

Jesus Christ, the Son of God

²¹ Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened,

²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

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,

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.

(Luke 3:21-38)

Mistaken Identity

Our heroes travel to a planet with a culture almost identical to **ancient Rome** but with 20th century technology where they soon find themselves doing battle in a **colosseum** made for TV, complete with fake boos and clapping and laugh tracks, but nevertheless, to the death. They find themselves fighting side by side several “**Sun worshippers**” who won’t bend their knee to the Emperor. At the end of the show, in one of the great TV dialogues of all time, as he’s puzzling out what these people were worshiping, Spock says to the gang, “**Sun worship is usually a primitive superstition religion.**” “**I’m afraid you have it all wrong, Mr. Spock. All of you,**” Uhura turns from her station to face them. “**I’ve been monitoring some of their old-style radio waves. The Empire spokesmen trying to ridicule their religion. But he**

couldn't. Well. Don't you understand? It's not the sun up in the sky. It's the Son of God."¹ They were worshiping Jesus and our band of 23th century treksters didn't understand.

Thinking about Luke's Gospel, you might be forgiven for hearing "sun worshiper" and thinking of the star called the sun, as this is actually a title given to Jesus, metaphorically, by Malachi ("Sun of Righteousness," Mal 4:2) in the very passage that Luke 3 is deeply involved with as it also signals the coming of John the Baptist (Mal 4:5; cf. Luke 3:2-20; cf. 1:17). But like Uhura said, Luke never calls him the Sun, but the *Son*—a child, offspring, progeny.

"Son of God" is a title that we find through the Gospels. In Luke's Gospel, it is mostly on the lips of *supernatural creatures* such as angels (Luke 1:35), the devil (4:3, 9), or demons (4:41), as Mark 3:11 summarizes, "Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God'" (Mk 3:11). Only in Luke 22:70 does the identification arise from the lips of men, and this only after Jesus has explicitly identified himself as the mysterious Cloud-Rider of Daniel 7:13, who, curiously, is called one like a "son of *Man*." But still, it is more supernatural context for this title.

¹ *Star Trek*, "Bread of Circuses" (1967). Written by Gene Roddenberry and Gene L. Coon.

Why would they give him this title? It is because “son of God” is a title *of deity*. Other human leaders took this title to feign deity. Egyptian priests of Ammon called **Alexander the Great** “Son of Ammon-Zeus” (his mother Olympias was said to have declared that Zeus impregnated her while she slept under an oak tree). Importantly, **Augustus**, the Caesar alive when Jesus was born, was called Son of God,² specifically, the son of Apollo by begetting and Julius by *adoption*.³ In doing so, they are linking themselves to the mythology of ancient history that cannot be traced back in time. Even if there is a kind of genealogy of the gods, at some point it just stops. Then, suddenly, miraculously, a new demigod is born.

But as with Spock, this too is a case of **mistaken identity**. Alexander and Augustus were *men*. As glorious as their lives and kingdoms and conquests may have been, they all ended. Given all that we will learn about as we go through the Gospel of Luke, I find it curious that the supernatural entities “get it,” when it comes to the identity of Jesus, while humans consistently don’t. That goes as much for then as it does for today, as so many people deny Christ’s deity.

² “Son of God,” *New World Encyclopedia*, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Son_of_God#cite_note-4.

³ **Michael Kochenash**, “‘Adam, Son of God’ (Luke 3.38): Another Jesus—Augustus Parallel in Luke’s Gospel,” *NTS* 64 (2018): 310.

But “getting it” isn’t just about his deity. It is also about his *humanity*. Since the beginning of the Church, we have been wrestling with opposing *heresies*. Some heresies, such as *Arianism* or Ebionitism, deny Christ’s deity. Others such as *Docetism* (from “to appear”) deny his humanity. Some, such as certain forms of Gnosticism, make him a *demigod*, just like Alexander was claiming to be—half god, half man.

Demons and the devil and angels reside in the realm that could understand divinity. We reside in the realm that can understand humanity. But how can anyone understand *full divinity and full humanity* in one person? Understanding it is one thing, but believing it and knowing why it matters is another. In *Luke 3:21-38*, he sets out to do just that in a most unusual way.

Luke 3:21-38—Context and Structure

Our is composed of *two separate kinds of literature*. The first is a *very short story* that you can look at as the completion of John the Baptist’s ministry. It is *Jesus’ baptism*. In the other Gospels, Jesus’ baptism is a significant story. Again, perhaps Luke knows that those are already out there, he shortens it to a mere two (and a half) verses. “*Now when all*

the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’ Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age...” (Luke 3:21-23a). (I look at the beginning of vs. 23 as informative of the baptism, see below). We can outline the structure as a series of progressive parallels:

- A. All the people are baptized
- A'. Jesus also had been baptized
 - B. Jesus was praying
 - C. The heavens were opened
 - D. The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove
- B'. A voice came
 - C'. From heaven
 - D'. You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.

I think it is important for you to simply note that in the parallelism of Luke-Acts, [this story of Jesus' baptism parallels the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2](#). As Jesus is in some sense baptized by the Spirit here, so his disciples will be baptized after his ascension.

The second part of passage (vv. 23b-38) is a very long genealogy. It is the genealogy of Jesus. In the NT, we have two of them. The other is Matthew 1. Luke's genealogy is nearly twice as long as Matthew's and has significant differences, including that Matthew begins his Gospel with it, but Luke waits almost three chapters to give it. One scholar has identified twelve significant differences, including how Matthew goes from Abraham to Jesus, but Luke goes backwards, starting with Jesus to the beginning, how Matthew seems focused on Jesus' royal lineage, while Luke has something else in mind, and how so many of the names are different, even when they seem like they might be the same.⁴

Matthew explicitly tells us that from Abraham to David there were fourteen generations, from David to the deportation to Babylon there were fourteen, and from Babylon to the Christ there were fourteen (Matt 1:17). This gives forty-two names. Obviously, you can divide fourteen by seven, and in the genealogy, you can do this three times. This makes seven and three significant numbers for Matthew. Some have also suggested that Matthew is

⁴ Adylson Valdez, "The Genealogies of Jesus," *Revista Bíblica* 71.3-4 (2009): 193-94.

using **gematria** for the name **DaViD**, which comes to fourteen. David is also the fourteenth name in his list. This is a clever way of highlighting Jesus' royal status as King.⁵

Luke, on the other hand, has **seventy-seven names**,⁶ including only 21 from Abraham to Adam (which is itself 3x7). This gives Luke 56 (8x7) names between Abraham and Jesus while Matthew only has 42 (6x7). This creates a fact that a lot of people are uncomfortable with, but that's probably because they do not understand the **theologizing** that both authors are doing in their lists. As we know from simply comparing Matthew with Chronicles, he leaves out certain names, on purpose. This should be just as obvious by noting a 14 generation difference between he and Luke as well. In other words, genealogies, even though they may say "the son of" **often have gaps**.

That's no big deal for an ancient person. For them, a great grandson could be called simply a son just as easily as

⁵ Cf. J. **Jeremias**, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975, 292); **W. D. Davies** and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, International Critical Commentary (London: T & T Clark Ltd, 2004), 165.

⁶ James Scott, following Irenaeus, suggests that the list originally had only 72 names, which is itself highly symbolic and related to the nations. I won't go down this path, but see **James M. Scott**, *Geography in Early Judaism and Christianity: The Book of Jubilees*, SNTSMS 113 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46-50.

the son of a father could. You can often tell when this is happening if the genealogy is using numbers like Matthew or Luke or Genesis often does in its lists that **round to perfect numbers**.

This means that even if Luke's genealogy is more complete than Matthew's, Luke could still be keeping names out for **theological profiling**. Theological profiling is in fact, exactly what Luke is doing, as we will see in more detail later. For now, we'll just leave it to the fact that his list of names goes from Jesus backwards, includes David and Abraham, but also goes all the way back to Adam ... *and beyond!* How could he go beyond Adam? I've already tipped that hat to you in the Introduction.

I want to raise one final point about the totality of chapter 3 that I brought up last time. The chapter **begins with seven names** and **ends with seventy-seven**. This means there is good reason to read the whole thing as a single unit of thought. We can do this by further seeing that **Herod** begins vs. 1 and returns in **vs. 20**, right at the end of the first main section, while the idea of **God's son** begins in **vv. 21-22** and returns again at the end of the chapter. This begs us to compare, therefore, Herod and Jesus. Who are these two, side by side? We'll return to this question at the end.

A (3:1-3). [Herod](#)

B. (3:4-6). A voice crying

C. (3:7-9). Thrown into the fire

D. (3:10-11). Crowds: “What shall we do?”

D'. (3:12-13). Tax Collectors: “What shall we do?”

D''. (3:14). Soldiers: “What shall we do?”

C'. (3:15-17). Unquenchable fire

B'. (3:18). He preached good news

A'. (3:20). [Herod](#)⁷

A. (3:21-22). You are [my](#) beloved [Son](#)

B. (23-38c) [Jesus, the son of \(x 76\) ... the son of God](#)

A'. (38d) [Jesus: the son of God](#)

Luke 3:21-2—The Baptism of the Son of God

We begin with the shorter unit, [the baptism of Jesus](#). To me, baptism is one of the most interesting of all the doctrines in the Bible. It has created no end of controversy over mode, recipients, and even meaning(s). And why not? Hebrews itself says there were “[diverse baptisms](#)” in the OT ([Heb 9:10](#)). It frustrates a lot of people that we can't all agree on this issue. Since I think I have a rather unique contribution to this subject, I love to preach on it. But doggone Luke, he only wants to talk about it for two verses! So I'm going to refrain myself to elaborate only enough based on what he actually says.

Let's notice [the setting](#). All the people were coming to John to be Baptized. His was a “[baptism of repentance](#)”

⁷ “11: The Proclamation of John the Baptist. Luke 3:1-20),” [Literary Structure](#) (Chiasm, Chiasmus) of Gospel of Luke, [bible.literarystructure.info](#), http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/42_Luke_pericope_e.html.

(**Luke 3:3**). He was telling them all that they had to repent of their sins and start showing forth good fruit in keeping with repentance if they wanted to enter the kingdom. A mere **outward washing was not enough**. That's what his repentance baptism meant. It was a symbol, something that in and of itself was ineffectual to save but pointed to something greater, whom he said was coming after him.

So now we come to **vs. 21**. “**Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized...**” This is the one coming after Him! But, that's all Luke says about the Baptism ... almost. He gives us **one more tiny hint** about it at the beginning of **vs. 23**, which clearly acts as a hinge verse between the baptism and the genealogy. He says, “**Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age.**” This allows me to comment just enough without fully leaving Luke to do a whole sermon on baptism.

Why does Luke mention Jesus beginning his ministry now, right after the baptism? This is clearly intentional. Well, Jesus has been, until this moment, a **private figure**, working probably with his father as a carpenter and/or being educated in the Torah in school.

Immediately after the genealogy, Jesus will go into the **wilderness** to be tempted, in a scene that reenacts the temptation of Israel in the wilderness and then he will immediately go into **a synagogue and start preaching**. In other words, Jesus' baptism is the moment that his ministry officially begins. Why might this be?

The answer to this must be the reason Luke tells us that Jesus is "**about thirty**." Those two things must be related. Luke isn't interested in an exact age, because that would defeat his theological purpose. Rather, when you go back to the OT, you discover that **thirty years of age** was a very important number for a certain group of people. The Lord commands Moses and Aaron, "**Take a census ... from thirty years old up to fifty years old, [of] all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting**" (**Num 4:3**). Curiously, this is repeated seven times (see also **vs. 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47**). There's our number again.⁸ So thirty is **when a priest began his ministry**.

Thirty is **doing more** than tell us about Jesus' ministry according to Levitical law though. It is also signaling **typol-**

⁸ Others who have noticed this are Darrel Bock, J. C. Ryle, and Dionysius. See **my** *Waters of Creation: A Biblical-Theological Study of Baptism* (Erie, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2009), 7.

ogy as Joseph, the Prince of Egypt went into Pharaoh's service at age thirty (**Gen 41:46**), and David, who began as king of Israel at age thirty (**2Sam 5:4**). Jesus is fulfilling all kinds of things. But though it has more than the ministerial service of the priest in mind, it most certainly does not have less.

This means that we must rethink what Jesus' baptism was. Many have thought that Jesus was baptized to identify with us, which to some degree is true. But many think this means he identified as a sinner and thus underwent John's baptism of repentance to be numbered with the transgressors. That didn't happen, Isaiah says, until his death on the cross (**Isa 53:12**). Rather, as Justin Martyr says, Jesus needed John to "anoint Him, and make Him manifest to all" (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8). What is this anointing that John performs? I suggest it is the anointing of Jesus as the High Priest, not merely of Israel, but of the world, in the order of Melchizedek (it is possible that he was anointed as king here too by John, the Prophet, but he was already recognized as king by the wise men and Herod; **Matt 2:2, 11**).

Jesus fits all the qualifications of the priest. He is thirty (**Num 4:3**). He is without defect. He is a male. He is from a priestly line (namely, Melchizedek). Most importantly, he is baptized. To serve as a priest, the priest had to be washed in

water at his *ordination/anointing* ceremony (Ex 29:4). This was no sprinkling, but a washing or bathing, as Jewish mikvehs (baths) communicate. He has to be baptized by someone already a priest (Ex 29:9), which is exactly what John the Baptist is. Even more important, he had to be called by God (Ex 28:1), which we will see is precisely what happens at the baptism. Luke (and the other Gospel writers in their own ways) is signaling that Jesus was not baptized for repentance, not even repentance to identify with us. Rather, he is baptized so that he might begin his high priestly work according to the law. Lest you think that Jesus would not need to do that, you need to go read Hebrews again, for this is precisely the point it makes. Jesus is obeying all kinds of priestly law. This is no exception.

Jesus was baptized (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21; John 1:31-32).	A priest had to be washed in water at his ordination (Ex 29:4).
Jesus was thirty years old at his baptism, the moment prior to the beginning of his ministry (Luke 3:23).	A priest could not begin ministry until age 30 (Num 4:3; 47).
Jesus was called directly by God at his baptism	A priest (especially the High Priest) had to be called of God as was Aaron

(Heb 5:4-10; cf. Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).	(Ex 28:1).
Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, a Levitical priest in the line of Aaron (Luke 1:5, 13).	A priest had to be washed by one already a priest (Ex 29:9; Num 25:13).
Jesus was without spot or blemish (Heb 5:9; 1 Pet 1:19; cf. Matt 3:14).	A priest had to be without defect in several special ways (Lev 21:16-23).
Jesus was a male (Matt 1:21).	A priest had to be a male (Num 3:15).
Jesus begins his ministry immediately after his baptism (Luke 4:18ff).	A priest began his ministry immediately after the ordination ceremony was completed (Ex 29:1).
Jesus' "genealogy" stems from Melchizedek, the High Priest of [Jeru]Salem (Heb 7:11; cf. Ps 110:4).	A priest had to be descended from Aaron (Ex 28:1).

I believe that **this is what Christian baptism is thus doing too**. We are told that we are new covenant priests throughout the NT, who offer sacrifices with our bodies and offer up prayers of incense and so on. To do this, we are set aside in an ordination that baptizes us into the priestly ministry of Christ. **Many people think that Christian baptism is for the**

repentance of sins. I don't think this is correct, and I think this is precisely what John tells the people. *He* was baptizing for repentance, but that was itself symbolic of what would happen when Jesus would come and, through his Holy Spirit, baptize us with fire, regenerating us and making us Christians. Jesus could only do this legally if he was himself the High Priest who offered up himself as a sacrifice for sin once-for-all—an act, by the way, he will call later in Luke's Gospel, [his second baptism](#). The Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ's death and our water baptism, while certainly symbolic of that, even as John's of repentance was, rather sets us aside to now serve him as new covenant priests of the new covenant temple. This is why your baptism is so important. It does the same thing, as we will see in Acts, that Jesus' baptism did for him. It allowed him to begin his ministry.

Now, besides this aside in vs. [23](#), Luke is more focused on just [one other aspect of this baptismal anointing of Jesus](#), that is, [the activity of God](#) at his baptism. So he tells us that Jesus is [praying](#) after his baptism. We know from the other Gospels, that this is still at his baptism, but just after he comes out of the water, like the dry land coming up out of the primeval waters of creation (which Tertullian, Cyril of Alexandria, and others called a baptism).

Jesus' praying is paralleled with a "voice" in vs. 22. Jesus is praying upwards and a voice comes downward. That voice that came down came "from heaven" (22). Luke has the parallel in vs. 21. "The heavens were opened." So we see here a tremendous interaction between the prayer and God, heaven and earth. When Jesus prays, he is answered. When the man on earth pours out his request to heaven, heaven opens and things happen! This is a powerful short teaching on the implications of prayer for us today. For this is precisely what prayer does, even if you can't see it with your physical senses, it is every bit as real. For God hears and answers the prayers of the righteous according to his will. How he did this with Jesus is a story for the ages.

In this answer, we see one of the great Trinitarian passages in the Bible. The Trinity working in three-part harmony. Jesus is there on earth, praying. A voice comes out from heaven and speaks. This is the Father, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (22). The Father's words are accompanied by the presence of the Holy Spirit who "descended on him in bodily form, like a dove."

It is important to connect the Spirit's descent to Jesus here with OT passages. Recall that as the very beginning of the Bible, the Holy Spirit is "hovering" over the waters (Gen

1:2). In the very next verse, someone **speaks** from heaven. Moses sings about this later on when he compares Israel to the original creation. Using words found only in these two places he says, “He found him in a desert land, and in the *howling waste (tohu)* of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like *an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters (rachats)* over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions” (Deut 32:10-11). Moses is saying, like Isaiah, that the Holy Spirit was now in their midst (see Isa 63:10-11), like a bird hovering over his people.

The **dove image comes from Noah**. Again, we have much water; indeed, the Flood was a baptism (1Pet 3:21). And when the waters began to subside, Noah sent out birds. One of these was a dove, hovering over the waters. Also, in that story, Noah keeps doing this **every seven days** (see Gen 8:8-10). In this way, **the dove is an image of the Holy Spirit** in the OT, hovering over his new creation, as he is about ready to empower and infuse it with new life. And this is precisely what he is doing with Jesus, who begins, in John’s Gospel, calling his disciples one day at a time for seven days, beginning at his baptism. John parallels this story of Jesus’ baptism to the beginning of a new creation (see John 1:18-2:1ff).

What a glorious picture of the Triune God working as Three Persons, together, to begin the ministry of Jesus. Indeed, *it could not have been otherwise*, which is why all four Gospel writers must tell you this part of the story. But now, we want to zoom our sights in on those words of the Father. For Jesus is not just another person coming to John. Rather, the one being baptized by John, the one whose sandals he is not worthy to untie, this person is *the very Son of God*.

Luke 3:23-38—Jesus ... the Son of Adam and the Terminal Generation

“*Son of God*” begins our passage in that voice from the baptism. Quite unexpectedly, given that Luke will now launch into a genealogy of Jesus, that phrase will *return at the end of our story* as well. To get there, we now want to see how *vs. 23*, that transitional verse, continues, “... *being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli.*” Notice how Luke hints already at what he will do at the end. He says that Jesus was the son “*as was supposed*” of Joseph. The reality is far more incredible. We need to think about this from a couple different perspectives.

First, if he were to put this at the very beginning of his Gospel, as Matthew does with his genealogy, we would have **a very serious problem**. He wouldn't be able to tell you think without you thinking that Jesus was a **bastard**. I'm not using that word in its filthy sense, but in its technical sense. A bastard is someone whose parents are either not married or who they do not know who the father is. Luke couldn't possibly tell you what he does here, unless he has first told you about **the virgin birth**! *Now* you are able to understand whose voice it is that comes from heaven and how it was the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary in Luke 1. *Now* you are able to hear this genealogy without getting yourself all worked up into a tizzy over that phrase.

This takes me to **the second point**. Luke continues that he was supposed to be the⁹ “**son of Joseph** [of course, this is the betrothed of Mary whom we saw in the first two chapters], **the son of Heli...**” In Matthew, however, it is not Heli, but **Jacob** who comes next. How to reconcile this? It has been popular throughout church history to try to say that the two genealogies, which so obviously diverge at just this point, have Luke tracing **Mary's genealogy**, while Matthew traces

⁹ This is the only instance in the list where the definite article is not present. It is more literally, “as was supposed, son of Joseph...” Some see here a clue that perhaps Luke is tracing Mary's line. See **Ryken**, 146.

Joseph's. Some see in the phrase, “as was supposed” a clue here that Luke is actually tracing Mary’s genealogy. In other words, *you thought I was going to trace him through the father, but no, I’m tracing him through the mother.*¹⁰ As much as I understand the urge to want this to be true, I hate to point out the obvious, which by those who take this view is downplayed. Both put Joseph, not Mary, next to Jesus and *Luke never hints at this being Mary’s line.* At the end of the day, I do not think Luke is tracing Mary’s genealogy.

Instead, it is probably better to see something like *Matthew tracing the royal line* through one of Joseph’s grandfathers (hence, a gap), while *Luke is tracing a different line that*

¹⁰ This has been attempted in several ways. For example, Mary is Heli’s daughter, making her the half-sister of Joseph (think Abram and Sarai for instance), thus, in a kind of bait-and-switch, the line ends up being Mary’s after it starts with Joseph. Jesus was “supposed to be” the son of Joseph, but the reality was that he was the son of Heli through his mother, because that was the only real biological father he could trace. But why not tell us this? Luke isn’t shy about praising women in his Gospel, especially Mary! Another idea is that Heli, Mary’s father, adopted Joseph to be his heir. Thus, the line goes through Mary. But again, why not tell us?

Going Deeper: The Fathers are supposedly unanimous that Mary was descended from David (see Valdez, n.7). But centuries later, Bede (672-735) would say that Jesus had to be descended *both from the kings and the priests*. “Now when the mediator between God and human beings appeared in the world, it was fitting that he had his physical origin from both tribes because, in the humanity which he assumed, he would possess the roles of both priest and king” (Bede, *Homily on the Gospels* 1.3). Some traditions therefore trace Mary to Judah on her father’s side and Levi from her mother (see Sebastian Brock, “The Genealogy of the Virgin Mary in Sinai Syr. 16,” *Scrinium* II (2006): 58-71). This question used to bother me, because I desperately wanted Mary to be descended from Levi to make Jesus a priest. But then Hebrews came to my rescue and when I understood it, realized that he didn’t need this at all, since he was from the order of Melchizedek, not Levi. This, of course, does not answer the Luke/Matthew question, but it is an interesting rabbit trail.

still goes back to David through the other grandfather, because that list of names suits a different purpose.¹¹ In other words, Matthew is asking, “Who is the next in line of succession,” making his way from Abraham to Judah to David to Solomon to Jesus, while Luke is asking, “Who is the next son from Jesus to Joseph all the way to the beginning.” The only difficulty I see with this is that it might not allow for gaps to take place in Luke. One answer, of course, is that maybe Luke doesn’t actually have any gaps!¹²

A comparison of the two genealogies shows that after Joseph, the names of the lists do not converge again until David. The divergence point is Solomon and his brother Nathan, who were both born to David in Jerusalem (2Sam 5:14). Thus, while David is still king, it is very clear that Luke is not tracing the lineage of the kings, but of the *princes*, the brother of the

¹¹ See J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), 188-209.

¹² There is another option presented by Valdez. He asserts that the genealogy is “name and lineage model” that follows chronological order and biblical history according to internal symbolical-theological principles that obeyed intervals with significant numerical groups. Valdez, as we will see, has some interesting insights into the groupings of the list (which are only hinted at by the names themselves and not by any internal order of grouping mentioned by Luke). At the end of the day, this thesis seems to require Valdez to say that this is only a theological, and not a biological, genealogy. However, I wonder, if these names, many of which we don’t even know from any other place, and many of which were surely popular outside of the Bible in ancient Israel are real family members, then perhaps Valdez’ observations need not require a mere theological genealogy. His insights could simply be the work of a sovereign God orchestrating the names to remind us of other figures that we know about in the OT. There is nothing illogical about my suggestion here.

Luke		Matthew
11	J Jesus	Jesus, who is called Christ
	J Joseph	Joseph the husband of Mary
	H Heli	
	M Matthat	
	L Levi	
	M Melchi	
	J Jannai	
10	J Joseph	
	M Mattathias	
	A Amos	???
	N Nahum	
	E Esli	
	N Naggai	
	M Maath	
9	M Mattathias	
	S Semein	
	J Josech	
	J Joda	Jacob
	J Joanan	Matthan
	R Rhesa	Eleazar
	Z Zerubbabel	Eliud
8	S Shealtiel	Achim
	N Neri	Zadok
	M Melchi	Azor
	A Addi	Eliakim
	C Cosam	Abiud
	E Elmadam	Zerubbabel
	E Er	Shealtiel
7	J Joshua	Jechoniah
	E Eliezer	Josiah
	J Jorim	Amos
	M Matthat	Manasseh
	L Levi	Hezekiah
	S Simeon	Ahaz
	J Judah	Jotham
6	J Joseph	Uzziah
	J Jonam	Joram
	E Eliakim	Jehoshaphat
	M Melea	Asaph
	M Menna	Abijah
	M Mattatha	Rehoboam
	N Nathan	Solomon
5	D David	David
	J Jesse	Jesse
	O Obed	Obed
	B Boaz	Boaz
	S Sala	Salmon
	N Nahshon	Nahshon
	A Amminadab	Amminadab
4	A Admin	Ram
	A Arni	Hezron
	H Hezron	Perez
	P Perez	Judah
	J Judah	Jacob
	J Jacob	Isaac
3	I Isaac	Isaac
	A Abraham	Abraham (Luke stops, Gen.-below)
	T Terah	Terah
	N Nahor	Nahor
	S Serug	Serug
	R Reu	Reu
	P Peleg	Peleg
	E Eber	Eber
2	S Shelah	Shelah
	C Cainan	Cainan (LXX, not MSS)
	A Arphaxad	Arphaxad
	S Shem	Shem
	N Noah	Noah
	L Lamech	Lamech
	M Methuselah	Methuselah
1	E Enoch	Enoch
	J Jared	Jared
	M Mahalaleel	Mahalaleel
	C Cainan	Cainan
	E Enos	Enos
	S Seth	Seth
	A Adam	Adam
	the son of God	

king. I'll give a possible theological explanation for that a little bit later.

As we look at these names, since there are so many of them and it would just get confusing and tedious, I'll make a few larger observations. First, Nearly half of the people in the Genealogy do not appear anywhere in Scripture, and of these, almost all of those are from Heli ("father" of Joseph, grandfather of Jesus) to Mat-tatha ("son" of Nathan the son of David). Where would Luke have gotten such a list? Whether it is her lineage or Joseph's, the safe bet is that he got it from his friend, Mary the mother of Jesus, who would most certainly have kept it as a family heirloom.¹³

Second, many of these people have the same names as biblical heroes. These include Levi, Joseph,

¹³ See previous note, but scholars love to argue that Luke is just picking and choosing names out of OT lists for theological purposes. Why would he do this though? He says he is giving us

Amos, Nahum, Zerubbabel, Shealtiel, Joshua, Eliezer, and Simeon. Obviously, just like today, it would have been popular to name your child after a biblical hero of old. Thus, it is [not a bad thing to think of the hero](#), even as you realize that they are almost certainly not who Luke is talking about.

Third, [many of these names repeat](#). We have three Josephs, two Matthats, Mattathias, Melchis, and Levis. We have a Simeon and Semein and we have a Jesus and Joshua (one Greek, one Hebrew). Of these names, we find [interesting groupings](#) of several Js together or Ms. One scholar, looking at these patterns, suggests that they are intentionally listed where they are to put them into three [groups consisting of seven](#) (Jesus to Jannai), [thirty-five](#) (Joseph to Nathan, consisting of five groups of seven), and [thirty-five](#) (David to Adam, consisting of five groups of seven).¹⁴ We can see interesting patterns such as names that begin [S-J-J-J](#) (Semein-Josech-Joda-Joanan) corresponding to another grouping of the exact same four letters (Simeon-Judah-Joseph-Jonam).

a genealogy. Is this like Tobit where Raphael the archangel is forced to invent a suitable human genealogy to be accepted (see Tobit 5:11-13)? (Note, in that genealogy, he gives only two names, not seventy!) On other false genealogies of the ancient world see [Paul Davidson, "Luke's Genealogy Compared with Matthew and the Old Testament," *Is That in the Bible?*](#) (Oct 15, 2014). I do not find these conclusions convincing. Why is it not possible that God orchestrated the names in the list providentially to give us what we find in Luke's genealogy? Isn't that kind of the point? Too many scholars love to take the awe of God's word by making it artificial and contrived.

¹⁴ Valdez, 9 with discussion from 9-13.

Or a list of five names of J-J-E-M-L (Jesus-Joseph-(H)Eli-Mathat-Levi) that correspond to the same five letter in a slightly different order (J-E-J-M-L: Jesus-Eliezer-Jorim-Mathat-Levi). Of these, several of the names are the same. The reason for this, it is suggested, is because Luke is giving theological messaging. That is, by arranging the names in such placement, we can pick out the larger groupings of sevens. Even though this is fascinating, it is looking too hard for an artificial pattern, which we don't really need as we will see later.

Of more interest are several of the name's meanings. *Joseph* can mean “He Adds”; *Mathathias* can mean “God's Gift”; *Jesus/Joshua* is “God Saves”; *Levi* can mean “Linked”; *Mathat* is “Gift”; *Melchi* is “My King”; *(H)Eli* is “Offering”; *Judah* is “Praise of God.” As Valdez says, “All of them lead to the idea of priesthood and Messianic government, as well as the fact that Jesus is a “gift from God” (*Mathathias*) by means of *Joseph* (the one who adds).”¹⁵

Who were these people? I agree with Ryken. They were “Who We Are.” They are the identity of Jesus, his fathers and father's fathers, just as our ancestors are our identity. The Jews thought this especially important, because they

¹⁵ Valdez, 12.

were **God's chosen people**. Each Jew could trace his ancestry back to one of the twelve, and to Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham before that. This was not an unusual thing either. While virtually no Jews today can do this (they say the tribe of Levi has kept their records through all the dispersions), it is said that **Rabbi Hillel**, who lived during Jesus' life, used official registers to trace his descent back to David.¹⁶ Josephus says he simply went to the public registry to find his lineage (*Autobiography* 1), and that even Jews who lived outside of Palestine sent the names of their children to Jerusalem to be officially recorded (*Against Apion* 1).

But these are not gods or superheroes. They are **sinners**, just like us. That's why they **are us**. Jesus comes from a line of them, every one a sinner, because every one comes from Adam.

In this, it is important now to see that **Luke does not stop at Abraham**, like Matthew does. Instead, he goes all the way back **to Adam**]. Now, you might think this is a bit of overkill, since, after all, isn't everyone descended from Adam? But this has several important functions in the genealogy. I'll give you **three**.

¹⁶ **Norval Geldenhuys**, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 151.

First, in linking Jesus to Adam, it clearly ties each of his ancestors to the sin of Adam. That is, they all, like Adam, are going to be in need of a Savior too. Of course, they are all dead, but Christ's work was for them every bit as much as it is for us today. As God "in his forbearance" left the sins committed beforehand, by his saints, unpunished (meaning that when they died, they were not punished in Hades/Sheol) (Rom 3:25). Of course, we already know that Jesus is different, because he is only the son of Joseph, "as it was supposed." But the reality is, Jesus has a different Father.

Second, in ending at Adam, it very clearly links Jesus to humanity. Jesus is not just for Jews. He is for all peoples!¹⁷ More than this, as incredible as that already is, people often forget, Adam is not just a name. Adam means "man." If Jesus is the son of Adam, then Jesus is the son of *Man*. More simply, Jesus is a human being. We've made this point repeatedly throughout the Infancy part of Luke's Gospel. And it needed to be this way, for if man owes a debt of sin, then only man can pay that debt of sin. Jesus had to be one of us to do anything for us that would matter eternally. This is certainly an idea that is closely tied to John the Baptists'

¹⁷ It has been pointed out (see Oliver, p. 1) that going back to Abraham does this too, since he is the father of "many nations." But it seems self-evident that going to Adam makes this point in a much different and basic way.

preaching and message. Humanity is a brood of vipers, in desperate need of salvation, repentance, and a change of family.

Third, I truly believe that there is more rhyme and reason to Luke's going back this far than most people are aware of. At this point, I want to focus in on Luke's **seventy-seven names**. Why would he do this? Is it more than just a clever way of capping off a chapter that began with seven rulers? I think so.

To help you understand what I think is going on, we need to take a **brief detour** to the other literature that was popular in Luke's day. I'm talking here especially about probably the most popular of all those books, the Jewish equivalent of *Pilgrim's Progress* for a Puritan, a book quoted and alluded to throughout the NT—the book of **1 Enoch**. Jude quotes from **1En 1:9** when he says, “**It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam** [a phrase which itself comes from **1En 60:8**], prophesied, saying, ‘*Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things*

that ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14-15).¹⁸ Jude calls Enoch a prophet who spoke about the coming Messiah.

There are several interesting connections to Enoch and Luke 3.¹⁹ First, most people are not aware of this, but the phrase “son of Man” that we have just seen with Jesus, is used nearly 20 times in 1 Enoch for a messianic figure. That son of man is also, however, very clearly divine in that book. It makes for remarkable reading.

¹⁸ Compare with 1 Enoch 1:9, “He comes with his myriads and with his holy ones, to make judgment against all, and he will destroy all the ungodly, and convict all flesh about all works of their ungodliness which they in an ungodly way committed and the harsh words which they have spoken, and about all which the ungodly sinners have spoken evil against him.” Other allusions to 1 Enoch in the NT include Matt 22:13; 25:31; 26:24; Col 2:3; 1Th 5:3; 1Ti 1:17; Heb 4:13; 12:23; James 3:6; 1 Peter 1:12; 3:19; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6, 13, 16; Rev 8:8; 15:3; 19:20; 20:3; and many, many more. See Heiser, *Reversing Hermon*, 204-21; also Steve Delamarter, *A Scripture Index to Charlesworth’s The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

¹⁹ For other Enochian allusions in Luke’s Genealogy see the fascinating work of Richard Bauckham on the Genealogy in *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 315–64. This includes comparing later in 1 Enoch, in the so-called *Apocalypse of Weeks* (1En 93:3-10; 91:11-17) in the *Book of the Epistle of Enoch* (contained as 1En 91-107) with its division of history into ten “weeks” of seven generations each, with names at the end of each seven being significant. As he points out, if we take Enoch as the end of the first week (seven names), and then divide the genealogy up to Jesus, we have important names such as Abraham (3), David (4), Joseph (6, 10), and Joshua (7 in the Jubilee week) and Jesus at the climax. This has the added advantage of explaining why Luke adds Admin and Arni, two otherwise unknown names, where the OT has only Ram. This moves the key names, starting with David, to the key “seventh” positions. Scott, edited by Bauckham, has interacted with this and decided Jubilees, rather than 1 Enoch, is Luke’s main source. Another interesting discussion is Isaac W. Oliver, “Lukan Eschatology and Genealogy in Light of Enochic Tradition,” *Academia* (Seventh Enoch Seminar, Camaldoli, Italy, 2013), https://www.academia.edu/40703897/Lukan_Eschatology_and_Genealogy_in_Light_of_Enochic_Tradition.

Second, and even more curious, Enoch makes another prophecy that goes as follows. “And when their sons have slain one another, and they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them fast for *seventy generations* in the valleys of the earth, *till the day of their judgement* and of their consummation, till *the judgement* that is for ever and ever is consummated” (1En 10:12). The context refers to the days of Enoch, seventh from Adam, and the main storyline of the first 36 chapters of this book, which deals with the fall of the watchers from heaven, who took human women that then gave birth to giants.

The punishment in mind here refers to locking up the pre-Flood fallen angels for their sin in Tartarus. This is something that 2 Peter 2:4, a chapter that is nearly identical to Jude’s book, talks about explicitly. Peter talks about how God “did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.” Peter is also talking about Enoch, or the same tradition that Enoch gets it from, namely Genesis 6:1-4.

So what does any of this have to do with Luke 3? Perhaps you have caught onto my emphasis of Enoch “seventh from Adam.” If you look at Luke’s genealogy, you see that

this is exactly where he is listed (following Genesis 5). If Luke has seventy-seven generations, and the first seven take us to Enoch, then **the last seventy take us to Jesus**. But it is precisely seventy generations that Enoch predicted from himself that would see the coming final judgment of these fallen heavenly beings called Watchers (for a Watcher in the Bible, see **Daniel 4:13, 23**).

This puts **Jesus as the terminal generation for final judgment**, which is exactly what he says later in the Gospel. “Truly, I say to you *this generation will not pass away until all has taken place*” (**Luke 21:32**).²⁰ We’ve already seen reason to believe that Luke has done this with Daniel’s seventy weeks and the birth of Jesus being the fulfillment of that prophecy, so there is precedent.²¹ Many people think Luke was mistaken about this, just like all the NT disciples were. But of course, this judgment came upon them *at the crucifixion*, which is what Paul says, “The rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away ... [did not understand] this, for it they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory” (**1Cor**

²⁰ Bauckham, 325.

²¹ A third idea is one that comes from 4 Ezra (not used by Luke) that I have written a short paper on that also seems to fit the timing of Jesus’ coming. I’m calling it, “A Brief Argument for the Possible Use of “Age” as a Platonic Month (2,160 years) Amongst the Jewish Scribes in 4 Ezra 14.10-12.”

2:6). This doesn't mean they are gone, merely that they have now been judged and are awaiting final sentencing.

As a kind of related aside, it is also interesting that there were said to be **seventy sons of God** (**Deut 32:8** and TargJon) which are the “princes” of the nations (see **Dan 10:13, 20**). In tracing the *princely* rather than kingly line of Jesus, is this giving us another reason to see Jesus as fulfilling prophecy? He comes from the line of human princes and becomes the great Prince that will overthrow the fallen heavenly princes.

Luke 3: 38—Jesus ... the Son of God

Finally, we have that one last Person mentioned in the genealogy, the one who **goes before Adam**. These Watchers are called in the Bible, “*sons of God*” (**Gen 6:4**) and this fits the whole idea that only heavenly beings (including the sons of God) can seem to understand that Jesus is the Son of God.

It is basically unheard of to end a long genealogy with “**the son of God**.” And many minds have spent a lot of time trying to figure out what Luke means by saying that Adam is the son of God? The whole thing seems simple enough to me. This is a literary *inclusio* beginning and ending the frame on the same idea. Of course, God created Adam from

the dust of the earth. God knit together Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary, but nevertheless, the Word of God who indwelt her is eternal. In saying that Jesus was *supposed* to be the son of Joseph, I think Luke is saying that the reality is, he is the son of God. He isn't trying to pull a fast one on you, by giving you a false list of names. He isn't conspiring to make up something he knows nothing about. He has done his homework. He is, **through the numbers**, telling you that this all happened in the perfect time (seventy and seven generations). And it happens to be to the perfect Man—the Son of Man and the Son of God. One Person with two natures. Both whole. Neither halved.

It is important that you see this, as the following story from Wycliffe Bible Translators tells you.

When a Bible translator in Papua New Guinea started to translate Matthew's Gospel, he thought, "The last thing I want to do is bog these people down with a genealogy." **So he began with chapter 2.**

But the day came when all the other chapters were done. He called together the men who were helping him, and they

decided on the best way to say “begat.” Then they proceeded with Matthew chapter one: “... Abraham begat Isaac. Isaac begat Jacob. Jacob begat ...”

By the time they completed about six of these “begats,” the translator could sense the men were becoming excited.

“Do you mean that these were real men?” they asked.

“Yes,” he answered. “They were real men.”

“That’s what we do!” they added, referring to their custom of keeping track of genealogies. “We had thought that these were just white man’s stories. Do you really mean that Abraham was a real man?”

“Yes,” the translator said, “that’s what I’ve been telling you.”

“We didn’t know that,” they said, “but now we believe.”

That night they gathered the village together and said, “Listen to this!” Then they read the first chapter of Matthew. This chapter was the key for belief in the tribe.²²

If it is true for Matthew’s genealogy, it is true for Luke’s. The whole point is to show you that Jesus was a real man who came from real people. And yet, it is more. He is also

²² This story is recounted without attribution in a newsletter from Wycliffe Bible Translators, Orlando, 2000. Retold in Ryken, 144.

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