

# Luke

*From First Adam to Last Adam  
Luke 3:23-38*

*With Study Questions*

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Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) *the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,* <sup>24</sup> *the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janna, the son of Joseph,* <sup>25</sup> *the son of Mattathiah, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai,* <sup>26</sup> *the son of Maath, the son of Mattathiah, the son of Semei, the son of Joseph, the son of Judah,* <sup>27</sup> *the son of Joannas, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,* <sup>28</sup> *the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, the son of Er,* <sup>29</sup> *the son of Jose, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,* <sup>30</sup> *the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim,* <sup>31</sup> *the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David,* <sup>32</sup> *the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,* <sup>33</sup> *the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,* <sup>34</sup> *the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,* <sup>35</sup> *the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah,* <sup>36</sup> *the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,* <sup>37</sup> *the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Cainan,* <sup>38</sup> *the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God (Luke 3:23-38).*

## Introduction

I don't know if there are any visitors with us this morning, but if someone invited you to church, they're probably feeling a bit of anxiety about the passage we've landed on. I recall being a visitor, so-to-speak to the Christian faith as a young man. I was told to read the New Testament, since it speaks more clearly about Jesus than the Old Testament. The first book in the New Testament is Matthew and Matthew begins, similarly to this, with a genealogy. I did not find it easy reading.

Yet, the more I read the Bible, the more interesting the genealogies became. Genealogies can be interesting. Ancestry.com or myheritage.com or

23andMe Ancestry Reports are big business. We're all a bit hungry to find something special in our bloodstream. Maybe I'm in a line of conquerors or artists or explorers.

I'm not sure how accurate this all is. As far as I can tell, the number of people related to those who came over on the Mayflower would require the Mayflower be the size of ten aircraft carriers. All to say genealogies become interesting if we know a bit about the people in the lineage and their unique contribution to history. If you found out your distant ancestor was a textile worker in central Europe, the conversation might rapidly end.

To be frank, the genealogy in Matthew is a bit easier to follow. The people in it are more recognizable in the redemptive history found in the Old Testament. Some in the genealogy in Luke are hardly recognizable at all. And it is very possible that Luke (likely the only gentile author in the New Testament) had an initial audience that, like many of us, were not as conversant with Old Testament figures. To say, the original readers may not have recognized many of these names. In that, we can feel a bit of ease in our own limitations (certainly not to advocate a lack of study on the matter).

At the same time there are some very significant names in both genealogies that get our attention, primarily the name, David. Yet in Matthew's genealogy he sets David apart with the language, "**...and to Jesse was born David the king**" (Matthew 1:6). Luke doesn't mention the title-that he was king. Luke also shoots us in a different direction by referencing Nathan as the son of David rather than Solomon, who is mentioned in Matthew's genealogy. Why do you suppose this is?

It is here that we engage in a little (not much really) speculation. For various reasons, we can't get into right now, it is widely accepted that Matthew was writing to a largely Jewish readership. Therefore, the royal lineage of the Messiah would have been of great interest. Perhaps not as much with Luke.

Yet the Savior of the world was not going to be born out of thin air. There were very specific prophecies regarding where, when and by whom Jesus would be born. It is actually quite remarkable to examine the Old Testament prophecies regarding the birth of Christ and how they were fulfilled-things that happened when He was not yet born or in His infancy. We haven't time to dig in now, but one of those prophecies was that He would be in the line of David.

**Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land (Jeremiah 23:5).**

Recalling that Jesse is the father of David and (I think magnificently) that earlier passage in Luke which records the Holy Spirit falling upon Jesus, we read in Isaiah,

**There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. <sup>2</sup> And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:1, 2).**

Since we are familiar with David, this jumps out as significant. I daresay the more familiar we are with our Bibles, the more things will jump out. But this is about as deep of a dive as I am going to take in terms of the specific cast in this genealogy at this time.

What I would like to pursue for the remainder of our time is a brief comparison of the two genealogies and then ask why they are even here in a big picture sort of way.

### **Contrasting Genealogies**

Satisfying people's undue curiosity should never be high on a preacher's priority list, yet perhaps there will be a bit of that here. First, an obvious difference in Luke's genealogy is the order. Matthew begins at the beginning of his genealogy and Luke begins at the end.

Second, the two genealogies, though substantially in agreement highlight different ancestors. Matthew, it has been argued, focuses on the "legal" or "royal" descent, where Luke the "natural" descent with greater detail.

Third, the most hotly debated issue is whether Luke is recording the genealogy of Mary, since Matthew clearly presents Joseph's ancestry. I have no intention of getting into the details of this debate and, at this time, this pastor remains undecided.

Finally, the most obvious distinction is that Matthew traces Jesus to Abraham, the father of the Jews, the father of faith (Galatians 3:6-9) whereas

Luke traces Jesus' genealogy all the way back to Adam, the father as it were, of us all. With this final observation hovering about, I would like to make what I hope to be salient and prayerfully redeeming statements.

## The Father of us All

Luke had earlier recorded John the Baptist's very aggressive denunciation of those who took comfort in the physical/ethnic heritage.

**...do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones (Luke 3:8).**

The Christian faith should not be viewed as some sort of tribal cultus. Though the Bible was very specific that Jesus would be born through the "Israelites" (Romans 9:4, 5), the promise associated with the coming of Christ was that through Him (the promise being made to Abraham), "**all the families of the earth shall be blessed**" (Genesis 12:3).

This may not be highly impactful to us. Most Americans don't view themselves as ethnically excluded from the promises of God. But there is a universality to the redeeming work of Christ. Because we (in the west) tend not to think tribally, we often misunderstand many of the "all" or "whole world" statements in Scripture (1 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 2:2) as if those words or phrases mean *every last single*.

Generally speaking, it would be best to understand these universal statements to mean all people without distinction rather than all people without exception. To embrace the latter leads us into theological mayhem and, often a weak view of the cross.

Suffice it to say that Luke's genealogy going all the way to Adam shows that,

**God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).**

## Not a Myth

Something else we learn from a genealogy is the reality of the person under examination. Luke had earlier emphasized the “**eyewitness**” testimony and was determined to write “**an orderly account**” that his reader(s) would have “**certainty**” (Luke 1:1-5). Even in the first century there were fanciful objections to the reality of Christ’s work of redemption and the reality of the existence of Christ altogether.

The guards were hired to lie about the resurrection (Matthew 28:12, 13). Some posited that Jesus did not come in the flesh (1 John 4:2, 3). Today, many critics assert that Christianity and Christ Himself is a myth. Don’t underestimate the force of these efforts. They are generally done by the self-proclaimed high-minded surrounded by words like “expert” or “scholar” or “intellect.” Yet, at the same time offering dubious data and an embarrassing lack of understanding of the religious system they so viciously attack.

All to say, that there is no doubt that persons mentioned in these genealogies were real people. To connect Jesus, the myth, to real people would relegate the Scriptures, not merely to error, but to intentional deceit. Of course, this is where the argument often goes—that the political expediency of Christianity motivated all manner of lies about who Jesus is and what He achieved.

C. S. Lewis addresses this in *Mere Christianity*. Addressing to the concession made by many that Jesus should be viewed as a great teacher and nothing more, he writes,

**That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.**

The Scriptures do not allow Jesus to be viewed as a mere teacher, nor as a mythological figure.

## **A Specific God**

Another conclusion we can draw from a genealogy is the specificity of the God who saves us and the God whom we serve. God is identified. He is no random being. Have you ever noticed how people can be very comfortable talking about god in general but become very uncomfortable when that god becomes defined. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as specific as that is, is not terribly offensive in today's climate. It may encompass Jews, Muslims, Roman Catholics and all the cults.

But when the name Jesus enters the conversation, a bit of the air exits the room. Every redemptive microscope and telescope find its crosshairs on Christ. He seems to think He owns everything, and has a right to everything, including us. **"All authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18)** is quite a statement! Kuyper said it well:

**There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!**

It is here that we come close to the offense of the cross (Galatians 5:11). We have been kidnapped and we have been willfully complicit in our own kidnapping. We think we own ourselves, but there is a very specific God in heaven who owns us, and there is a thief who has stolen us (John 10:10). And in a dark and bizarre sort of spiritual Stockholm Syndrome, our fallen human natures prefer the world and its darkness. We love our captor and fancy its death over Christ and the true life He gives.

If we don't realize we belong to somebody, we will willingly belong to anybody. Chesterton put it well:

**When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything.**

In self-reflection, it might be a good question to ask, *to whom do you belong?* Would you flee to Christ and find rest for your soul?

## **A Superior Ministry**

Finally, we see that Luke's genealogy, unlike Matthew's does not begin at the opening of his gospel. Here we are at the end of the third chapter. Now what I am going to propose here, though I believe to be theologically

accurate, is not terribly obvious in an exegetical sort of way. Someone I was reading very gingerly offered these thoughts and I will finish by building on someone else's work (though I can't recall who it was).

Luke informs us that Jesus was about thirty years of age and was beginning His ministry. He had just been, as it were, consecrated by the Holy Spirit in the previous passage. The passage which will follow is the temptation in the wilderness. Recalling that the last person mentioned in the genealogy was Adam, we begin to see the ministry of the "last Adam" (**1 Corinthians 15:45**). But the difference between the two Adams is striking.

At times you'll hear people accuse the Scriptures of being contradictory because the order of the temptations in Luke are different than in Matthew. In Matthew the order is stones to bread; throwing Himself from the pinnacle of the temple; and worshiping the devil. But these accounts are not necessarily given chronologically. You can ask me what I ate today, and I might first mention the meal I enjoyed most-which may be breakfast.

The order chosen by Luke is identical with the temptations in the third chapter of Genesis. The tree was "good for food" (the lust of the flesh); "a delight to the eyes" (the lust of the eyes); and the promise of wisdom (the pride of life). Of course, Adam and Eve failed, and death entered.

But the second Adam would not fail. That which was lost in Adam was found in Christ. Sin, guilt, shame, brokenness, death and alienation from God are overturned in Christ. We are either in Adam or we are in Christ. These are the two, and only two, options.

**Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift* came to all men, resulting in justification of life. <sup>19</sup> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous (Romans 5:18, 19).**

May we all be found in the righteousness of Christ.



## Questions for Study

1. How do you respond to the genealogies in the Bible? What do they mean to you (pages 2-4)?
2. What are some of the major distinctions between Matthew's genealogy and Luke's? Why do you suppose (pages 4, 5)?
3. In what way does a genealogy address the accusation that Christianity is a myth (pages 5, 6)?
4. Why do you suppose people are comfortable with a non-specific god versus a specific God (pages 6, 7)?
5. How was the last Adam's ministry superior to the first Adam's ministry? In which Adam are you (pages 7, 8)?