

Twenty-seven years ago, I was brand-new Christian. God opened my eyes to see the glory and grace of Jesus in the Gospel, and He granted me repentance and faith, and He gave me a new heart to receive Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. One of the marks of God's regenerating work in my life was a **sudden and steady hunger** for the Word of God.

Like a newborn infant, I craved the pure spiritual milk of the Word, that by it I might grow up into salvation (**1 Pet. 2:2**). So, for the first time in my life, I began a quest to read through the whole Bible. I didn't make it very far into Genesis before encountering a bump in the road: ***an entire chapter filled with dozens of names, hard-to-pronounce names, of people I didn't know anything about, other than that they lived and died a long, long time ago.*** Not knowing what to make of this list of names, I turned to the New Testament thinking it was newer so it must be easier to understand. And to my bewilderment, when I found **Matthew chapter 1**, I discovered waiting for me... yet another long genealogy!

Perhaps you've had a similar experience with **challenging passages** like the one before us this morning in **Luke 3:23-38**. Luke provides us with a **genealogy of Jesus**, a genealogy that differs at many points with the genealogy provided by Matthew. How are we supposed to make sense of this?

When we encounter difficult passages in the Bible, we need to remember that God commands us to **love Him**, yes with all our **heart**, and all our **soul**, and all our **strength**, but **also with all our mind**! Paul commanded young Timothy, ***"Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything."*** (**2 Tim. 2:7**) Thinking hard over **difficult biblical texts** that we don't initially **understand** and don't initially **grasp** the relevance of for our lives demonstrates a **humble devotion** to the holy God who breathed-out all of Scripture. It demonstrates a faith that seeks understanding.

**God doesn't waste words.** Every jot and tittle is more precious than gold, even much fine gold. His Words are pure. ***"The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times."*** (**Ps. 12:6**) We believe that ***"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*** (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**) Even the **Bible's genealogies** are **profitable** for us, because they are the **"words of eternal life,"** (**John 6:68**) and the **"lively oracles of God."** (**Acts 7:38**) Even difficult to understand and challenging passages are for your eternal good and His everlasting glory.

In our series of studies in **Luke's Gospel** so far, Dr. Luke has presented to us in **Chapters 1-3** several reliable, trustworthy, authoritative witnesses concerning the identity of Jesus Christ. Dr. Luke is a good historian, he spoke with eye-witnesses and those who were with Jesus from the beginning, and he has written an orderly account of the things accomplished by God in the Gospel. So far, Luke has presented to us the righteous testimony of **Zechariah**, and **Elizabeth**, and **Mary**, and the **angels**, and **Simeon** and **Anna**, and **John the Baptist**.

Last week, we considered **Christ's baptism in the Jordan River**, His coronation ceremony as it were. And we discovered both **visible** and **audible** testimony from **God the Holy Spirit** and **God the Father**, namely, that **Jesus is the prophesied Spirit-anointed Davidic Messiah, and the eternally Beloved Son of God, in whom the Father is well-pleased.**

This morning Luke provides another piece of vital testimony concerning the identity of Jesus. He provides us with His family tree, His lineage, His genealogy, that testifies to His rightful claim to the throne of David as Israel's Messiah, as the promised seed of Eve, and seed of Abraham, and seed of David.

**Luke 3:23-38:** *Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, 27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

- 1. Jesus is the Son of Mary**
- 2. Jesus is the Son of Adam**
- 3. Jesus is the Son of God**

This morning, I pray that God the Spirit would help us, and show us, what this long list of names in Luke's Gospel **teaches us about Jesus...** and **teaches us about the world...** and **teaches us about ourselves.**

### **1. Jesus is the Son of Mary**

Before giving us Jesus's family tree, Luke provides an interesting detail about Jesus's ministry. **Look again at Verse 23:** "Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age..."

**Luke notes that Jesus, at the outset of His public ministry, was around 30 years old.** The last mention of Jesus's age by Luke was back in **2:42**. Jesus was 12 years old and He played hooky from His parents and they found Him in the Temple sitting among the

rabbis. Luke tells us He “*increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man,*” (2:52) but he then skips over all of Jesus’ teenage years, and all of His 20s.

**Our Lord waited until age thirty to be baptized, and to begin His public ministry.** This is significant. In the OT, priests began their public ministry of service at age thirty (Num. 4:3). Joseph began serving in Pharaoh’s house at age thirty (Gen. 41:46). And, perhaps most important of all, King David began his reign in Israel at age thirty (2 Sam. 5:4). Luke wants us to know that Jesus is ready... to minister, to serve, and to reign.

**After this important timestamp in the ministry of Christ, Luke narrates the genealogy, the family tree, of Jesus.**

**Verse 23:** *Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli...*

**Illus.:** Now, I imagine some of you have used websites like Ancestry.com to research your family tree. Oftentimes, we just want to learn a little about our ancestors because we’re curious. We want to know if we have any *famous* or *notorious* familial connections.

But in ancient Israel, **genealogies were vitally important.** Ancestry determined claims in the Promised Land, which was divided up and allocated to the twelve tribes of Israel. Ancestry determined the right of inheritance. Ancestry established the basis of taxation. Ancestry also determined any claim to the priesthood. If you wanted to serve as a priest in Israel, you had to be able to verify **by genealogy** that you belonged to the priestly line.

But most importantly of all, **any claim to royalty, any claim to be King in Israel, any claim to be the Messiah, had to be verified.** You had to be able to determine that you were, in fact, born in the blood-line, in the family tree of David. You had to have a royal pedigree verified by your genealogy.

**So genealogies were vitally important in ancient Israel.** Accurate genealogical records were kept before and after the Babylonian exile. The Jews in the First Century knew their own family trees. They knew who their ancestors were. **Illus.:** For example, Joseph and Mary both knew their family trees. They both knew they were descendants of David. Luke’s already told us that they went to Bethlehem to be taxed because that was the city of David.

**App.:** So what Luke provides us in **Verses 23-38** is yet another **vital piece of evidence, a necessary piece of testimony** that Jesus is the Messiah! ***If Jesus isn’t descended from David, then Jesus isn’t the Messiah.*** Luke provides us with Jesus’ family tree, His lineage, His genealogy, because it testifies to His rightful claim to the throne of David.

Even Jesus’ harshest opponents recognized the validity of His claims to be a descendent of David, according to the flesh. They never challenged that He was a son of David; they denied He was the Messiah; but they never questioned His royal pedigree.

But before we consider the meaning and significance of this genealogy, let me begin by helping you understand what to make of the **fascinating differences** between Luke and Matthew's genealogies of Jesus. **There are a ton of differences. Why?!**

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus is **abbreviated and stylistic**. He has three sets of fourteen generations (**Matt. 1:17**), structuring his list so that Abraham, David, and the exile are all highlighted. **He lists 42 names**. He begins with **Abraham** and works up to Jesus, from the past to the present. Matthew also breaks with Jewish custom by including **four women** in the genealogy; he even includes Gentile women! (**Ruth the Moabite!**)

**Luke's genealogy is significantly longer than Matthew's**. Luke's genealogy is more exhaustive and its structure is more in the traditional Jewish style. There are 77 names; 11 sets of 7 names. It looks just like a genealogy you'd find in **1 Chronicles 1-4**. Luke begins with Jesus and then works backwards, all the way back to **Adam**. Luke starts with the present and then works back to the past.

***Why do Matthew and Luke have so many different names for Jesus' ancestors? Because they are tracing two different genealogies, two different family trees.***

For example, **Luke traces Jesus' line back to David through... Nathan**. Look at **Verse 31**: "...the son of Nathan, the son of David." Nathan was David's third son, born to Bathsheba.

**But Matthew traces Jesus' line back to David through... Solomon.** (**See Matt. 1:6**) Solomon was David's first son, born to Bathsheba.

This is **crucial** to understand what's happening here. In Luke's genealogy, he is tracing Jesus' lineage to David through Nathan. In Matthew's genealogy, he is tracing Jesus's lineage to David through Solomon.

In other words, you have **two different lines**, both in the **royal line**, because they're both in the **line of David**, but **different lines** because they are traced through **different sons of David**: one coming down from **Nathan** and the other coming down from **Solomon**.

This is a clue to understand the differences between the genealogies in Matthew and Luke: they are two different genealogies; one is **maternal**, the other is **paternal**.

**Illus.**: Everybody has two genealogies. You have one family tree branching up through your father and one branching up through your mother.

**Matthew provides the genealogy of Joseph through his father Jacob back to King David through his son, Solomon. Luke provides the genealogy of Mary through her father, Heli, back to King David through his son, Nathan.**

You'll notice Luke doesn't mention **Mary** explicitly, or **any women at all**, in this list of names. This is because genealogical records for the Jews were traced through males.

**The legal right to rule came through your father.** Joseph wasn't the biological father of Jesus because of the **virgin conception**. **But Joseph was Jesus' legal father by adoption.** Therefore, **Matthew** points out to his Jewish readers that Joseph, who was a righteous man, was the **legal father of Jesus** and, as a descendent of David, Jesus has the legal right to the throne through his adopted father. **If you read Matthew 1, it's told from the perspective of Joseph.**

**But Luke 1-2 is told through the perspective of Mary, Jesus' biological mother!** Think about it! Mary is visited by the angel. Mary is told by the angel: *"You shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."* (**1:32**) Mary sings a praise song to the Lord for keeping His covenant promises. Mary hears the words of the shepherds. Mary treasures their sayings in her heart. **Luke narrates these opening scenes from the perspective of Mary.**

So after telling us that Mary is the fulfillment of the promise given in **Genesis 3**, that a son of Eve will come to crush the serpent, and that Mary is the fulfillment the prophecy of **Isaiah 7:14**, *"a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,"* Luke provides for us the **maternal genealogy** of Jesus, the Messiah. **Luke provides the genealogy of Mary through her father, Heli, back to King David through his son, Nathan.**

Dr. Luke, as a historian, follows the **tradition Jewish custom of not naming any women in the family tree**. **But here's a question for you to consider?** How in the world does one go about writing a family tree for someone who was miraculously conceived in the womb of a virgin? The virgin conception has only happened once! Jesus didn't have an earthly biological father! Joseph was His legal father by adoption.

So how do you follow the traditional Jewish form of a genealogy, only including male names, and yet also subtly indicating to the reader that you're tracing the family tree through the **biological mother**? You would need to drop a serious clue!

**Look again at Verse 23:** *Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli...*

That phrase **"as was supposed"** or **"supposedly..."** or **"as was thought"** **is the key clue.** Jesus, of course, was thought to be the biological son of Joseph. That's what people thought. Even the folks in His hometown thought this!

After His very first sermon in the hometown synagogue, Luke tells us *"All spoke well of Him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth. And they said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?'"* (**4:22**)

People supposed, people thought, He was Joseph's son. Legally, Jesus was Joseph's son. **But biologically, Jesus was the son of Mary.**

That verb “**supposed**” is used by Luke to indicate something that’s thought to be true but isn’t actually the case. He told us earlier in **Luke 2:43-44**: “*And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, 44 but **supposing** Him to be in the group they went a day’s journey, but they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.*”

So Luke drops this clue, (**as was supposed**) this hint of the virgin conception, the virgin birth, right at the outset of the family tree in order to point us to Mary. And in order to keep the tradition Jewish formula, Luke then proceeds to mention the first male in the line of His mother, that is, Jesus’ grandfather on His mother’s side, a man named **Heli**.

**App.:** Jesus is the Son of Mary. That’s Luke’s point. Jesus not only has the **legal right** to rule as King through His adoptive father, Joseph. Jesus also has the right to rule as King through **the blood in His veins** because of His mother, Mary. He can rule as King **legally** through Joseph; and He can rule as King **naturally** through Mary.

**This is a vital piece of evidence, a crucial piece of testimony that affirms that Jesus is the Messiah, that He is descended from David according to the flesh!**

## **2. Jesus is the Son of Adam**

I’ve spent a lot of time on the **beginning** of this genealogy, but I want to draw your attention now to how Luke **concludes** Jesus’ family tree. Look again at **Verse 38**: “*...the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*” **Jesus is the Son of Adam.**

Matthew aims to connect Jesus to **Abraham**, the father of the Jewish people. But Luke goes back even further. **Jesus is the Son of Adam.** Luke wants his readers to understand that Jesus not only came into the world to fulfill the promises given to **Abraham**; but Jesus also is the fulfillment of God’s plan to bless **the whole world**, all nations, all peoples, a plan that stretches all the way back to Eden, all the way back to Adam, the father of the entire human race.

In his sermon on Mars Hill, the Apostle Paul says, “*God Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And **He made from one man every nation of mankind** to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.*” (**Acts 17:25-26**) **In His mighty providence, God orchestrates all of human history beginning with Adam, in order that, in the fullness of time, He might bring forth His only-begotten Son into the world, born of woman, born under the law, as the Son of Adam!**

All of us, every human being, regardless of ethnicity or nationality, belongs to one race: the human race. We are all descended from one man, our father Adam. No matter what identity you claim: Virginian, Southerner, American, Democrat, Republican— you are fundamentally a son or a daughter of Adam. **You share a common humanity with every human being in the world.**



**App.:** Brothers and sisters, don't let hyper-partisan, nationalistic politics deceive you!

**Illus.:** When you walk into a room and you see someone who looks differently than you do, someone who has a different skin color than you, someone who has a different nationality than you do, if you are thinking biblically, the first thought that comes into your mind ought to be: *"That person is made in the image of God, just like me. That person is fearfully and wonderfully made by God, just like me. That person is descended from Adam, just like me. That person is a sinner, fallen in Adam, and is perishing, and is in desperate need of saving grace and reconciliation, just like me. And if that person is trusting in Christ, the last Adam, then that person is counted righteous in God's holy sight, and is a part of the family of God, just like me."*

In this genealogy, Luke highlights the **universal scope** of Christ's coming into the world. Jesus didn't just come to rescue Jews from their sins and from the curse of death and hell. ***"The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*** (19:10) He came to save hell-bound men and women of every tribe, nation, and tongue. **We sang earlier in the service: *"See the true and better Adam Come to save the hell-bound man."***

You see the sin of our Father Adam, our covenant-head in the Garden, brought the curse of death into the world. **Every person listed by Luke in this genealogy, except for Jesus, was a sinner and is dead.** (OK, Enoch gets a pass... because the Lord took him! He was still a sinner though!)

**The people that Jesus came to save, like the people in His family tree, were people like us.** They were idolaters like Abraham. They were liars like Jacob. They were adulterers and murderers like David. They were sinners, just like us. Just like us they all deserved death, eternal death, in Hell because we've all sinned against the good and holy God who made us, and the wages of sin is death.

**Jesus' genealogy, the family tree of the King of kings, is a family tree of rebels.** But Luke's Gospel was written to persuade us, to convince us of this good news: ***God our Savior desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all!***

**Listen to these words from J.C. Ryle:** *"How little we know of many of the persons whose names are here recorded! They all had their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, their cares and troubles, their schemes and plans, like any of ourselves. But they have all passed away from the earth, and gone to their own place. And so will it be with us. We too are passing away, and shall soon be gone. Forever let us bless God, that in a dying world we are able to turn to a living Saviour. "I am He," says Jesus, "that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore." (Rev. 1:18)<sup>1</sup> Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, is also the Son of Adam, and He came into the world to save sinners... to the uttermost!*

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on Luke (vol. 1; New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1879), 104-105.

### 3. Jesus is the Son of God

**As we close, let me highlight one more thing: Jesus is the Son of God.** Did you notice how Luke places this genealogy of Jesus here in the narrative, right at the outset of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew begins his gospel with the genealogy. But Luke waits and places it here instead. **Why?** The phrase, "**the son of God**," in Verse 38 is the key.

Verse 38 *the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

**Luke told us that at His baptism, God the Holy Spirit and God the Father, visibly and audibly testified that Jesus is the eternally blessed and beloved Son of God. Jesus is truly and fully divine.** But Luke wants us also to know that **Jesus is also truly and fully human: He's the Son of God incarnate. He's the last Adam. He's God in the flesh.**

So, like Adam, He will be **tested** and **tempted** by Satan. But this time, unlike in Genesis 3, this test won't come in **Paradise**. It will come in the **wilderness**. And what will that ancient serpent say to Jesus over and over again, "**If you are the... Son of God...**" **But this time, unlike in Eden, Satan loses.** The true Son of God, the last Adam, is faithful and obedient. He is led by the Spirit of God and He is obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

**What does all this mean for you?** Brothers and sisters, perhaps when you read the genealogy of Jesus it seems to be a **distant** and **trivial** thing. But it's not!

You see, all who trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the One who died for our sins and rose again for our justification— all who turn from their sins and trust in Him— all who receive Him in the empty hands of faith— are united to Him by the Spirit of God. When you are united to Him, you receive not only Him, but His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of adoption: "*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.*" (Rom. 8:15-17)

**If you are trusting in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, this genealogy, as it were, has become your family tree!** You are members of the family of God! In the household of God, you belong not as a **guest**, but as a **child**. You and I orphaned ourselves because of our sin. We threw away our inheritance. But because of our Father's love, we have been **accepted** through Jesus Christ, and because of His blood and righteousness, and because of the Spirit who dwells within us, **we have been adopted by God**, and we are treated as **first-born sons**. We are **heirs** of God and co-heirs with Christ. **His family tree has become our family tree.** And because of **our elder brother**, the Lord Jesus Christ, the **Son of Mary**, the **Son of Adam**, the **Son of God**, I can say to you, because you are trusting in Him: "*All things are yours, whether the world or life or death or the present or the future—all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*" (1 Cor. 3:21-23)