

David's Heir: Semitic Line of Messiah Narrowed to Jewish through Isaac, Gen 25:23, cf. v. 28, Jacob's Twelve Sons, 35:23–26; Reuben's Indiscretion with Bilhah, 35:22; Jacob withdraws Primogeniture from Reuben; Double-Portion Given to Joseph, Priesthood to Levi; Messianic Line Narrowed to Judah; Shiloh Is a Messianic Title, Gen 49:8–10; Primogeniture: Birthright of the Firstborn; Baptism of the Holy Spirit, John 14:19–20; Believers Are Joint Heirs with Christ, Gal 3:26–29; 4:7; Rom 8:16–17; Col 1:13, 1 Pet 2:9

Matthew 1:2 - Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. (NASB)

1. Verse 2 narrows the Messianic line from Abraham, originally a Gentile who was transformed into a Jew, to Isaac, history's first natural-born Jew.
2. Although Ishmael was Abram's first-born, he was a Semitic Gentile and therefore not qualified for the chart pedigree of the Messiah.
3. Isaac was the father of two sons by Rebekah: Esau and Jacob. Esau was a Gentile while Jacob was a Jew:

Genesis 25:23 - The Lord said to Rebekah, "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger."

4. Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of slumgullion (Genesis 25:29–34). Thus the line of Messiah officially moved from Isaac to Jacob who is also called Israel.

Genesis 32:28 - The Lord said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel [יִשְׂרָאֵל] (*Yisra'el*): "he who struggles with God"]; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."

5. When Jacob/Israel was dying he gathered his sons together to receive his blessings. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn and was heir apparent to continue in the leadership role, at least in Reuben's mind.
6. Reuben was not a cruel man, but he did have a mercurial personality. He was compulsive at times exhibited by zealousness while at other times dismissive and uninterested.
7. This and an indiscretion that Jacob took to his grave resulted in Reuben failing to receive the inheritance. The indiscretion was staying awake with Jacob's concubine Bilhah. Whether they slept together afterwards is not mentioned.

Genesis 35:22 - It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land [Eder, a Judean watch tower between Bethlehem & Hebron], that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it.

8. The thoughtlessness of Reuben to do such a thing just days after Rachel's burial demonstrates his self-centeredness. Jacob never forgot the insult.
9. Jacob fathered twelve sons by four women:

Genesis 35:23 - ... the sons of Leah: Reuben (1), Jacob's firstborn, then Simeon (2) and Levi (3), and Judah (4) and Issachar (9) and Zebulun (10);

v. 24 - the sons of Rachel: Joseph (11) and Benjamin (12);

v. 25 - and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan (5) and Naphtali (6);

v. 26a - and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: **Gad (7) and Asher (8).**

10. When Jacob assembled these twelve boys around his death bed, he expressed his blessings to each beginning with Reuben:

Genesis 49:3 - Reuben, you are my firstborn; my might and the beginning of my strength, outstanding in dignity and outstanding in power.

v. 4 - You are destructive like water and will not excel [**Hiphil imperfect jussive of the verb יָתַר (yathar)**¹], for you got on your father's bed, then you defiled it—he got on my couch!² (NET)

11. As firstborn, Reuben should have had the blessings of leadership, the priesthood, and the inheritance. He lost leadership to Judah, the priesthood to Levi, and the inheritance—the double portion—to Joseph.
12. The transfer of leadership to Judah was prophetic of the future narrowing of the line of Messiah to that tribe. In so doing the other brothers' progeny will be submissive to Judah under a future monarchy:

Genesis 49:8 - Judah, your brothers will praise you, your hand will be on the neck of your enemies, your father's sons will bow down before you.

v. 9 - You are a lion's cub, Judah, from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches and lies down like a lion; like a lioness—who will rouse him?

v. 10 - The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs [**שִׁילוֹה (Shiloh)**³]; the nations will obey him. (NET)

13. It is interesting to note how the practice of primogeniture was not systematically practiced within the line of Christ.
14. To understand the importance of this practice, the term needs to be defined followed by a study of the Doctrine of Primogeniture and Inheritance.

Primogeniture. The fact or condition of being the first-born of the children of the same parents. The right of succession or inheritance belonging to the first-born; the principle, custom, or law by which the property or title descends to the eldest son. Introduced into England at the Norman Conquest, and still prevailing in most places in a modified form.⁴

15. The biblical policy toward the firstborn is much the same. The Hebrew word for primogeniture is the noun **בְּכוֹר (bechor)**: the firstborn son who had special privileges. This birthright could be lost or even given away as was demonstrated by Esau who bartered away his privileged position to Jacob.

¹ “The negated jussive is rhetorical here. Rather than being a command, it anticipates what will transpire. The prophecy says that because of the character of the ancestor, the tribe of Reuben would not have the character to lead (see 1 Chronicles 5:1)” (*The NET Bible*, first beta edition [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001], 130tn2).

² “The last verb is third masculine singular, as if for the first time Jacob told the brothers, or let them know that he knew” (Ibid., 130tn4).

³ “The Hebrew *shiloh* can be rendered in several ways. (i) As a messianic title. (ii) The assembling of Israel to Shiloh. (iii) By emending *shiloh* to *shelloh* and translating with the LXX [Septuagint] ‘until that which is his shall come,’ *i.e.* ‘the things reserved for him,’ a vaguely messianic hope. (iv) Following a variant reading in LXX, ‘until he comes whose it is’ (the kingdom). The last of these was generally favoured by the Fathers while the first does not seem to have been put forward seriously until the 16th century. (iii) and (iv) involve a minor emendation, and the renderings leave much to the imagination, but Ezekiel 21:27 (“until He comes whose right it is” [NASB]) shows that a similar construction can stand; indeed it is probably a deliberate echo and interpretation of Genesis 49:10” (J. B. Taylor, “Shiloh,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962], 1177).

⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “primogeniture.”

16. The Greek word for primogeniture is the noun **πρωτοτόκια (prōtotókia)**: The birthright among the ancient patriarchal Hebrews conferred upon the eldest son. This included the right of religious leadership and promised a double portion of the father's estate which indicated his authority over his younger siblings.
- Deuteronomy 21:17** - "But a man shall acknowledge the firstborn [בְּכוֹר (bechor)] by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn."
17. This concept is used in the plan of God to reveal the special relationship that Jesus Christ has with the Father and that believers have with Him as a result.
18. Jesus is described as the "uniquely-born Son" in John 3:16 and the "son of God" in numerous New Testament passages.
19. In like manner, when a person believes in Jesus for salvation his is baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ, at which point, he enjoys all the attributes associated with Christ as the firstborn of God.
- John 14:19** - "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also."
- v. 20** - "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and You in Me [baptism of the Holy Spirit] and I in You [indwelling of Christ]."
20. There is a phrase in the New Testament that communicates the baptism of the Holy Spirit: **ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (en Christōi Iēsou)**: "in Christ Jesus."
- Romans 8:1** - Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
21. From this we learn about our inheritance in Christ:
- Galatians 3:26** - For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- v. 27** - For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
- v. 29** - And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.
- Galatians 4:7** - Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.
- Romans 8:16** - The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,
- v. 17a** - and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.
- Colossians 1:13** - He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.
22. These verses are summarized by the graphic "Top and Bottom Circles." The Top-Circle assets listed provide the details of our position in Christ: (1) righteousness, (2) eternal life, (3) sonship, (4) heirship, (5) royalty, (6) priesthood, (7) election,⁵ (8) destiny, and (9) sanctification.

⁵ God decreed in eternity past that those who believe in Christ from their own free will would be the elect. For Him to *know* from omniscience who will believe in Christ and decreeing it so is different from *decreeing* who will believe in Christ while leaving the rest reprobate. The former is unlimited atonement while the latter is limited atonement.

23. Since Jesus Christ is the King of kings Who will wear David's crown in the millennial kingdom and since we are heirs with him and known as "sons of God," therefore we are members of the royal family of God, a doctrine mentioned by Peter in:

1 Peter 2:9 - You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellences of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.