

Luke 3.21-38

Jesus the Messiah: Son of Man, Son of God

Where are you from? What's your family history? What gives you your identity? Your answer to those sorts of questions will give some idea of who you are—the kind of things that shape you as a person.

Well, the account of *Jesus'* baptism and genealogy we just read from Luke 3 gives us some answers to those questions about Jesus. It tells us where *Jesus* is from, *his* family history, and what gives him *his* identity.

Main point: *It's who Jesus is that determines who you are.* 3 parts: 1. The Baptism of Jesus (verses 21-22); 2. The Genealogy of Jesus (verses 23-38); 3. We'll *tie it all together* by talking briefly about Jesus as both the *Servant King* and the *King of Servants*

1. The Baptism of Jesus (verses 21-22)

Now, it's interesting that John the Baptist isn't mentioned by Luke here at all. Of course, his presence is *implied*. But Luke just told us about John's imprisonment by Herod. And so, now that Jesus is set to begin his public ministry, John drops out of the narrative entirely, and Jesus alone takes center stage.

And notice that Luke says in verse 21 that Jesus' Baptism happened "*when all the people were baptized.*" Now, *Why do you think he makes it a point to tell us that?* Well, I'd suggest he's emphasizing Jesus' *identification* with his people.

Because Baptism points to repentance and forgiveness — John came preaching a Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as we read in 3.3. And so, as the people were Baptized in the Jordan, their sins were symbolically washed away into the Jordan river. But Jesus had nothing to repent of—no need for forgiveness. But he's Baptized anyway.

And so, as Jesus went into that same water in which all the people were Baptized, he *in a sense entered into* their world of sin without having any sin of his own and took their sins upon himself.

You see, by being baptized Jesus identified with his sinful people. And he showed that he was taking their sins upon himself right at the very outset of his ministry.

Because, remember, John the Baptist says in John's Gospel that Jesus is the Lamb of God who *takes away* the sins of the world. And so, from the time of his Baptism forward he'll carry those sins right to the cross.

And this is all tied up with the theme of *judgment*. Because in the previous scene, John the Baptist proclaimed God's judgment. He told the crowds who came out to him about the coming wrath. He said the axe was laid to the roots of the trees and those who didn't produce good fruit would be cut down and thrown into the fire.

And he also told them the coming Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit and *fire*, and thoroughly clear his threshing floor—gathering in the wheat and *burning up* the chaff with *unquenchable fire*!

So, according to John, *fiery judgment* is coming. And the Messiah's baptism is a *baptism of judgment*—whether for vindication (wheat gathered into the barn) or for condemnation (chaff swept up and *thrown into the fire*).

And it's against that background that Jesus himself is baptized by John in the Jordan. He goes down into the water, is baptized *after* everyone else, and so identifies with the guilty. And then the heavens open up and the Spirit descends on him *like a dove*.

Now, *Why a dove?* //// Think about it: You have Jesus standing in the water, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove coming down to the water from heaven. *Where else in Scripture do we see a both a dove and water?*

Well, remember the account of the flood? Back in Genesis 8, when the waters of the flood began to recede, *what did Noah do?* //// He sent out a *dove*, *right?* And the dove came back to him in the ark with an olive leaf in its beak.

And so, the dove's return to the ark indicated that Noah and his family were brought safely through the *waters of judgment* that God *poured out* on the world for mankind's sin.

And, in a sense, we could say they received the post-flood world—that *new world* that made it through the judgment—as their inheritance.

But what does that have to do with us? Well, in light of all that, it's *really interesting* that 1 Peter 3.21 says Noah's ark was an Old Testament type of Christian baptism, "*which,*" Peter tells us, "*now saves you... through the resurrection of Jesus.*"

And that's the case because *our Baptism into Jesus* conveys the reality that *in Him* we're brought safely through judgment. We're baptized into his death and resurrection—*his judgment for our sins and his vindication*. As Paul says in Romans 4.25: Jesus "*was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*"

So that in the *final judgment we'll be vindicated* because we're in Christ. And because we receive that verdict of vindication through our Union with Jesus, we also receive *his inheritance*—the *eternal Kingdom; the New New Heavens and New Earth*— *as our own*.

And another thing we see in Jesus' Baptism is his *anointing* for his messianic task. Because the *truly amazing* thing here *isn't* just that Jesus was baptized, but what happened *after* his Baptism.

Now, I want you to try to picture this scene: after all the people were baptized, and Jesus himself was baptized, the heavens opened up, and the Holy Spirit *came down* upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "*You are my beloved Son. With you I am well pleased.*" And it all happened *while Jesus was praying*.

But what was he praying for? Well, we don't know for sure. But it *could be* that he was *actually* praying for the Holy Spirit. And I think there's some support for that in Luke 11.13, where Jesus tells his disciples: "*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*"

You see, according to Jesus, it's the Holy Spirit who's the good gift the Father gives to his children. And it's the Holy Spirit that the children are to seek from the Father. And it's the Holy Spirit that the Father sends to Jesus as he's praying.

Now, of course, Jesus was always the Son of God. But he knew that in order to complete his Messianic calling he needed the special anointing of the Holy Spirit upon him.

And notice that the descent of the Spirit on Jesus here in chapter 3 provides the foundational backdrop for the beginning of Jesus' ministry in chapter 4. Because in 4.1, he enters into the wilderness "*full of the Holy Spirit*" to be tempted by Satan.

Then, *after* his temptation, in 4.14 he returns to Galilee "*in the power of the Spirit.*" And then we have the words Jesus reads in the synagogue at Nazareth in 4.18-19—"*the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me...*" which is followed by his insistence to those who heard, "*today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*"

So, Jesus received the Spirit as his anointing for his Messianic work. But *that's not all*. Because once he finished his work on earth, he received the gift of the Holy Spirit *again!*

As Peter says in Acts 2.33 on the Day of Pentecost: "*Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.*"

You see, in his *humiliation*, Jesus received the Spirit, in a sense, for himself—empowering him for his Messianic task. But in his *exaltation*, he received the gift of the Spirit *for us*. That he might *baptize* his church with the Spirit, cleanse her, give her life, and empower her to engage in the mission of the Kingdom *as his body*.

And that's *all tied up* in Paul's grand statement in 1 Corinthians 15.45 that after his resurrection, "*The Last Adam (Jesus) became Life-giving Spirit.*" And that's what *he is now for us*.

For the one who was baptized in the Jordan by John is now the *highly exalted* head of the Church who gives life and rules by his word and Spirit. So that from his fullness we might all receive grace upon grace.

And there's one more aspect of this scene of Jesus' Baptism we need to look at—the Father's voice from heaven. Now, the words he says are sort of a combination of Psalm 2.7 and Isaiah 42.1.

Psalm 2.7 is in the context of the King of Israel as God's Son. It says, "*I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.'*"

And Isaiah 42.1 is in the context of the coming Messiah as the Suffering Servant. It says, "*Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.*"

Now, *why's that important?* Well, because with those two themes combined in the Father's words, we see that Jesus is *both* the great King *and* he's the Suffering Servant. And those 2 things aren't at odds with each other. Because Jesus *fulfills* both.

For the combination of those 2 realities—*King and Servant*—defines Jesus and his mission in a nutshell, *doesn't it?* As it'll be *precisely through suffering* that the Son of God will receive his kingly inheritance.

2. The Genealogy of Jesus (verses 23-38)

Now, at first glance this seems like a bit of an odd place to put a genealogy, *doesn't it?* Both Matthew and Mark go directly from Jesus' Baptism to his temptation in the wilderness.

But Luke inserts this genealogy right in between those two accounts. *Why?* Well, I think that'll become apparent as we think a bit about the part the genealogy plays in Luke's narrative.

The first thing to notice about the genealogy is what Luke says right at the beginning in verse 23: Jesus was the son, *as was supposed*, of Joseph. You see, he grew up in Joseph's house, but he wasn't physically begotten of Joseph.

Because while Jesus was intimately united with humanity as a true human being in *every way* and formed from *the substance* of Mary, He was nevertheless at the same time the *eternal* Son of God—of *one substance with the Father*. In other words, Jesus is, in the *truest sense*, *both* Son of Man *and* Son of God.

And that's *exactly the point* Luke wants to drive home for us with his genealogy. And I think we can actually see that best if we compare Luke's genealogy with Matthew's.

Now, in both places—here in Luke 3 and also in Matthew chapter 1—Jesus' genealogy *establishes* at least 2 basic things about him. 1. He was a *true human being* in every way, with a family history and all. And so he *wasn't* some sort of mythological demi-god. And 2. He's a descendant of David, and so he had that essential Messianic credential.

But the genealogies in Matthew and Luke also *differ* in some important ways. First, the immediate difference you'll notice right off the bat is that *Matthew's* genealogy moves from Abraham *forward* to Jesus, while *Luke* traces the line from Jesus backward to Adam and God.

And another significant difference is in the names that are listed. You see, they're largely the same from Abraham to David. But they almost *entirely diverge* from David to Jesus. *So, Why the difference?*

Well, there've been a variety of suggestions. And I don't want to bore you by recounting them all. But I'll just mention the one I think's the best. It's possible that Matthew's genealogy gives us Jesus' *legal* descendants—those who were the heirs to David's throne—while Luke gives Joseph's *physical* descendants.

And the support for this view is that the differences in the 2 genealogies only really come into the picture when they get to King David's son. Where Matthew lists Solomon, who as we know was David's royal heir. But Luke records Nathan, who was also one of David's sons, but was never king.

And so, the point of the difference is that *Matthew* gives a list of *rightful heirs* to the Davidic throne in order to establish that Jesus rightly belonged in that line, while *Luke* lists Joseph's *physical descendants* in order to trace Jesus' *natural* ancestry back to the first man Adam, and ultimately to God himself.

And *if* that explanation is correct, we actually see the *theological purpose* of each genealogy *precisely* in the differences between them. Because, you see, both genealogies are equally true. But they're looking at Jesus' lineage from 2 different perspectives.

And they present those 2 perspectives for distinct theological purposes. *Matthew* emphasizes Jesus as the true Israelite—*Israel's* Messiah. While *Luke* emphasizes Jesus as the *universal man*—the hope of *all* the ages and *all* the nations.

And so, by tracing Jesus' physical descendants *all the way back* to Adam and the *original creation* of humanity, Luke highlights Christ's solidarity with *all* humanity and the *universality* of his mission. And that theme will carry *all the way through* Luke's Gospel to the book of Acts. Where we see the Kingdom spreading to the far reaches of the earth.

Now, sure, the fact that Jesus is heir to David's throne and fulfillment of all the promises made to the patriarchs is vitally important for Luke. After all, he's brought that out continually prior to this genealogy.

It's there in Gabriel's announcement of his birth. It's in the songs of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon. And it's in John the Baptist's preaching.

But there've also been hints along the way about Jesus coming for the redemption of *all people*. And John the Baptist just made it clear, *didn't he*, that God could raise up children for Abraham even from the rocks. So, *how much more* could it be said that he can bring the Gentiles into his Kingdom through Abraham's true offspring, Jesus.

And so, in his genealogy Luke's driving home the point that Jesus was none other than God's own Son. *Just as* Gabriel said back in chapter 1. *Just as* Jesus himself declared as a 12 year old boy in the Temple in chapter 2. And *just as* the Father *just said* from heaven at Jesus' baptism.

The *recurring insistence throughout* the Gospel of Luke is that Jesus of Nazareth is God's one and only Son. Because Jesus, just as much as he's Son of Abraham, is also *Son of Adam and Son of God*.

He's the *universal man*. As he's *intimately linked* with the history of humanity, and with humanity's Creator. And *that's why* the genealogy ends by going through Adam, to God himself.

And the inclusion of Adam ties Jesus together with the opening chapters of Genesis. Because Jesus the Son of God is *also* the 2nd Adam, who came to *undo* what the 1st Adam did, and to *do* what the 1st Adam failed to do. And *how'll he do that?* Well, he'll do it by entering into trial and temptation as the *representative man* and *triumphing* over it in our behalf.

Because, as we've already seen, he showed his *solidarity* with humanity at his Baptism. And Luke further establishes that solidarity—particularly as the 2nd Adam—with his genealogy.

And then, right after Jesus' Baptism and genealogy here in chapter 3, *where does he go? What does he do?* He goes out into the wilderness to be *tempted* by the devil. To undergo the *same sort of testing* the 1st Adam underwent in the Garden, which he failed and therefore plunged mankind into an estate of sin and misery!

Now, I don't want to get into all that too much now, because that's next week's sermon. But I just want you to notice for now how Luke frames Christ's redemptive work here at the outset of his public ministry against the backdrop of Adam in the Garden.

As chapter 3 ends with the words, "*Son of Adam, Son of God,*" and then chapter 4 begins with the words, "*And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.*"

3. The Servant King and the King of Servants

And he did it all in order to be tempted, suffer, and die as a *servant*. As his obedience to his Father and his resistance of evil ultimately led him to the cross.

He *was* and *is* the King. The rightful heir of *all things* as God's only Son—the one *by whom* and *for whom everything* was made. But *for us* and *for our salvation* he humbled himself, took the form of a servant, and became obedient even to the point of death on a cross.

And so Jesus, as we see throughout his earthly ministry, was a *Servant King*. He opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. He healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor.

He identified with the weak, the lowly, and the outcast. He washed the feet of his disciples, and underwent mocking, scourging, spitting, and crucifixion. And his *crown* was one of *thorns*—the *very symbol* of the curse the 1st Adam brought to the earth.

His Baptism was his anointing and appointment into public service. His genealogy established his royal lineage. And *even now* that he reigns in *heavenly glory*, he still gives himself over to his people for their good.

As he received the gift of the Spirit at his ascension into heaven. But not to keep that gift to himself as his own personal treasure like a normal king of this world would.

No. As Paul tells us Ephesians 4.6-7, grace is given to each one of us according to the measure of *Christ's gift*. Because when he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he *gave gifts* to men." And even now he *ever lives* to make intercession for his people.

You see, friends, *Jesus*, the one in whom we've been Baptized, *identified* with us so that we might be *identified* with him. He *took on our flesh* that we might be *united to him*. He *entered into* our story that we might *enter into* His. And he *destroyed* the kingdom of darkness that we might be *transferred* to the kingdom of light.

And in his kingdom as it now exists in this present age, we're his servants who live lives of service in his name to each other and to the world. And as such we're called to live as he lived—as those who follow the way of the cross! Freely offering ourselves as servants out of love for God and our neighbors.

And we wage war to advance his kingdom. But we do it through humble duties like prayer, giving to the poor, and giving ourselves over in self-sacrificial love to even our enemies.

Because, you see, entering into union with Jesus means you live like Jesus. Not always perfectly. But the general pattern of your life follows his. Because belonging to the Kingdom means living after the same pattern of the King. And his life's at work within us to conform us to *his image*.

And *his image* while he was in this world was that of a Servant—obedient to his Father's will even through temptation, suffering, and cross. *That's* where the Spirit ultimately led him. And our lives *in union with him* are lives that follow that same course. *First the cross, then the Glory*.

And so, your trials in this life, whatever they may be, *aren't* without purpose. No. They're a *fellowship* in the sufferings of Christ, that are meant to make you more like King Jesus. Because it's *who Jesus is* that defines *who you are*. It's *his story* that shapes *yours*. *Not* the other way around.

And the end result of your life in union with him will be an *eternal weight of glory* with which all the light, momentary afflictions of this present age aren't even worthy of being compared. Don't ever forget that, brothers and sisters.