul's statement in *Romans* that Jesus descended bodily from David to be true while also accommodating the contention that Jesus descended from Hasmonean kings. The only other option, as I see it, is that Paul lied about the identity of Jesus for reasons only known to him. Paul defected from the Roman-Herodian side of a religious battle to that of Jesus and his band of reformers. Defectors are inherently untrustworthy. An extreme minority view sees Paul as an agent provocateur who hijacked Christianity steering it away from the foundations laid by Jesus and his brother James the Just to something else.<sup>48</sup> One cannot dismiss this view out of hand for Paul's theology clearly clashed with that of James the Just, the successor of Jesus. Who knew the teaching of Jesus better, James the brother and successor of Jesus or a recent convert from the enemy camp? More on this issue in Chapters 7 and 8.

### Conclusion

Jesus contests the suggestion that he is a "son of David"; therefore, his claim to be the messiah does not rest on descent from King David. Direct support for the concept of a messiah of Levi exists in pre-Christian, Jewish sectarian texts. The messiah of Levi doctrine is the only theologic avenue allowing Jesus to claim to be the messiah while denying he is a son of David. Not only was it used by Jesus but, also, the Hasmonean kings to justify their place on the Jewish throne. In the next chapter, I connect the dots between Jesus and the Hasmonean kings using the genealogy list found in the *Gospel of Luke*.

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<sup>48</sup> See *The Brother of Jesus and the Lost Teachings of Christianity* by Jeffrey J. Bütz (Inner Traditions 2005). Jeffrey Butz is an adjunct professor of world religions at Penn State University. My wife is from Kenya, a former British colony. Most Kenyans of her generation have two first names: i.e., a proper British name and a Kenyan tribal name. So it was with the Hasmoneans—one Greek name, one Hebrew. The Hebrew name of King Antigonos was Mattatayah.<sup>48</sup>

## Chapter 3

# Luke's Genealogy

The Bible contains two separate and incompatible ancestor lists for Jesus—one found in *Matthew* and the other in *Luke*. The Roman Catholic Church and a minority of scholars resolve the difference by concluding that the genealogy of *Luke* is actually that of Mary the mother of Jesus. Below is the ancestor list from *Luke* (chapter 3) opposite Hasmonean king Antigonus and his known ancestors (as recorded by Josephus). Why use Antigonus and not another Hasmonean king? Because Josephus records Antigonus' daughter as having been alive in 4 BCE.<sup>49</sup> She was the only daughter or granddaughter of a Hasmonean king known to have lived during the last decade of the Common Era.

Luke Chapter 3	Hasmonean Kings
Heli	
<b>Matthat</b> ←	← <b>Mattatayah Antigonus</b>
<i>Levi</i>	<b>Aristobulus II</b>
<i>Melchi</i>	← <b>Alexander Jannai</b>
<b>Jannai</b> ←	<b>John Hyrcanus I</b>
<b>Joseph</b>	<b>Simon Maccabee</b>
<b>Mattathias</b> ←	← <b>Mattathias Maccabee</b>

The identification of Mattatayah Antigonus as the second name on the list is rather self-evident in my opinion when put in context of the names found immediately thereafter on the list, i.e., Levi (priest) and Melchi (king). It may be argued that “Matthat” is

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<sup>49</sup> *Antiquities* XVII 5:2 (92).

a Hebrew variant of Matthew or Matthias.<sup>50</sup> But five names down on the list, *Luke* completely writes out the name “Mattathias”. This infers Matthat and Mattathias on the *Luke* list represent different although similar names. My wife is a native of Kenya, a former British colony. Most Kenyans of her generation have two first names: i.e., a proper British name and a Kenyan tribal name. So it was with the Hasmoneans—one Greek name, one Hebrew. The Hebrew name of King Antigonus was Mattatayah.<sup>51</sup>

After Matthat, the modern version of *Luke* lists Levi, Melchi, and Jannai. Levi was the patriarch of the Jewish priesthood. Thus, this name plays into the theory that Jesus presented himself as the Messiah of Levi and, I submit, was unlikely to have been used by anyone outside of the Jewish priesthood during the Second Temple period. The term Levite means priest. As previously stated, melchi is the Hebrew word for king. I am not aware of another instance where the word melchi was used as a Jewish name by a historical figure in the Second Temple period. The only Jewish kings known to history in the time period corresponding to the name Melchi on *Luke's* list (i.e., four generations or 80 plus years before Jesus) were the Hasmoneans. Jannai is a rare Jewish name. The only historical figures I uncovered with the name were Hasmonean king Alexander Jannai (103 BCE - 76 BCE) and a Rabbi Jannai from Sepphoris who lived in the second to third centuries CE (i.e., after the destruction of the Second Temple).<sup>52</sup> The *Luke* list names Jannai's son and grandson, respectively, as king (Melchi) and priest (Levi). Only the Hasmoneans were both priests and kings. I submit the name Jannai found in the ancestor list of *Luke* undoubtedly refers to Hasmonean king Alexander Jannai.

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<sup>50</sup> The standard Hebrew equivalent of Matthew is Matitياهو, not Matthat or Mattatayah.

<sup>51</sup> We know Antigonus, last king of Hasmonean dynasty, used the name Mattatayah because he struck coins during his reign and these coins are still in existence today. They contain a double-sided inscription: one side in Hebrew reads "Mattatayah the High Priest" and the reverse side in Greek, "King Antigonus".

<sup>52</sup> [The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia](#) by Isaak Landman (Varda Books 2009) at page 36.

For those who speculate that these were common names of the period potentially referring to another family than the Hasmonean kings, research exists supporting the position that these names (Levi, Melchi and Jannai) were all unusual names for the Second Temple period. The table below gives the frequency of occurrence of male names in the first century CE in Jerusalem.<sup>53</sup>

Name	Percentage
Simon	21%
Joseph	14%
Judah	10%
Yochanan (John)	10%
Eleazar	10%
Jesus	9%
Jonathan	6%
Matthew	5%
Hanina	3%
Yo-ezer	3%
Ishmael	2.2%
Menachem	2%
Jacob (James)	2%
Hanan	2%
Levi	0.2%
Isaac	0.2%
Gamaliel	0.2%
Hillel	0.2%

Levi comes in at 1/5<sup>th</sup> of one percent or 1 in 500 Jewish males. Melchi and Jannai don't even make the list, meaning they occur less than 1 in 500.

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<sup>53</sup> The Brother of Jesus by Hershel Shanks and Ben Witherington (HarperOne 2004) at page 56. The table is based on data from Rachel Hachlili's article, "Names and Nicknames of Jews in Second Temple Times," published by the Israel Exploration Society in 1984 in volume 17 of Eretz-Israel.

One additional point exists worthy of mention concerning the name found after Heli on the *Luke* list. The *Gospel of Luke*, in the form we now have it, lists the ancestors of Jesus as Joseph, the son of Heli, son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, et cetera. Eusebius (263 - 339 CE) was the Bishop of Caesarea in Samaria and author of the earliest history of the Roman Catholic Church now existent, a work called Ecclesiastical History. In this history, Eusebius quotes extensively from a letter by early church father Julius Africanus (160 – 240 CE).<sup>54</sup> Eusebius' quotation of Africanus is the only surviving fragment we have from this work of Africanus which attempted to explain why *Luke* and *Matthew* have different genealogy lists.<sup>55</sup> Therein, Julius Africanus quotes *Luke* as follows: "Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Melchi." Remember the term "Melchi" means king. Writing at most two centuries after the time of Jesus Christ, Africanus named the individual in the position of Matthat as Melchi. As the ancestor lists of *Luke* and *Matthew* were the primary subject matter of Africanus' letter and, given the extensive nature of the analysis found in the letter, I do not believe the positioning of the name Melchi by Africanus was an accident. The stronger conclusion is that an early version of *Luke* in the possession of Julius Africanus listed "Melchi" (king) in the position of Matthat on the Jesus genealogy. My reasoned inference from these facts is that the names Melchi and Matthat apply to the same individual. Melchi Matthat from *Luke* 3 was King Mattatayah Antigonus, the last Hasmonean ruler executed by Marc Antony in 37 BCE.

### The Heli Issue

Astute readers surely noted that I sidestepped discussion of the first name on the *Luke* list, Heli. Again, I accept the assertion of the Catholic Church that the ancestor list from *Luke* is that of Mary the mother of Jesus. I have presented evidence tending to show that this list contains the names of Hasmonean kings and,

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<sup>54</sup> Ecclesiastical History, Book I, Chapter 7.

<sup>55</sup> See <http://reedsporthchristianchurch.com/christgenehist.html#epistle>

further, that the name Matthat in said list refers to Mattatayah Antigonus, the last Hasmonean king. Who then can Heli be?

King Antigonus died in 37 BCE. According to Josephus, Herod executed his entire family. The only descendant of Antigonus recorded by Josephus as surviving Herod's takeover of the Jewish kingdom was his daughter who was the wife of Crown Prince Antipater. Considering her historical significance as the last living vessel of pure Hasmonean royal blood, it's shocking Josephus failed to give her name and, further, that he mentions her but once in his multivolume history of the Jews.

I date the birth of Jesus to 3 BCE, see the next chapter herein. If the daughter of King Antigonus was the mother of Jesus and Antigonus died in 37 BCE, Mary was at least 34 years of age at his birth. To still be of childbearing years in 3 BCE, Mary would have been a baby at the death of Antigonus. If so, it logically follows that Mary was adopted upon the execution of her father and mother (and aunts and uncles and close cousins) in 37 BCE. If an infant daughter of Antigonus survived Herod's massacre of her family, did any Hasmoneans further removed from the king exist who might have stepped up to adopt the child? The historian Josephus claims to be of a priestly family (including high priests) and, also, to himself be of Hasmonean blood. History does not record a high priest every being a descendent of Herod. The only Hasmoneans explicitly named by Josephus to have survived to the time of Jesus were members of Herod's family. How then could a Hasmonean born in the first century of the Common Era be Hasmonean yet not related to Herod? I infer from these facts that a line of lesser Hasmonean nobles who were Temple priests survived Herod's purge. Factions within the Temple priesthood collaborated with Herod so it's not inconceivable that he spared Temple priests despite their noble Hasmonean blood. It's the only mechanism by which Josephus, a self-described Kohanim priest, could have been born in 37 CE yet been a descendant of Hasmonean kings without the stain of Herod's blood. My conclusion is that one clan of Hasmonean priests supported Herod after he overthrew King Antigonus in 37 BCE and, thus, avoided execution.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the *Protevangelium of James* (a Christian apocryphal work) states that Mary was raised in the Temple. Women were only allowed into an outer courtyard of the Temple and all people left when the doors shut for the evening.<sup>56</sup> Thus, I do not take the words literally that she was raised in the Temple. Rather, the reasonable inference from the *Protevangelium of James* is that Mary was raised in the family of a Temple priest thereby closely connecting her childhood with the Temple. If Hasmonean priests survived Herod's takeover, they would have been Mary's only surviving relatives and the logical family to adopt her. Thus, I theorize Heli of *Luke* was a Temple priest (Kohanim) of lesser Hasmonean blood who survived Herod's purge. By "lesser", I mean not a son or grandson of a Hasmonean king.

The Catholic Church has long recognized Mary's father to have been Joachim. This name comes to us from the aforementioned *Protoevangelium of James*. There are two places in the Old Testament where the name Joakim (which I take as a variation of Joachim) is given as interchangeable for Eliakim.<sup>57</sup> Jehovah and Eli are alternative Hebrew names for God. Thus, the names Jehoiakim and Eliakim mean the same thing--one who God has raised up. Substituting Eliakim as a variant of Joachim, it is then a simple matter to make the following connection: Eliakim = Eli = Heli.<sup>58</sup> By this logic, Joachim is an equivalent name for Heli. Thus, a reasonable argument can be put forth that the *Protoevangelium of James* is consistent with *Luke* in the naming of Mary's father as Heli; however, I view Joakim / Heli as the adoptive father of Mary. This shall be discussed further in Chapter 4.

#### Hole In The *Luke* Argument

I find it intellectually dishonest presenting the *Luke* genealogy evidence without acknowledging a sizable hole in this proof. **Problem:** the genealogy list found in *Luke* names King

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<sup>56</sup> Except for the Day of Atonement when the high priest spent the night in the holy of holies.

<sup>57</sup> *2 Kings* 23:34 and *2 Chronicles* 36:4.

<sup>58</sup> Prof. James D. Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty* (Simon & Schuster 2006) at page 52.

David further down from the names I allege to be those of Hasmonean kings; however, we know from other sources that the Hasmoneans were not descendants of King David. This means one of two things: (a) I'm relying on a faulty piece of evidence (i.e., the *Luke* list contains errors) or (b) those really are not Hasmonean kings on the *Luke* list.

My view of the ancestor list found in *Luke* is that the author only knew the identity of three ancestors of Jesus: King Mattatayah Antigonus, King Alexander Jannai, and Mattathias Maccabee (patriarch of the Hasmonean clan). The rest was filler. That is why the author of *Luke* used the Hebrew term for king (melchi) as a name on the list. Melchi is an office, not a name. Likewise, Luke used the name of the patriarch of the priestly tribe of Levi to fill in another gap. Luke's mixing of Hasmonean kings within a genealogy that extends to King David does lessen the credibility of the evidence but I still find it of value.