

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 3- Luke 3:23-38**

36- The Genealogy of Jesus and Why it Matters

July 5, 2009

Luke 3:23-38

This is one of those areas where I need to publicly repent. I use to say that those passages in the Bible that contains those long lists of genealogies were a waste of time; that we didn't need to spend a lot of time with Aholiab, the son of Ashisamach of the tribe of Dan (**Exodus 31:6**). I even went so far as to say that when you read these names that are so hard to pronounce- that you just insert American names like Bob, Tom, Mack, and Joe in their place so we can get past all of that and get to what really matters. I was wrong about this, dear friends, and I have begged God to forgive me, and I beg you to forgive me this morning.

These verses are just as inspired as any other verses in the Bible. And whereas they may be hard for us to read- they, too, came out of the Mind and Heart and Mouth of Almighty God just as much as **John 3:16**- that tells us that God loved the whole world and **Philippians 4:13**- that says that I can all things in Jesus Christ.

And the fact that these names may be hard to pronounce is not cause for us to skip over them- but is cause for us to spend *more* time with them so that we make sure that we pronounce these names correctly. Last Wednesday, I called Brother Claude and encouraged him to take time and study so that he could pronounce these names properly as he read them this morning- and the fact that he did that encourages me greatly.

We need to honor these people whose names God saw fit to put in this Book. My name is not anywhere in this Book. You can search all through the 66 Books of the Holy Bible and you will not find my name there. But Mattathias, the son of Simei is in **Luke 3:26**, and I tell you that that means something. So I appreciate Bro. Claude struggling to get this right. Now most people would not take an entire sermon on the

genealogy of Jesus- but I am, and I am not just biding time by doing this- but I pray that I can show you this morning that not only is this in the Bible- and, therefore, inspired- but this genealogy is very important to the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ, and thus all of these names are very important to our own Salvation.

Now remember that Luke wrote all these names down to prove to Theophilus who Jesus is. And remember that Theophilus was a Roman and a Gentile and a dignitary- possibly even someone who worked and even lived in Caesar's house.

But Luke's account of Jesus' genealogy raises four very important questions that I want to ask and answer this morning:

1. Why Does Luke Put this Genealogy Here?
2. Why Does Luke's Genealogy Go all the Way Back to Adam?
3. Why is the Genealogy of Jesus in Luke Different From the Genealogy of Jesus in Matthew?
4. Since Luke's Genealogy Does Go All the Way Back to Adam- Does this Mean that we can use this Genealogy as a Tool to determine the Age of Man?

So let's go over each one together.

1. Why did Luke insert the genealogy of Jesus here in between the Baptism and the Temptation of Jesus while Matthew and Mark put Jesus' Baptism and Temptation together?

The key to answering this first question is found at the end of **Luke 3:38** when the good doctor doesn't stop discussing the lineage of Jesus by simply saying "Adam"- but Luke says that Adam was,

... the son of God.

Now we must know that Luke doesn't want us to think of Adam as being the son of God in the same sense as Jesus was the Son of God.

Luke 1:35 clearly shows us that Jesus' Sonship depends on His unique and miraculous and immaculate conception in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. So the reason that Adam is called "the son of God" is to establish a comparison between Adam and Jesus as being uniquely who they were- Adam being instantaneously created as full grown man and

Jesus in His perfect virgin Incarnation. Along these lines- the Holy Ghost moved upon the Apostle Paul to write in **1Corinthians 15:47–49**:

47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

Now there is no reason to think that Luke was ignorant of this idea since he was with Paul as much as anyone. So one reason Luke inserted the genealogy of Jesus here in between Jesus' Baptism and His Temptation was to stress that just like Adam- Jesus was man and was very unique, and that even as Adam was "the son of God"- Jesus was "the second Adam" whose Ministry will be to create and assemble a new people- who are not received by God because they are Jewish and neither are they rejected by God because they are Gentiles- but they will be known as a people who confess sin, turn from that sin, and who walk in the dove-like character of the Holy Spirit.

2. Why Does Luke's Genealogy Go all the Way Back to Adam?

Why does Luke's genealogy of Jesus go back to Adam while Matthew's genealogy stops at Abraham? First of all- Matthew wrote his Gospel Account to verify to the Jews that Jesus was, in fact, the long awaited Jewish Messiah, while Luke wrote his Gospel Account to the Gentiles- to Theophilus- a Roman dignitary- to prove to him that Jesus was the Son of Man.

You see, the term "Messiah" only meant something to the Jews- but the term "Christ" meant something to the rest of the world. Messiah or Deliverer meant that God would send the Jews a man to vanquish the sinful pagans and restore Israel back to the Jews and to its former Glory. But Christ- the Anointed One- would come to the whole world to vanquish internal sin and restore our souls back to God and to His Glory.

So Matthew's genealogy proves to the unbelieving Jews that Jesus is, in fact, the long awaited messiah and rightful King. Matthew focuses on Jesus being the **Son of David**- a direct descendant of the

beloved King David- and as such- Matthew's genealogy proves to the Jews that Jesus is, in fact, the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies concerning David and his lineage.

Mark's Gospel is designed to reach out past the Jews to a Gentile audience- in particular- the Romans. In Mark's Gospel account- Jesus appears as **The Servant** Who came to suffer for the sins of the whole world- not just the Jews.

Luke's genealogy proves to the much larger Gentile world that Jesus is the **Son of Man** and descends directly from Adam- the father of the entire human race. Luke says that Jesus is the one single Answer to the sin problem of the whole of humanity.

And John's Gospel Account which is written much later than the other three is specifically designed to show Jesus as being the **Son of God**, and proves that Jesus was God Himself in human flesh.

Now this fits in perfectly with the emphasis we have seen already on the universality of the Gospel— that the Good News is open to all men because Matthew proves that Jesus is the direct descendant of Abraham and is the Son of David, but Mark, Luke, and John prove that Jesus is not only the Son of Abraham and Son of David- but that He is also the Son of Man, and the Son of God.

Now in no way should we take this to mean that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are in any way fighting against each other or contradicting each other, or portraying conflicting views about Jesus- they are not. They do not conflict- they complement. Each one of these four Evangelists are simply giving us 1/4 of the total picture of all that Jesus is and all that He did while He was here on earth, and put together we get a full view of all that God desired to reveal to us about Jesus.

So here in **Luke**- Jesus' *humanity*- not his Jewish *ethnicity*- is the crucial thing. And that is Luke's point in attaching Jesus to Adam. So Luke is putting forth a powerful statement that Salvation does not come by way of Jewish birth- but Salvation comes to all who have been gifted to be genuinely broken over their sins and who have been empowered to turn from those sins who have been so blessed to be able to put their full faith and trust- not in the good that they have done- but in the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ.

3. Why is the Genealogy of Jesus in Luke Different From the Genealogy of Jesus in Matthew?

As you examine the two genealogies of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke- you find that they are almost completely different. Every single name but two are different. Well, why is that? Does this mean that one of them is wrong? If so, which one? Does it mean that the Bible is full of contradictions, and, therefore, we cannot trust the integrity of what the Bible teaches? No, not at all- the Bible does not contain any contradictions. Okay, if that is true- then why are these two genealogies different?

Well there are several reasons. First of all- during Bible times- the first born son was often what was called "the legal heir" who would take on the family business when the father became too old, and who would carry on the family name. And many genealogies listed only legal heirs or the lineage of the first born son. Matthew gives us the *legal* descendants of Jesus from Joseph's side because Joseph- although not the biological father of Jesus- was, in fact, His *legal* father.

Also we need to know that the phrase "son of" was a *generic* term that was used in the Bible and did not necessarily mean that the person was the literal son of that person. It could mean, at times, that when somebody called a person "the son of another man" that that person was actually the grandson, or the great-grandson, or even a very distant child of that individual. So you have to take that into account when looking at Biblical genealogies.

Another issue about Jesus that we need to remember is that the Bible tells us that both Joseph and Mary were physical descendants of King David, and as such- there would be need from the gentile perspective of looking at Jesus from Mary's side of the family. So Luke gives us the genealogy from Mary's side- to prove that Jesus was, in fact, the Son of Man and a Savior to the whole world, and not just the Jews.

Now there is another fascinating thing about these genealogies that we need to know. In the actual Greek, the phrase "the son of" was not actually written down. So for example- the way that **Luke 3:38** would actually read in the original Greek would be:

Which was of Enos, which was of Seth, which was of Adam, which was of God

... you would not see the phrase "the son of" in the Greek. In the King James Version, for example- you will notice that the phrase "the son of" is in italics- meaning that it was added later by the translators for clarification purposes, but it was not in the original text.

So now with that understanding- look with me to Luke 3:23. The King James version says:

And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,

Now on a very quick examination- this verse appears to say that:

Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age- being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph who was the son of Heli.

Now the name Heli at the end of verse 23 is actually Eli, and there are historical reasons to suggest that Mary's father- not Joseph's father- was named, Eli. And that would mean that as the King James Version translators went about to bring the Greek into English- they misplaced the last parenthesis and the words "the son of Joseph", or as the Greek actually said, "of Joseph", should have been *inside* the parenthesis and not outside. That would have made verse 23 read like this:

Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age- being (as was supposed the son of Joseph) who was the son of Heli.

In other words- you add the phrase "the son of Joseph" *inside* the parenthesis so that inside the parenthesis of verse 23 would read,

(as was supposed the son of Joseph) or (as was supposed of Joseph)

... and then the words "who as the son of Heli" (or Eli) would *follow* the closed parenthesis. Now as you remove the phrase "the son of Heli" and put what the Greek actually said here, "of Heli", you get verse 23 to say that Jesus was *not* the descendant of Joseph as was supposed, but Jesus was actually the descendant of Heli, or Eli, who was Mary's father- not Joseph's father, or in other words- Heli was Jesus' grandfather.

By putting the phrase "the son of Joseph" inside the parenthesis of verse 23- you change Heli from being the father of Joseph to being the father of Mary. And that fits in with why Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus from Mary's perspective rather than from Joseph's.

Now what we know from history is that Matthew drew his information from Solomon. And as soon as the natural heirs ended with the man named Jechonias- the legal heir transferred to Salathiel- who was of the house of Nathan- another son of David.

Now by doing this- Luke leaves out all the Kings of Judah from his genealogy- which underscores again the importance that Luke stresses throughout this Gospel account that our glorious and eternal Salvation and right relationship with the Owner and the Creator of the Universe has nothing to do with blood line or with ethnicity. We are not God's people, dear friends, because we can trace our lineage back to Abraham or Moses or Paul or anyone else- and anyone who teaches that being in right standing with God has to do with a literal blood line is antichrist and has forgotten what it took to pay for his sins.

Our right standing before God has only to do with the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the God-given Faith by which we trust in that. As Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:26**:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

4. Since Luke's Genealogy Does Go All the Way Back to Adam- Does this Mean that we can use this Genealogy as a Tool to determine the Age of Man?

Now many people have tried to do that- but they get off base precisely because of what I said earlier. When Jewish genealogies list the word "son" they might mean "son", or they could mean "grandson", or they might even mean "descendant." And as I already told you- in Luke's genealogy- the English word "son" does not even occur in the original Greek. For example, **Luke 3:38** reads like this in the King James:

Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

But in the original Greek in which Luke actually wrote this verse literally says:

Which was of Enos, which was of Seth, which was of Adam; which was of God

...so what really matters in a Jewish genealogy is not that every single member of the family be included- but that the genuine line of descent be preserved and maintained.

Now we know from **Matthew's** genealogy that some names were left out. For example, in **Matthew 1:8** it says:

Joram begat Ozias

Now the name Ozias is a translation from the Greek Septuagint- which was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was being used all throughout Israel during the first century. In actuality- the name Ozias is from the Hebrew Uzziah. This is similar to why the New Testament says Esias instead of Isaiah, and Elias instead of Elijah. So Ozias is Uzziah.

But when you go to the genealogy listed in **1Chronicles 3:11**- the Bible places three *other* names in between Joram and Uzziah. Now why is that? Why does Matthew's genealogy omit these other three names? Well, one of the reasons for this is so that Matthew could have three equal groups of 14 names each (**Matthew 1:17**). And this same motive was at work in Luke's genealogy, because there appears to be 11 groups of 7 names each with all the important figures either at the beginning or the end of each group.

So from all of this we can rightly conclude that going strictly by this genealogy here in **Luke**- that we *cannot* determine the age of Man.

We *do* know that according to all historical and archeological documents that recorded history only goes back 6,000 years. So we can *assume* that Man has not lived much longer than that. And if you start with Adam in the Book of **Genesis** and trace all the lives of all those who are named in the Bible- you will come out with what Bishop James Ussher did almost 400 years ago- that Man has been on earth approximately 6,000 years.

But you simply can't get there from here going only by this genealogy here in **Luke**. You have to have more information.

Now in **Luke 3:23**- the Bible says:

... Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age...

...so from this we know that 31 years and 3 months have passed from **Luke 1:24** and **Luke 3:23**. 31 years and 3 months since Elizabeth-Zacharias' wife conceived John the Baptist, and this moment when Jesus steps out of the baptismal waters to begin His Ministry. The virgin Mary conceived Jesus in her womb by the Holy Ghost 6 months after Elizabeth conceived John. Nine months later- Jesus was born in Bethlehem according to **Luke 2:7**. And now 30 years have passed since that miraculous birth and several things have now changed and a whole host of characters in Luke's Story of Salvation have passed from the scene to be replaced by a whole new crop of names that we will meet very soon.

From here on out- we will hear no more about Zacharias or Elizabeth- the godly old couple who were the parents of John the Baptist. They are no doubt dead now as Jesus begins His Ministry and gone on to their great reward in Heaven. We will hear no more about the shepherds who saw and heard the Angel and the Heavenly host and, who 30 years prior to this day, came rushing into the manger to see Jesus.

We will hear no more about Simeon and Anna- the old saints who looked for the consolation of Israel. They, too, no doubt are dead, also. And we will hear no more about Joseph- the husband of Mary- who had the unbelievable assignment to raise the Incarnate God from a boy into a man.

What is interesting is that just as Jesus was 30 years of age as He began His Ministry- that is the very same age that Joseph was when he stood before Pharaoh according to **Genesis 41:46**. And it is the same age as the beloved King David was when he began to reign in Israel according to **2Samuel 5:4**. And according to **Numbers 4:3**- the Levitical Priests entered into the full execution of their office when they reached 30 years of age- so this age of 30 is significant.

Also after this time- the Bible says that Jesus ministered for 3-1/2 years- and that, too, is significant. According to **Luke 4:25** and **James 5:17**- the Heavens were shut up for the space of 3-1/2 years during Elijah's ministry. The Bible also records this span as being forty-two

months in **The Revelation 11:2**, and the one thousand, two hundred, and threescore days of ministry by the two witnesses in **The Revelation 11:3**.

Now I realize that this genealogy might seem confusing to you. But I want you to understand why I have gone through this with you in such great detail. This passage- as hard as it may be for us to grasp- is, nevertheless, part of the Holy Bible. These words are every bit as inspired and inerrant and infallible and authoritative as any other verse or passage and therefore it demands and expects our attention and recognition.

We are wrong, dear friends, to skip over this simply because it is difficult. And I have done my best to not only go over this, but to preach Jesus Christ and His Death Burial, and Resurrection in these verses to the Glory of God.

The main thing to keep in mind about this genealogy is that it *terminates in God*. The last words of Chapter 3 says:

the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Now this ending is one-of-a-kind. There is nothing else like it in all the Old Testament, or in any rabbinic texts for a genealogy to begin or end with the Name of God. The fact that Luke ended the genealogy of Jesus this way begs for attention. And what Luke wants us to understand is that Adam was “the son of God” in the sense that God was his Father in both a spiritual way and a natural way- because God created Adam as a full grown man.

Therefore, in this sense- as the very first man- Adam can be referred to as “the son of God.” But Jesus- the eternal Son of God- has become part of the human family and its *flawed* sonship (flawed because of Adam’s disobedience).

So the great thing about this is that Jesus exercises His perfect and eternal Sonship as he takes on Adam’s (and our) flawed sonship— and, therefore, Jesus is able to redeem it. The Apostle Paul put it this way in **1Corinthians 15:22, 45**:

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

45 So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

And, again, in **Romans 5:17**:

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

So God's good pleasure reverberates in those precious words, "**You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.**" God was pleased in advance- because He knew that Jesus Christ alone would live 33 sinless years and then fulfill all the Father's Delight in having all the sins of all of God's people imputed to Him on the Cross so that the Father could then pour out the full fury of His Wrath against our sins on Jesus and Jesus would literally purchase the Salvation for every single one of those whom the Father had chosen from before the foundation of the world to be saved.

And God was pleased that the failed and fallen children of the *first* Adam would be redeemed by the Blood of the flawless, triumphant, *second* Adam.

*Christ the Son of God
Became a son of Adam
That we the sons of Adam
Might become the sons of God.*

Apart from the Son's perfect Work at Calvary- no one will ever hear God say, "**You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.**" God *cannot* and God *will not* say that to a sinful humanity. However, **2Corinthians 5:17** says:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature*; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

And upon these new creatures- God's sons and daughters- God Pleasure abides!

Let's come pray

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