

Matthew 1:17

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-1/matthew-117/>

After concluding his genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, Matthew explains that he has divided it into three groups of fourteen. In Jewish tradition the number fourteen is associated with King David.

There is no apparent parallel account for this genealogical record in the Gospels.

Taking a closer look at Matthew's divisions of the generations from *Abraham* to the *Messiah*, we see that they are not arranged evenly by time. For instance, the fourteen generations between *Abraham* and *David* was around 1000 years, while the *fourteen generations* from *David's* reign to the *deportation to Babylon* was roughly 800 years. The *fourteen generations from the deportation to Babylon to the birth of the Messiah* was about 600 years.

Matthew's purpose is clearly not to mention every single person within Jesus's family tree. Nor is it to divide his groupings into equal timeframes. His genealogy is organized according to the significance of key events within Jewish history and their symbolic meaning for establishing who *Jesus* is. *Jesus* is a son of *Abraham* who will bless all nations. *Jesus* is in the line of *David*, and the rightful King whose Kingdom will never end. And *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, come to rescue, restore, and redeem His people living in the exile of their sin. The nation has been without a ruling king since the *deportation to Babylon*. Now *the Messiah* has come to restore the kingdom, but in a manner that was unexpected.

Why three groups of *fourteen generations*?

There is much meaning within Matthew's divisions that are almost invisible to Western thinking. Jewish literature did not have unique symbols to represent numbers such as Roman or Arabic numerals that we use in our culture. Instead they assigned specific numeric values to different letters within their alphabet. This practice is known as "Gematria," and was common in ancient Jewish culture.

The central figure in Matthew's genealogy of Christ is King *David*. *David's* name in Hebrew consist of three letters: "Dalet, Waw, Dalet." The sum of the numeric value of these three letters is fourteen (four + six + four.) By grouping his divisions into three groups of *fourteen generations* Matthew emphasizes *Jesus's* lineage to King *David* in an explicit Jewish context. Matthew is stressing to his Jewish audience that *Jesus* is the heir of *David*, rightful King of the Jews.

Biblical Text

1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.