



A SCHOLARLY APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE GENEALOGY OF THE HOLY FAMILY

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Received: 14 th March 2026 Accepted: 10 th April 2026	The article presents a scholarly study of the genealogy of the Holy Family in Christian and Islamic traditions. It analyzes the genealogies in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, their differences, numerical structures, and theological aims. Special attention is given to the role of women in Matthew's lineage. The Islamic perspective is represented through the family of Imran, and the Quranic portrayal of Mary and Jesus. The study draws on classical and modern sources, including works by Brown, Bryan, Muretov, and others. Using textual, historical-critical, and comparative methods, it reveals the symbolic and theological meaning and interfaith parallels in Holy family's lineage.
Keywords: Genealogy, Matthew, Luke, Jesus, Islam, Mary, messianism, critical analysis, Imran	

INTRODUCTION

The genealogy of the Holy Family constitutes one of the most debated topics in Biblical studies and theology. In the Christian tradition, the lineage of Jesus Christ is presented in two canonical Gospels – the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke – yet their content and structure differ significantly. These discrepancies have, for centuries, been the subject of discussion among both theologians and scholars of the Scriptures.

Contemporary scholarly approaches to the study of the Holy Family's genealogy include textual criticism, the historical-critical method, and comparative analytical research. These methods make it possible to identify the theological characteristics of the narratives, the historical context of their composition, and the symbolic significance of genealogies within the Christian tradition.

Particular attention is devoted to the interpretation of the differences between the genealogies in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke, allowing for a deeper understanding of the concept of Jesus' messianic origin and the role of familial relationships in Christian theology. This article examines contemporary research on the distinctive features of the Holy Family's genealogy, taking into account current scholarly hypotheses and the contributions of leading biblical scholars and theologians.

METHODS

Genealogy is a systematic compilation of information concerning the origin, succession, and kinship of families, involving the tracing of lineages and family histories; in a broader sense, it is the study of

relational ties. The object of genealogical inquiry consists of historical sources containing information about consanguineous and affinal, as well as formal and socially constructed, relationships among individuals. The subject of the discipline is these very kinship and affinity relations. Through genealogy, individuals achieve familial and, to a considerable extent, social self-identification.

Imran is regarded as a leader among the Israelites. This is supported by a narrative according to which, when his wife entrusted her child to the guardianship of the council at Bayt al-Maqdis, many sought to assume responsibility for her before it was agreed that she would be placed under the care of the prophet Zechariah. This account suggests that Imran occupied a privileged social position in his time.

Ibn Kathir, in his work *Qisas al-Anbiya*, cites the opinion of Muhammad ibn Ishaq that Imran was the son of Basim ibn Amun ibn Misiya ibn Hizqiya ibn Ahrika ibn Mautsima ibn Azaziya ibn Amshiya ibn Yaushi ibn Ahrikhu ibn Yazim ibn Yafasa ibn Isaya ibn Ayana ibn Rahbaam ibn David [1:615]. He also reports alternative views, though the same name – David – remains central to the lineage.

In the New Testament, two accounts of the genealogy of Jesus Christ are presented: one in the Gospel of Matthew and the other in the Gospel of Luke. Matthew traces the genealogy from Abraham to Joseph, whereas Luke proceeds in reverse, from Jesus back to Adam. The lists of names coincide up to David – emphasizing the messianic significance of Jesus as the Son of David – but diverge substantially thereafter. Matthew records twenty-seven generations from David to Joseph, whereas Luke lists forty-two, and these genealogies show little overlap with other known



lineages. There is also a discrepancy concerning the name of Joseph's father: according to Matthew, his name was Jacob, while according to Luke, it was Heli [10:16–23].

William Montgomery Watt and Raymond E. Brown are prominent scholars who made significant contributions to the study of biblical texts, particularly in the context of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Both scholars emphasized the importance of contextual analysis in the interpretation of sacred scriptures; however, their approaches and research emphases differ in certain respects.

Raymond E. Brown, a Catholic priest and biblical scholar, is well known for his application of the historical-critical method to the study of the New Testament. In his work *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke*, Brown offers a detailed analysis of the genealogies of Jesus presented in these Gospels. He highlights the substantial differences between the two accounts: Matthew begins with Abraham and proceeds forward to the time of Jesus, whereas Luke traces the lineage backward from Jesus to Adam. Brown emphasizes that these differences are linked to the theological aims of each evangelist rather than to an attempt to provide an exact historical record. He concludes that the evangelists employed genealogies primarily to affirm the messianic status of Jesus and that "nothing certain can be known about Jesus' grandparents or great-grandparents" on their basis [3:54]. Brown and other critical scholars thus argue that both genealogies were constructed by the Gospel authors to support Jesus' messianic identity rather than to present a literally precise family chronicle.

William Montgomery Watt, renowned for his contributions to Islamic studies, also paid considerable attention to the contextual analysis of religious texts. In his works, he underscored the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context in which sacred writings emerged. Although his research primarily focused on Islam, his methodological approach rests on the recognition that religious texts are shaped by specific historical circumstances and that their proper interpretation requires attention to these conditions. In interviews, he emphasized the importance of interreligious understanding, noting that "the whole house of Islam, and we Christians with them..." thereby highlighting the necessity of dialogue.

Both scholars converge on the necessity of contextual analysis in the study of religious texts. However, Brown concentrates on the texts of the New Testament, employing the historical-critical method to uncover the theological intentions of the authors and to analyze the structural features of the narratives. His detailed examination of the genealogies in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke explains their differences in terms

of the evangelists' theological purposes. Watt, in contrast, applies contextual analysis primarily to Islamic texts, stressing the importance of historical and cultural background for understanding religious teachings and practices. His approach contributes to interreligious understanding and dialogue, which is particularly significant in the context of contemporary globalization [4].

The studies of Raymond E. Brown and William Montgomery Watt demonstrate the significance of contextual analysis in Biblical studies and religious studies. Their work emphasizes that a profound understanding of religious texts is impossible without taking into account the historical, cultural, and theological contexts in which they were produced. The approaches of these scholars enrich contemporary research on religion, contributing to a more comprehensive and accurate interpretation of sacred texts and their exegesis.

The article by Barbara Sivertsen is devoted to an analysis of the differences in the genealogies of Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. Particular attention is given to the generations immediately surrounding Joseph and Mary, as these links in the genealogy raise the greatest number of questions among scholars.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the genealogy of Jesus begins with Abraham and proceeds forward to the birth of Christ. This structure underscores historical continuity and the connection to the patriarch of the Jewish people. The genealogy places particular emphasis on the royal line of David through his son Solomon. This is of special importance, as it highlights Jesus' status as the King of the Jews, which is central to affirming his messianic identity. Matthew further stresses Jesus' descent through the kings of Israel – such as Solomon, Rehoboam, and others – thereby emphasizing his legitimate claim to the throne and the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecies. Additionally, Matthew deliberately structures the genealogy into three groups of fourteen generations: from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian Exile, and from the Exile to Christ. This numerical arrangement reflects symbolic completeness; the number fourteen (a multiple of seven, traditionally associated with perfection) is also linked to the name of David in Hebrew gematria.

By contrast, in the Gospel of Luke, the genealogy begins with Jesus and traces backward to Adam, thereby emphasizing the idea of universal salvation for all humanity, since Adam is regarded as the progenitor of humankind. Luke follows the lineage through Nathan, another son of David, rather than through Solomon as in Matthew. This approach reflects a more universal and anthropological dimension of



Jesus' origin, underscoring his connection not only to the Jewish people but to all humanity [5:43–50].

Barbara Sivertsen concludes that the differences between the genealogies in Matthew and Luke should not be understood as historical errors. Rather, these divergences reflect distinct theological intentions of the evangelists and highlight the symbolic significance of genealogies. Her article represents a valuable contribution to biblical scholarship, offering a rigorous academic approach to understanding the diverse genealogical traditions of the Holy Family.

Peter-Ben Smit, a professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, examines in his article a distinctive feature of the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew—namely, the inclusion of five women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba ("the wife of Uriah"), and Mary. Smit approaches this issue from a gender-sensitive perspective, considering these women as a significant group playing an important role within the genealogy. He notes that the inclusion of women is unusual in Jewish genealogical tradition, where typically only male ancestors are listed. According to Smit, the mention of these women reflects Matthew's intention to emphasize the messianic lineage of Jesus, particularly through the irregular or extraordinary circumstances surrounding their lives and the births of their children. In this sense, the narratives of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba function as a kind of theological prefiguration or justification of the unique birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary.

Moreover, Smit highlights an important theological dimension: the presence of foreigners and morally complex figures among Jesus' ancestors demonstrates the inclusivity of salvation for all peoples, including Gentiles and those with troubled pasts. This underscores the idea that divine action operates through unexpected individuals and situations, often transcending established social and cultural norms. Thus, Smit interprets Matthew's genealogy not merely as a list of ancestors, but as a profound theological statement emphasizing the universal and all-encompassing nature of messianic salvation [8:191–207].

Stephen M. Bryan, in his article *The Missing Generation: The Completion of Matthew's Genealogy* (2019), addresses the problem of numerical inconsistency in the genealogy of Jesus presented in the Gospel of Matthew. The evangelist divides the genealogy into three sections of fourteen generations each: from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonian Exile, and from the Exile to Jesus Christ. However, the final section appears to contain only thirteen names, raising questions about the structural consistency of the text.

Bryan surveys various scholarly explanations and concludes that Matthew intentionally constructed

the genealogy as a literary-theological framework in which the number fourteen carries symbolic meaning. He points out that fourteen is associated with the name of David in Hebrew gematria (D–V–D), thereby functioning as a symbol of completeness and fulfillment. Matthew's aim, according to Bryan, is to present Jesus as the perfect Messiah and rightful heir to the Davidic throne. Bryan further observes that Matthew refers to Jesus explicitly as "the Messiah" at the conclusion of the genealogy, allowing him to be counted as the fourteenth generation despite the absence of a conventional biological listing. In this way, completeness is achieved through symbolic numerical reckoning, with $14 \times 3 = 42$ underscoring the themes of perfection and the fulfillment of prophecy [7:294–316].

According to Bryan, Matthew is less concerned with strict historical precision than with conveying a theological message, namely the culmination and perfection of the Davidic line in the person of the Messiah [6:479–494]. This genealogical structure reflects the idea that Jesus brings the history of Israel to its completion, symbolically linking it with messianic expectations. Bryan's work exemplifies a modern application of the historical-critical method, revealing theological intentions through numerical patterns and textual analysis.

Mitrofan Dmitrievich Muretov, a professor of the Moscow Theological Academy, conducts a detailed textological analysis of the genealogies of Jesus Christ as presented in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke, comparing them both with each other and with genealogical traditions of the Old Testament. His primary focus lies in identifying and explaining discrepancies, such as the divergence in the names of ancestors after David and the difference in the identity of Joseph's father (Jacob in Matthew and Heli in Luke). Muretov examines these issues in light of Jewish legal norms concerning marriage and genealogical traditions, drawing on the interpretations of the Church Fathers as well as Western critical scholarship of his time. He argues that each genealogy reflects a specific theological purpose: Matthew emphasizes the messianic identity of Jesus as a descendant of David and Abraham, whereas Luke highlights the universality of salvation by tracing Jesus' lineage back to Adam. Despite its historical distance, Muretov's work remains highly valued as a rigorous historical-exegetical study, demonstrating that, when properly interpreted within their legal and cultural context, the apparent contradictions between the genealogies are not irreconcilable [16]. His research continues to be cited in contemporary scholarship for its contribution to understanding both the theological and historical dimensions of the Gospel texts.



Cassian Bezobrazov, in his book *Christ and the First Christian Generation*, offers a theological and historical analysis of New Testament history, establishing himself as one of the most prominent Orthodox biblical scholars of the twentieth century. Among other issues, he addresses the problem of the Gospel genealogies, critically evaluating the popular hypothesis that the genealogy in Luke actually refers to Mary. Bezobrazov argues convincingly that both genealogies pertain to Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, since early Christians recognized Jesus as the “son of Joseph,” while the origin of Mary is scarcely detailed in the Scriptures. Consequently, Joseph’s genealogy was sufficient to affirm the messianic status of Christ. He further notes that the tradition identifying Mary as belonging to the line of David lacks explicit grounding in the New Testament, suggesting instead that she may have belonged to the Levitical line, given her kinship with Elizabeth [5:36]. From this, Bezobrazov concludes that the evangelists were primarily concerned with demonstrating Jesus’ legitimate Davidic descent through Joseph, while the mystery of the Virgin Birth and the role of Mary were later developed within the theological reflection of the Church [13]. His work remains relevant due to its synthesis of Western critical methodology and Eastern Orthodox exegetical tradition.

A foundational work of nineteenth-century liberal biblical criticism, though not contemporary, is that of David Friedrich Strauss, who significantly influenced subsequent scholarly debates. Strauss questioned the historical reliability of the Gospel narratives, including the genealogies. He argued that the divergent lists of ancestors in Matthew and Luke were likely compiled later by early Christians seeking to demonstrate Jesus’ descent from David. Referring to the testimony of Julius Africanus, Strauss noted that relatives of Jesus in the second century were actively engaged in genealogical investigations, and that such efforts may have produced multiple, differing ancestral lists. However, he emphasized that the reconstruction of genealogies was often speculative due to the lack of reliable data, forcing compilers to rely on conjecture [18:265–266]. Strauss thus interpreted the Gospel genealogies as legendary constructs designed to fulfill messianic criteria –namely, descent from Abraham and David – and his work became a point of departure for many later historical-critical studies in this field.

A concise encyclopedic overview of biblical genealogies, authored by German biblical scholars and published in Russian translation, provides a systematic account of the functions of genealogies within the biblical tradition. The authors examine the principal features of the genealogy of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. It is noted that Matthew traces the genealogy back to Abraham, thereby emphasizing the fulfillment of divine promises

within the history of Israel, whereas Luke extends the lineage to Adam, highlighting the universality of the salvific plan.

The article also surveys various approaches to explaining the discrepancies between the genealogies – from traditional interpretations (such as the hypothesis of levirate marriage and the concept of Joseph’s dual paternity) to critical perspectives that view the genealogies as constructions of the early Christian community. In doing so, it references the opinions of well-known interpreters and scholars. This encyclopedic entry serves as a useful introductory synthesis, summarizing the state of scholarly knowledge by the late twentieth century and providing a foundation for further study [17].

Each of the aforementioned works sheds light, in its own way, on the distinctive features of the genealogies of the Holy Family within the Christian tradition. Taken together, they reflect a broad spectrum of approaches – from detailed textological analyses of the differences between Matthew and Luke to historical-critical interpretations and theological commentaries. Contemporary research, particularly since the early twenty-first century, seeks not only to identify and explain discrepancies in biblical texts but also to understand the narrative and theological function of genealogy in presenting Christ and affirming his messianic status.

Such studies take into account both ancient solutions – such as the hypothesis of levirate marriage proposed by Julius Africanus – and more recent interpretive models, including the emphasis on numerical symbolism in Matthew. Together, these perspectives offer new insights into the genealogy of Jesus within the broader framework of biblical theology. These works, whether in Russian or English, are widely available in academic libraries and online repositories, providing extensive material for further research into the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

The dissertation by Ahmad Muzakki, entitled “The Family of Imran in the Qur’an (A Thematic Study Using the Qasas fi al-Qur’an Approach)”, is devoted to the analysis of Qur’anic verses related to the family of Imran, with the aim of identifying their educational and moral significance. The study is based on a library research method and employs a thematic approach to the collection and interpretation of Qur’anic material. Its theoretical framework is grounded in the method of Qasas fi al-Qur’an, which focuses on deriving meanings and lessons from Qur’anic narratives.

The author examines verses that mention members of the family of Imran, including Imran himself, his wife Hannah, their daughter Mary, their grandson Jesus, the prophet Zechariah, his wife, and their son John the Baptist. The narrative of the family



of Imran is presented as a model of steadfastness and sincerity in devotion to God.

Ahmad Muzakki identifies three principal dimensions of educational significance: genealogical, pedagogical, and personal. The genealogical aspect underscores the importance of righteous ancestry in shaping virtuous descendants. The educational aspect is exemplified by the figure of Zechariah, who raises Mary as a pious woman and John as a wise and devout individual. The personal dimension highlights qualities such as patience, perseverance, and righteousness demonstrated by members of the family.

The study emphasizes the relevance of the example of the family of Imran for contemporary Muslims, particularly in terms of moral upbringing and spiritual formation. The third chapter is specifically devoted to Qur'anic verses concerning the family of Imran, including Imran, his wife, Mary, Jesus, and Zechariah and his household, with particular attention to their spiritual significance in Islam.

Imran is described as a leader among the Israelites, known for his piety, and his name is mentioned in the Qur'an (e.g., 3:33). The family of Imran occupies a distinguished place among those chosen by God. His wife, Hannah, remained childless for a long time and vowed to dedicate her child to the service of Bayt al-Maqdis if granted offspring. When Mary was born, she was devoted to God's service, and her upbringing was entrusted to Zechariah. Mary is portrayed as chosen and specially blessed, growing up in purity and devotion.

According to the Qur'anic account, Mary conceived Jesus by the will of God without the involvement of a man, which caused astonishment among her people. She gave birth to Jesus in solitude beneath a palm tree, where God miraculously provided sustenance in the form of dates and water. The birth of Jesus is depicted as both a miracle and a trial for Mary, which she endured with steadfast faith.

Thus, the family of Imran is presented as a symbol of piety, patience, and divine election in Islam. Mary and Jesus, in particular, are highlighted in the Qur'an as exemplary figures of righteousness and purity [2].

The narrative of Mary (Maryam) first appears in Egyptian apocryphal traditions and subsequently enters religious texts such as the Gospel and the Bible. With the emergence of Islam, it acquires a distinct and prominent place in the Qur'an, where it is transformed into a specifically Qur'anic narrative. The incorporation of this story into Jewish and Christian sacred traditions, as well as the variations found in pre-Islamic sources, contributed to the evolution of its content in medieval Qur'anic exegesis and to the formation of an independent narrative tradition within Islam.

A comparison between pre-Islamic and Islamic versions of the story demonstrates that Mary evolves from the image of the Mother of God in the Bible and the Gospel into a chaste and righteous woman chosen by the Almighty. Comparative analysis of different versions of the narrative in ancient sources and in Islamic-era texts shows that the story underwent a process of transformation in both content and structure, influenced by diverse cultural elements. While the central figures of the earliest versions are preserved, their roles and relative significance shift, resulting in a reinterpretation of the narrative.

Various details and motifs of the Maryam narrative exerted a significant influence on the development of themes in Persian-Tajik literature. The study of the origins of this narrative indicates that its сюжет can be traced to the Bible and later to the Qur'an, while its mythological antecedents are reflected in Egyptian apocryphal traditions. From the outset, the image of Mary is associated with sanctity: the announcement of her birth by an angel underscores her exceptional status. She is depicted not merely as a woman who bears a child, but as a divine gift to her family. From early childhood, she resides in the temple and is sustained by provisions brought by angels.

Upon reaching maturity, Mary is entrusted – by divine will – to the care of a guardian, and she receives the annunciation of the birth of her son, Jesus Christ. The archangel Gabriel informs her that she has been chosen by God and will give birth to a son named Jesus [15:90]. In the Qur'an, the narrative of Mary is presented primarily in Maryam and Al Imran, where her story is conveyed in a fragmentary yet theologically rich form, emphasizing her purity, chastity, and divine favor.

Whereas in the biblical tradition Mary is portrayed as the Mother of God and Jesus as the Son of God, these theological constructs are absent in the Qur'anic account. Instead, Mary is presented as a pure and chosen woman, and her son Jesus as a prophet. A comparison of the Qur'anic and biblical versions reveals that, although the central figures remain consistent, their roles and theological status undergo significant reinterpretation, shaping the overall meaning of the narrative.

The story of Maryam is among the most widely represented Qur'anic narratives in Persian-Tajik literature. In the works of mystical poets, the Qur'anic account and its medieval interpretations give rise to numerous short narratives about Mary's life, as well as poetic expressions such as "rishtai Maryam" (the thread of Mary), "suzani Isa" (the needle of Jesus), "nutqi Isa" (the speech of Jesus), and "dami Jabra'il" (the breath of Gabriel). These symbolic elements convey themes of purity, spiritual rebirth, and sanctity.

Thus, the narrative of Maryam underwent a complex evolution—from ancient mythological motifs to



fully developed religious interpretations within Islamic culture. In its adaptation within Persian-Tajik literary traditions, it retained its essential core while acquiring new cultural and religious dimensions that reflect broader spiritual and ethical values [9].

RESULTS

The genealogy of the Holy Family represents one of the most complex and debated topics in Biblical studies and religious studies. Contemporary scholarly approaches to its investigation include textual criticism, the historical-critical method, and comparative-analytical research, enabling a deeper understanding of the theological and historical dimensions of the genealogies of Jesus Christ as presented in the canonical Gospels.

Scholars note substantial discrepancies between the genealogies recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. Matthew emphasizes the royal line of David through Solomon, thereby underscoring the messianic origin of Jesus. In contrast, Luke traces the genealogy from Jesus back to Adam through Nathan, symbolizing the universality of salvation.

Modern scholars, such as Raymond E. Brown and Stephen M. Bryan, highlight the symbolic significance of numerical structures and the theological intentions of the evangelists, arguing that the Gospel authors were less concerned with precise historical record-keeping than with affirming the messianic identity of Jesus. Research indicates that the differences between the genealogies are not the result of error, but rather reflect distinct theological aims and symbolic emphases.

Particular attention is given to the inclusion of women in Matthew's genealogy, which departs from traditional Jewish genealogical practice and underscores the universality of salvation through unconventional life circumstances.

In the Islamic tradition, a parallel interest in the genealogy of the Holy Family is reflected in narratives concerning the family of Imran. This perspective emphasizes the spiritual and moral lessons embodied in the lineage, highlighting the righteousness and chosen status of the family of Jesus, while differing from the Christian understanding of messianism. Studies further demonstrate that the image and genealogy of Mary evolved from pre-Islamic apocryphal traditions into a distinct Qur'anic narrative within the Qur'an, reflecting broader cultural and religious transformations.

Overall, contemporary research seeks to uncover the symbolic and theological meanings embedded in the genealogies of Jesus, taking into account the historical and cultural contexts of their formation. These studies underscore the importance of an interdisciplinary approach and rigorous textual

analysis, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the religious and cultural significance of the genealogies of the Holy Family.

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