

The Messiah's genealogical chiasm with Salathiel and Zerubbabel examined

The lines of inheritance for Messiah from David diverge from his sons in Luke and Matthew.

We have [before explained](#) this as relating to Mary and Joseph's lineages, both were necessary to the fulfilment of the promises to David of a formal son in his line and of a son from his own loins (2 Sam.4.14).

After the divergence at Nathan, Mary's progenitor, and Solomon, Joseph's, the two lines converge around the Babylonian Captivity in c.606 BC and then diverge again. How may this chiasm, or crossover of convergence and divergence, be explained?

King David	
Nathan (Luke's Gospel)	Solomon (Matthew's Gospel)
(18 generations)	(15 generations, incl the 3 Matthew omits)
Neri	Jeconiah
Salathiel	Salathiel
Zerubbabel	Zerubbabel
Rhesa	Abiud

We may quickly discount the possibility of a coincidental alignment of similar names. Zerubbabel's name is especially unusual, it seems to be unique to the uncrowned ruler who returned from captivity with Jeshua the High Priest (Haggai 1.1, Ezra 2.2 etc). The name's most likely meaning is a 'stranger in Babylon'. He also seems to be the same as the man called Sheshbazzar, the pagan Babylonian name of the ruler to whom treasure was entrusted at the return (Ezra 1.6,11). Salathiel is once also called Shealtiel by an elision of one letter (Haggai 1.14), though the AV translates only the reference in 1 Chr.3.17 as Salathiel though the Hebrew is identical to the other 7 occurrences. It also appears to be unique, though the meaning is not so particular, 'asked of God'. So the possibility of two unique names, at the same approximate time occurring in juxtaposition, and in the same order being a coincidence in two different genealogies can be dismissed.

Explaining a divergence is easy and results from multiple offspring or different names. In the passage in 1 Chron.3.19 onwards none of the names matches the descendants of either Luke or Matthew's genealogy for 4 generations. This may well be because of aliases, which are common, or because none of the lists are comprehensive.

A convergence is more challenging, how can more than one set of parents produce the same offspring in Jewish law? One solution is the levirate marriage, something we see in action before Sinai in Tamar's case, Gen.38, or later in [Ruth.4.5-10](#). Strictly, Boaz was raising up the name of Mahlon and sustaining his family line in Ruth, in practice, Boaz is always remembered as the kinsman redeemer and saviour of the Moabite convert, Ruth 4.18-22. So both names could be given as ancestors in all propriety, though Boaz is the actual genetic father. Yet the situation in 1 Chronicles is more complex and needs closer examination.

Chronicles lists Pedaiah as Salathiel's younger brother, they were the fourth and second sons of Jeconiah the King of Judah¹. Jeconiah's father, named Jehoiakim by Pharaoh Necho, was previously

¹ Whose name is known by 4 Hebrew anagrams, Jehoiachin being the other English version (1 Chr.3.16-17, 2 Chr.36.8-9, 2 Ki.24.6, Jer.27.20) and a shortened name Coniah (Jer.22.24,28).

known as Eliakim, who was the son of King Josiah, and brother of the first succeeding King, Jehoahaz (2 Chr.36.1-8).

There are three specific problems:

Firstly, 1 Chronicles 3.19 gives Pedaiah, *not* Salathiel, as the father of Zerubbabel. How so?

There is another knotty problem too, which runs in parallel. Coniah, this son of King Jehoiakim is emphatically cursed as childless in Jeremiah 22.30, (see also v.24). The earth is invoked three times as witness in the preceding verse. Then the curse continues that **none** of his seed shall sit upon the throne of David or rule over Judah (v.30). 37 years into his captivity, Jeconiah is gently treated and given better treatment than other kings, perhaps under Daniel's influence (2 Ki.25.27-30, Jer.52.31). Some suggest this fruit of apparent repentance reverses the strong curse altogether, but that seems improbable (1 Sam.15.29).

The third problem is Neri, whom Luke provides as Salathiel's father, is nowhere to be found in these lists.

The proposed solution addresses all three.

Salathiel was childless. His wife descended from a family of sisters only and by marrying into the same tribe, she claimed the rights of Zelophehad's daughters to have her father's name, Neri, recorded in the genealogy (Num.27.7; 36.6-9). It is unlikely Neri is a synonym for Jeconiah, since all his ancestors diverge until David. During the turmoil of the exile, Salathiel died. His brother Pedaiah, though not next in turn, performed his duty to Salathiel's wife by raising seed to her in Salathiel's name and in Neri's course, as well as Jeconiah's. So we have a combination of a Levirate marriage, as well as a Zelophehadite marriage. The curse against Jeconiah does not preclude bearing seed, 1 Chr.3.16-18 shows that he did, it warns they will not 'in his days' bear the rule in Judah not sit on the throne. In reality no king of Judah arose again, Zerubbabel was a mere governor, without personal royal authority. Intriguingly the genetic line to Messiah, via Mary and through Nathan and Neri, was not in Coniah's name. This also means Solomon contributed to the genetic line, though remotely, and both lines ran through Bathsheba (1 Chr.3.5). From a signet to be wrenched away and discarded, Jeconiah (Jer.22.24), Zerubbabel is restored again to pride of place as a type of One better to come (Hag.2.23).

The LORD sees the end from the beginning and He has good thoughts and plans for those who fear Him and seek Him, in His royal Son.